



## **SOCIAL POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER**

In October 2009 For the Sake of Our Children Trust hosted three collaborative meetings with leadership representation from over 18 organisations from the community, health, education, government and business sectors.

These individuals recognised the need to initiate dialogue with key leaders across the community and felt it important to hear views on the state of our families and the wellbeing of our children in New Zealand.

The general consensus across all three meetings was the need for New Zealanders to:

- ❖ *Uphold the family unit; married mother and father raising their children*
- ❖ *Review and overhaul many of the failed social policy initiatives that have simply not been effective for families and children.*
- ❖ *Build stronger partnerships between central government, local government and communities; and*
- ❖ *Continue to work collaboratively towards leaving a positive legacy for our children.*

Our dialogue brought about an in-depth discussion on our collective hope of leaving a safe and great legacy for our children. It was concluded there needed to be a strong family unit of a mother, father and a loving environment necessary to a child's development and learning.

It was agreed that extra emphasis needs to be given to the Maori and Pacific communities. These communities remain over represented in many adverse social areas; overcrowded housing, student truancy, high crime rates, and welfare dependency, resulting in many children being raised in highly unsatisfactory environments.

### **Aspirational Statements on: Marriage, Family, Parenting and Government**

Below the group collaboratively discussed the Aspirational statements to what would be the best ideal situation for our children and the future legacy we hope to leave them. Without placing judgement on other family models that exist, this is what was agreed upon being the best for our children.

**Parenting**– As research points to a significant improved prospect for married couples;

- ❖ To nurture and provide a safe environment and economic stability and,
- ❖ To provide the opportunities for a child to grow up to be a good citizen;
- ❖ Parents ideally should commit to each other in marriage and commit to their responsibilities when raising a child.

The general consensus discussed and agreed upon regarding the obligation and responsibility of parents to their children is

*“The primary obligation and responsibility of the Parents is to RAISE the child.  
However, this responsibility should not be in isolation but should come with the support of the community and, to some extent, the Government.*”

**Family**– The common suggestion that came from the groups of leaders is the need for the family unit to be one that is solid and clearly defined.

*“A strong family unit to raise a child should ideally consist of a married father and a mother who will do everything they can do to raise, protect and love their children”*

#### **Government/Local Government**

*“We recognise the need and civic responsibility between the government, local government, local communities and the extended families to support the family unit – married parents and the child/children”.*

#### **What can you do?**

The intention of this discussion paper is to encourage you to provide feedback and indicate your support for the policy recommendations listed and together we can advocate change within our local, central Government and communities.

Your opinion is important as we push towards seeing improvements to social policies supporting children, families, and the value of marriage. Please join us in being a ‘voice for the voiceless.’ If you have any suggestions, we would like to hear from you. Enclosed is a self-address envelope to make it easier for you to respond back to us. Alternatively, you can email Rachel Afeaki on [rachel@forourchildren.org.nz](mailto:rachel@forourchildren.org.nz)

If you require any further information please contact our office.



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Name:  
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**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

*Please join us in being a 'voice for the voiceless.' If you have any suggestions, we would like to hear from you.*

<p><b><u>Marriage &amp; Family</u></b></p> <p>❖ It is the role of Government to place in policy a clear and accurate definition of 'Family'. Following consultation with the community the ideal BEST definition for the wellbeing of a child is a married mother and father together raising their children. The definition of family should not be one that is perceived as alienating and judgemental. It simply should be what is best for our children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Marriage Policy – Encouraging commitment and building strong marriages.</li> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Building Strong Families Policy Supporting the family unit – a married mother and father raising children.</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <p>Non Support</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Non Support</p>
<p>Your comments:</p>		

<p><b><u>Marriage &amp; Family</u></b></p> <p>❖ When a society allows its government to bring in policies that undermine marriage and the solid commitment to family that goes with it, then one way or another the children are going to suffer. The Government must begin to develop policies that affirm marriage and the solid commitment to the Family unit highlighting its social and economic benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Marriage and Family Definition Policy- Consistent and Clear definitions of Marriage and the NZ Family that is best and ideal for our children.</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <p>Non Support</p>
<p>Your comments:</p>		

<p><b><u>Family Responsibility</u></b></p> <p>❖ The Government must recognise it is the role of parents who have the primary responsibility to raise and be responsible for the actions of their children. The Government must ensure its policies indicate support towards the primary role of parents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Defining the primary role and responsibility of Parents towards their children with the support of Government.</li> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Investigate the benefits of shared parenting so that both mothers and fathers remain part of a child's life.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Support</i></p> <p><i>Non Support</i></p> <p><i>Support</i></p> <p><i>Non Support</i></p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>		

<p><b><u>Government / Local Government Role</u></b></p> <p>❖ The Government needs to develop policies that acknowledge the factors that are causing harm and are unsafe to our children and families and comparatively examine where safe children who are unharmed come from- research will indicate the latter group are more likely to come from intact married families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Develop Policies based on strong supporting evidence indicating factors and environments that cause harm and are unsafe to our children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Support</i></p> <p><i>Non Support</i></p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>		

<p><b><u>Government / Local Government Role</u></b></p> <p>❖ A standard procedure that after a set period of time, existing laws and social policies should be subjected to an appraisal process which examines firstly whether the law is achieving its stated objectives, it's impact is on all of the groups that may be affected by the law, and finally whether the behavioural changes that have been evoked by the law are positive ones. If the result of the appraisal shows that the negative unintended consequences are greater than envisioned, then the law should be repealed or amended.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Appraisal process over a set period of time for policies effecting families and children</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <p>Non Support</p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>		

<p><b><u>Government / Local Government Role</u></b></p> <p>❖ The Government must allow for available funding to assist Parenting organisations to deliver parenting and family education programmes targeting intermediate schools (11yrs-12yrs) and the first years of secondary school (13yrs-15yrs) to provide a 'real-life' picture of the realities of parenting and raising a family is a valid option. Preventative strategies are required to minimise the number of broken families, single parents, and unwanted births in New Zealand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Compulsory parenting education in appropriate school levels to further raise the awareness of strong families and safer children.</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <p>Non Support</p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>		

<p><b><u>Research</u></b></p> <p>❖ Accessible funding from Government to be made available for NGOs and organisations who wish to conduct further research to investigate the existing evidence indicating significantly better outcomes for children where parents are married. With such research concerning Marriage, for Government to provide support to the findings and look to include it in developing social policies. An aspirational NORM, where we all agree, recognise and understand the ideal BEST environment for child wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Policy Recommendation:</b> Policy Development to be based on strong empirical evidence promoting strong families, encouraging marriage and highlighting the best environment to raise children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Support</i></p> <p><i>Non Support</i></p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>		

<p><b><u>Research</u></b></p> <p>The Government needs to look for better ways to support NGOs and organisations already at the coalface – organisations that are already providing effective solutions and building stronger families and communities. There needs to be a balance of dialogue between central and local government and all sectors of the community.</p> <p><i>Support or Non Support</i></p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>

<p><b><u>Research</u></b></p> <p>Transparency and accountability is necessary and action needs to follow recommendations. All actions need to work towards the goal of ensuring, first and foremost, that children in NZ are born into safe, strength-based environments, and that parents are supported and equipped to raise champions.</p> <p><i>Support or Non Support</i></p>
<p><i>Your comments:</i></p>