

Media Release
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More ‘people’ needed in the lives of our children

The health and development of young children is moulded more by the positive interaction they have with other people, than by the books they can read in a classroom, a leading child psychiatrist told a Littlies Lobby gathering at Parliament today.

Around 100 politicians and representatives from government and non-government organisations heard Dr Bruce Perry speak on the link between early childhood experiences and the kind of adults that children will become.

Dr Perry, an international expert on childhood trauma. is in New Zealand to conduct seminars discussing the importance of the early years and exploring the need for early intervention with families facing difficulty.

Dr Perry told the Littlies Lobby function that the western world had created societies that are materially wealthy, but impoverished in relationships.

“The people who are most successful are those with relational skills. There are many people who are smart, but if they don’t have relational skills, they can’t take that smartness and turn it into wisdom and positive action from people around them,” said Dr Perry.

“We need to develop children who are humane as importantly as we develop children who can read.”

Dr Perry said this will come about if children are given the opportunity, at an early stage, to interact with many different people.

“We need more elderly in the lives of our children; we need more neighbours, more aunts, more uncles and more fathers. We need more older children in the lives of our younger children and we need younger children in the lives of all of us.

“This, in turn, can make us all healthier. Everyone feels good when they have a positive interaction with a child and we all know we feel better when we are around other human beings,” he said.

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Dr Perry was brought to New Zealand by the Brainwave Trust and Pacific Foundation

The Littlies Lobby, an initiative of Plunket and Office of the Children’s Commissioner, facilitates a cross-party Parliamentary Children’s Caucus. The Littlies Lobby has over 400 members from local and central government, non-government organisations and other private and public organisations and people involved in the health and welfare of young children. Regular briefings are provided by specialists on children’s rights and needs.