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Media statement

Littlies Lobby urges investment in the early years

As election year gets underway, the Littlies Lobby is urging all political parties to make a commitment to policies that will ensure investment in the early years of baby and child development.

“It is critical that New Zealand creates the social, economic and political environment that supports the necessary investment in the early years, and political party policies can assist this process,” said Deborah Morris-Travers, Littlies Lobby Coordinator.

“Investment in the early development of babies and children establishes the foundations necessary for all of a child’s social, educational, and health development. When conditions enable this development to occur, the future prospects for children are significantly improved.

“Evidence demonstrates that the brains of neglected or abused children don’t develop properly, leading to poor physical and mental health, poorer educational performance, an inability to form secure attachments to others, and poor socialisation.

“The harms caused by such circumstances can be avoided, in the interests of all of us if we ensure early investment in child development.

“Many different policies can enable this investment to occur, by placing priority on children as well as supporting and valuing the roles of parents and care-givers. These could include funding for appropriate well child health and early childhood education services; providing social support; promoting flexible work practices and family-friendly policies in the work place; and funding positive parenting programmes.

“This year presents an opportunity for all of the political parties to demonstrate a genuine commitment to the future safety, security and prosperity of New Zealand by promoting policies that will ensure the necessary early investment takes place,” said Ms. Morris-Travers.

The Littlies Lobby is a joint initiative of Plunket and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner. The project is designed to increase awareness of the importance of the early years of a child’s life and promote the wellbeing of children and families. The first Littlies Lobby event in 2005 is a parliamentary breakfast featuring Dr Bruce Perry, a neuro-biologist at the leading edge of research into child brain development, on Wednesday 2 March.

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