



Ray of Hope

the Little's Lobby newsletter



From Cradle to Grave

A Message from the new Plunket President Kaye Crowther

A decade or so ago Justice Minister Phil Goff visited Southland. As part of his trip he was to visit the Borstal that was then located in Invercargill. He also asked to visit Plunket. I was an Area Councillor at the time and I and the then Area Manager met with him. I was a bit curious as to why he wanted to link Plunket and the Borstal into one visit. But he was very clear about that. He said that if we could only get it right in the early years then we wouldn't have all these young men in prison.

I have always remembered that visit and that message. Although the importance of the early years has only really come to prominence as a public health issue recently, as compelling new research has emerged, it is something that I, and I think all of us working in Plunket, have always known and believed. That is why we, both volunteers and staff, have put so much energy into supporting Plunket and its work with young children and their families. they grow up?



Joining the Lobby
Visit

www.littlieslobby.org.nz

click the membership button and fill out the simple form or free phone

0800 4 LOBBY

Little's Lobby is proudly supported by:

Part of the solution lies in parenting education. Plunket has a very good parenting education for secondary school students – Tots & Toddlers. But why is this targeted primarily at less academic students? Parenting is the most important job in the world – vital to the well-being our society – but most people embark on the job with no skills or knowledge. I would like to see some form of parenting education become a compulsory part of the curriculum for all students. Encouragement must also be given to all new parents to attend education classes on parenting

Before young people even embark on starting a family, they need to have an understanding of the importance of the first three years of a child's life. They need to understand the importance of nurturing a baby from conception. They need to know how to locate information on parenting. This is pre antenatal education that I am talking about. As a relatively new grandmother, I know that it is not always easy for young parents to find this information. Even finding out how to choose a maternity care provider can be difficult today.

We, all of us, as a society have to agree and work to put children first. This is the only way that we are going to improve health and education outcomes for our children - ultimately improving the outcomes for us all. Working together collaboratively is the only way to make a difference so our children are indeed "amongst the healthiest in the world".

Little's Lobby Six Key Messages

- ?? Ko ā tātou tamariki ki mua
Children must come first
- ?? Me mātua whiwhi tīmatanga tika ā tātou tamariki
Children must have the right start
- ?? Me mātua poipoi ā tātou tamariki kia ora rawa ai
Children must be nurtured to thrive
- ?? Me mātua whiwhi tiaki pai ā tātou tamariki
Children must have quality care
- ?? Me mātua whakamau ā tātou tamariki i te kainga
Children must be secure at home
- ?? Me mātua reri mō te kura ā tātou tamariki i te rima tau
Children must be school ready by five

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily that of Little's Lobby.



Ray of Hope

the Little's Lobby newsletter



Welcome aboard!

"Who can disagree with the sentiments in Mary Poppins' song "Let's start at the very beginning; a very good place to start". That's what the Little's Lobby is about – giving our youngest, most valuable, most potentialised the very best start that is available to them. They need to know about the magnificent world that will open up to them as they learn to speak and hear and then read and write.

The environment we create for our very youngest children will set the scene for each day for the rest of their lives. So whether it is "Doe Rey Me" or 1,2, and 3 year olds, a good start at the very beginning is worth the effort."

Roger McClay
Commissioner for Children

"Children must be school ready by five"

After submissions to the Little's Lobby Bulletin Board on www.littlieslobby.org.nz, it has been decided to change the wording of our sixth key message "Children must be school ready by five" to read "Children must be well prepared on school entry. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the debate.

Little's Lobby is keen to encourage a public dialogue and debate around its key messages, and is open to the prospect of refining these messages in response to differing points of view. We have a bulletin board on our website specifically designed for you to post your comments.

Visit www.littlieslobby.org.nz and select "bulletin" from the menu on the left.

Leah de Friez
Little's Lobby Coordinator

A 13 year old is jailed for murder. A 15 year old kicks a man to death. An 18 year old shoots a bank teller in cold blood. What do they have in common aside from the fact that they are remorseless, hateful, hurtful human beings ?

It may come as no surprise to know that they all had appalling childhoods. But more than that, the brains of each and every one of them has been 'wired' for violence.

This wiring happened some time during their first three years of life.

In the past two decades, there have been huge advances in our understanding of how the human brain develops.

Neuroscience tells us that experience is far more important than we ever believed possible. That our brains develop through an interplay with our genetic potential and our early experiences, as early as in-utero.

When we are born, our brain has a full compliment of neurons – however it is only 15 % 'connected' or 'wired'. Only the connections that allow for crying, sleeping, eating and basic survival are there.

The remaining 85 % of connections are physically triggered by a child's experience.

The child that is brought up in a chaotic, abusive and stressful environment will develop a brain that is 'wired' for a fight or flight response. They are on the look out for danger and are driven by their very basic need to survive. They are not able to concentrate and have a higher level of the hormone cortisol present in their system. This can be extremely damaging for the developing brain as it can shrink and damage vital brain structures.

Males may tend to become aggressive and lacking in concentration, on high alert. They have a higher blood pressure, metabolism and so may be thinner than other boys. They have difficulty learning and may become depressed and suicidal.

Females tend to turn inward on themselves, dissociating from the world. Their blood pressure may be very low. They may faint. They may become withdrawn and depressed and similarly suicidal.

Little's Lobby is proudly supported by:

One of the most important connections to form in the brain is triggered when a bond between mother and



Parliamentary Children's Caucus

The first Parliamentary Children's Caucus Breakfast was a great success. Over eighty people gathered in the Grand Hall of Parliament, with more than thirty Members of Parliament attending the event.

Guest speaker, principal Judge of the Youth Court, Andrew Becroft delivered a compelling speech on the importance of early intervention. The question was asked "how do we influence aggressive, impulsive, truanting, teenage boys (disproportionately Maori) in the grip of alcohol and/or drug addictions, and who have borderline personality disorders from dysfunctional families with anti social peers?" The answer posed was effective early intervention and the Little's Lobby raison d'être. Judge Becroft challenged all who attended and asked them "what will you do?"

TV One and TV3 were both present, Linda Clarke interviewed Judge Becroft on National Radio and the Dominion Post conducted an interview after the event. Visit the bulletin board on the www.littlieslobby.org.nz for Judge Becroft's speech notes.

Judge Becroft's Photo

Next Parliamentary Children's Caucus Breakfast

The seed has been planted for an effective cross party initiative in support of children and we look forward to the next event on July 2. Barbara Wellesley the National Director of Australia's Good Beginnings National Parenting Project will be the next guest speaker. Good beginnings aims to create a caring environment with families, communities, service agencies and governments working together so that children can have a good beginning.

Good Beginnings provides proven services to Australian families including those who are:

- ?? Isolated through economic, geographic, cultural circumstances or incarceration
- ?? Suffering from post-natal depression
- ?? Experiencing difficulties which may disadvantage their children
- ?? Seeking to improve and build on their parenting skills

Within a strong framework *Good Beginnings* will

- ?? Develop and recommend models which enable easy access to local resources for parents and their children and generate increased opportunities to make decisions which result in families being strong and healthy
- ?? Develop and recommend models whereby communities reinforce the efforts of families to raise responsible, productive, confident, joyous children and where neighbours watch out for each other regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, cultural or socio-economic differences
- ?? Facilitate the development of strong linkages between institutions that serve children and their families to ensure that all levels of government and community-based organisations make children, youth and their families a priority
- ?? Develop a network of *Good Beginnings* Programs
- ?? Encourage an ongoing commitment by the community for the community

Good beginnings also provides, volunteer and Professional home visiting, parenting programs and groups, prisoners & their families program which provides training for inmates about their role and responsibilities as parents and antenatal classes for both fathers and mothers. For More information visit www.goodbeginnings.net.au

Contacting the Little's Lobby

Leah de Friez - Little's Lobby Coordinator
Email leah.defriez@plunket.org.nz - FREE Phone 0800 4 LOBBY
Post - PO Box 5474 Wellington

Little's Lobby is proudly supported by:



Little's Lobby - Message for "Good Beginnings"

Thursday, June 05, 2003

In April this year, we held the inaugural breakfast meeting of the Parliamentary Children's Caucus in the Grand Hall of Parliament. This was a well-attended meeting that was co-hosted by M.P. Katherine Rich and myself.

Plunket has undertaken the role of providing secretariat support to a group of interested M.P.'s who want to work together to advocate for healthy children and families.

We heard a thought provoking and disconcerting address from Principal Youth Court Judge, Andrew Becroft on the impact in our society resulting from inadequate parenting skills and a lack of community support systems working together. He stressed the need for further development of inter-sectoral programmes and early intervention initiatives to reduce young person's offending. We call this an "all of government" approach and we need to inform our communities of the types of programmes that are being developed such as the "Circuit Breaker" programme in our electorate of Rotorua that focuses on the reduction of truancy.

This was an appropriate address for our first meeting and will inspire others to participate in a series of speakers that will target different themes throughout the year. This was a "good beginning" for a strategy that will allow us to champion the needs of children across all parties in any government policy and law making.

Little's Lobby is proudly supported by:



Posters

April saw the distribution of Little's Lobby posters members, Plunket clinics and Members of Parliament.

Responses have been overwhelmingly positive with requests for additional posters every day. The bright and colourful A3 poster containing the six key messages can be obtained free of charge by calling:

0800 4 LOBBY

or emailing the coordinator on leah.defriez@plunket.org.nz.

Umbrellas Available

The distinctive Little's Lobby children's umbrella is back in stock! The umbrella symbolises our commitment to the many and diverse organisations in New Zealand, who focus on the well-being of children.

Following our regional launches and first parliamentary Breakfast, we ran out of stock. They are now available again from the Little's Lobby Coordinator on:

0800 4 LOBBY.

Umbrellas cost just \$10 each + \$5 courier charge

Champion Centre Article