

Child Poverty Action Group (NZ) Inc Media Release, Oct 23 2006.



WELCOME EVIDENCE OF MANUKAU FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMME'S ECONOMIC & EDUCATIONAL VALUE.

Child Poverty Action Group applauds City of Manukau Education Trust (COMET)'s success in establishing the Manukau Family Literacy Programme and demonstrating its value so unequivocally.

"This innovative family learning project has been remarkably successful and we hope they are able to continue their excellent work", says CPAG spokeswoman, Janfrie Wakim.

"Education is acknowledged as the most reliable route to personal and economic freedom, but too many young New Zealanders do not attain their potential within the current system. This programme provides a model for enhancing the life chances of both children and their parents", she stated.

MLFP provides an environment where parents can nurture their pre-schoolers while giving them a chance to pursue their own learning, an opportunity many have not previously had.

The programme been shown to be highly effective. Of the 85 families involved 70% of the adults took up further tertiary study and their children's learning also improved. The programme has also shown increased participation in early childhood education, increased school leaver qualifications and improved the literacy skills of the adults who participated.

A PriceWaterhouseCoopers report on the programme has shown that MFLP generates nearly \$10 worth of benefits for every dollar spent. While substantial investment is required, the costs to the individual and the nation of poor early childhood development are far greater.

According to CPAG policy analyst Donna Wynd, this 'investment model' of education needs to be more widely available. "This programme has huge social and economic benefits for communities, particularly disadvantaged communities. It has had a positive effect on the participants, and is flexible enough to be adapted to local needs.

It is a real shame that when the commitment is so demanding and benefits are so obvious, participants do not qualify for financial support such as the In Work Payment. Such exclusion is an example of how counter-productive the Working for Families package can be for families in low income communities."

"By 2050 recent projections indicate that 57% of all New Zealand children will be of Maori or Pacific Island descent. These young people will be the workforce of the future and our social and economic prosperity will depend on them in large measure. So it is in everyone's interests to ensure that they, and their families, acquire the skills essential to participate in our community."

CPAG applauds the endeavours of the many dedicated people involved in the programme and fully supports COMET's efforts to secure the modest funding required for another 100 families to benefit from the scheme.

For more information: see COMET website www.comet.org.nz or one of their press releases obtainable from <http://www.cpag.org.nz/news/cpag-news/nr1161670137.pdf>