

BEST START

HIGHLIGHTS

- Best Start Payment of up to \$60 for children under the age of 3.
- 25 hours free ECE, up from 20.
- 26 weeks of Paid Parental Leave, in line with Sue Moroney's Member's Bill.
- More support for expectant parents.

Through our Best Start package, Labour is standing with New Zealand parents to deliver the best start in life for all New Zealand children.

Everybody's life and family is unique. This package alone won't solve every problem, but it is a big step towards making sure every Kiwi kid has the opportunities they deserve.

Future packages will support this approach with better education, healthcare, housing and job opportunities.

BEST START PAYMENT

- **\$60 per week for a baby's first year of life**, universal for all families earning under \$150,000 per year.
- **Up to \$60 per week between the child's first and third birthdays**, targeted at modest and middle income families.
- The first year payment will go to around 59,000 households, covering almost 95 percent of children under one year of age.
- The one and two year old payment will go to around 63,000 families, covering 56 percent of all one and two year olds.
- The Best Start Payment provides desperately needed support to the estimated 50,000 children under three who are currently living in poverty.
- The Best Start Payment will benefit all New Zealand children born after 1 April 2016.

THE ISSUE

These are tough times for working New Zealanders.

Unemployment remains stubbornly high, even five years after the Global Financial Crisis. Wages are not keeping up with costs. More than ever, families are struggling to make ends meet.

Things are particularly challenging for families with children. Couples with children are 80 percent more likely than those without to report that their income isn't meeting their everyday needs.

New Zealand families are finding it harder than ever to give their kids the best start.

A Labour Government will stand with New Zealand parents, because the future of our next generation depends on it.

The Children's Commissioner Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty found that "there is overwhelming evidence that the early years of a child's life matter most for their future life course."

Kids who get what they need to start life well are more likely to do well in school, more likely to move New Zealand ahead in decades to come, and less likely to live in poverty or have run-ins with the law.

Further information is available at:
labour.org.nz/beststart

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Labour
labour.org.nz

BOOST FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- **Labour will introduce 25 hours of Free Early Childhood Education** for New Zealand's three, four and five year old children, an increase from 20 hours.
- The policy will save all families with a three, four or five year old in ECE full-time or nearly full-time around \$25 each week.
- Labour will extend the policy of Free Early Childhood Education for the most vulnerable children earlier than three years of age.
- Labour will restore over time National's funding for highly qualified ECE centres. We will work with the sector to reinstate the policy of 100 percent qualified staff in all teacher-led services.
- We will build more ECE centres in high-need areas so there are enough places for kids who need them.

PAID PARENTAL LEAVE

- **Labour will introduce 26 weeks of Paid Parental Leave**, an increase from the current 14 weeks, in line with Sue Moroney's Member's Bill.
- This will provide around 26,000 families a year extra time with their new-born babies.
- The policy will be phased in over three years: 22 weeks from July 2015 and 26 weeks in July 2017.

SUPPORTING EXPECTANT PARENTS

- **Labour will ensure all women have access to free antenatal classes**, with a focus on first time mums and those who would benefit from them the most.

- Antenatal assessment will be available to all women by 10 weeks' gestation, and we will set targets for District Health Boards to deliver on this.
- New mums' programmes will be available nationwide, targeted at parents who need the most help to give their babies the best start in life
- Well Child/Tamariki Ora visits will be extended so that our families in the most need get extra support before baby even arrives
- Labour will assist families to get the help they need by registering new mums with GPs, Well Child/Tamariki Ora provider, the immunisation register, and a dental health provider.
- The fiscal impact of the Best Start package is estimated at \$530 million in 2018/19, the first year of full implementation.

IMPACT

Labour's Best Start package will give 26,000 families more time with their babies, provide up to \$60 a week extra for over 100,000 children mainly in modest and middle income families, and give many families with a child in ECE \$25 each week.

Every child under the age of 3 who is living in poverty will qualify for the full \$60 per week Best Start Payment.

Combined, the Best Start package is an important step towards making sure every child in New Zealand is born into an environment of opportunity. New Zealand children deserve nothing less.