



CHILDREN'S POLICY

United**Future** not only places children and parents firmly at the centre of all our policy and planning – we exist as a Party to keep Government focused on the family in all its shapes and sizes. The main principle of the United**Future** policy for children is that we believe that investing in those on whom children rely for their well-being is key – namely parents and teachers.

It is United**Future** policy to:

- Retain the Families Commission and Children's Commissioner
- Set personal tax rates as follows:

10% up to \$12,000

20% between \$12,001 and \$38,000

30% above \$38,000

United**Future** would also introduce income splitting for couples with dependent children. Each partner is taxed as if they had earned 50% of the household income with a significant reduction in income tax. It attributes equal value to the different roles each parent plays, whereas our current tax system does not recognise the stay-at-home parent's contribution.

This tax policy would mean that for a family with:

- a combined income of \$45,000 a year, a tax cut of \$87 a fortnight
- a combined income of \$60,000 a year, a tax cut of \$137 a fortnight
- a combined income of \$80,000 a year, a tax cut of \$191 a fortnight
- Introduce one-stop shop family service centre's to meet community needs in a coherent and family-friendly way. A one-stop family service centre would offer parents information on opportunities that exist for them and their children. Centre's would provide services demanded by the community, such as:
 - health checks
 - early childhood education and care options
 - relationship counseling
 - Working for Families entitlements, other benefit information and budget advice
 - parent education opportunities and support.
- Strengthen universal services to families with children
- Establish a cross-party parliamentary group for children
- Regularly update the child and youth health indicators and ensure a focus to improving these outcomes where a need is identified
- Support the ongoing funding and development of the longitudinal programme, "Growing Up in New Zealand" and the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study and the Christchurch Health and Development Study.
- Focus on increasing affordable housing for families with children
- Increase requirements for organisations where children are involved to ensure safety standards are reached. For example, implementing the "Childdsafe" programme.

- Take all necessary steps to safeguard children from harmful internet material, working with the Internet Safety Group and the industry to ensure that filtering software and other appropriate safety measures, including effective Codes of Practice, are adopted.

United**Future** has become increasingly concerned with the number of serious and fatal dog attacks that have occurred throughout New Zealand over the last few years – particularly on young children.

It is United**Future** policy to place the most dangerous breeds on a ban-list and require neutering for dogs on that list as well as placing a ban on new animals. No one will have to give up their current pet, but over time the number of dangerous dogs will drop until such breeds no longer exist in New Zealand.

Children with Disabilities

United**Future** understands that parenting children and young people with disabilities brings many strains and stresses, these are complex areas but we will:

- Establish and fund a Disability Commission to be accountable for the full implementation of the disability Strategy;
- Introduce a Caregivers Allowance for those currently providing unpaid support;
- Ensure that sufficient and appropriate respite care is available in every region;
- Consider the need for client-centred funding models;
- Establish advocacy services so that parents have more energy to give to parenting rather than chasing entitlements;
- Address workforce planning, pay rates and qualification issues for people in this sector;
- Increase ORRS funding to schools by 10% and ensure that it is not pruned if a student makes academic progress but remains disabled.

Supporting parents supporting children

- Improve access to parenting programmes for a wider range of parents and parenting seasons.
- Provide subsidies to parent educators, relationship counselors and relationship course providers to reduce cost and improve access for clients
- Ensure that years 7 – 13 at school take an integrated approach to life skills by establishing it as a separate subject, including segments on career planning, budgeting advice, civics education and parenting skills.
- Recognise the imperative for fathers to bond with their newborns by giving fathers an entitlement to paid parental leave.
- Extend paid parental leave to 12 months.
- Support flexible working hours.
- Change family law to a presumption of shared parenting in custody disputes, to recognise the right and best interests of the child to continue his/her relationship with both parents following separation.

Health Issues

- Fund Plunketline, separate to funding for Healthline.
- Target infant health by concentrating on the appropriate support for parents before and after birth and ensuring high-quality extended care and support, including home visits, by lead maternity carers and Plunket.
- Treat child obesity as a parenting issue and use parent education as the first line of attack to reduce obesity rates.
- Ensure that information about immunisation is widely circulated, including the latest international developments, to promote informed decisions by parents.
- Supplement the work of social workers in schools with health clinics where appropriate.
- Improve dental services to Primary and Secondary school age children by:
 1. increasing the number of dental therapists trained;
 2. ensuring DHBs secure sufficient contracts with local dentists for the provision of services to secondary students and additional services to Primary age students;
 3. Increased use of mobile clinics in isolated communities.