

Response to Autism NZ

- **Under your party, when will ALL teachers be trained in special needs education as part of their training?**

Labour believes that all trainee teachers should be trained in special needs education. This was recognised in the recent Special Education Review and we would like to see those recommendations adopted as soon as possible. The creation of a more inclusive and accessible education system that supports schools to provide students and parents access to quality services is a vitally important process. Additional funding is needed in order to provide the necessary support for improvements in leadership and professional development.

- **ASD children seem to miss out on funding in both education and health as their needs are not as visible as some others. When will this change?**

Labour appreciates that the Ministry of Health criteria for disability support services can result in the exclusion of some ASD children. Reviewing the definition of disability that dictates the eligibility for government support – which currently excludes people with autism – would go part way to resolving the situation. We believe it is an investment in the future well-being of people with autism and their families and carers.

- **What supports are politicians going to put in place for adults with ASD?**

Issues facing the autistic community are complex and sit across the jurisdiction of multiple MPs and multiple portfolio areas. Labour is committed to working with all parties to ensure there are better tools for policy development. We need to address the current challenges and future prospects for people living with autism in New Zealand.

- **How will your party ensure and maintain the rights of all disabled people (including people with ASD) in the current recessionary environment?**

The rights of disabled people are human rights and should be upheld regardless of the economic circumstances facing the country. Funding cuts have prompted a much larger and more urgent discussion on the way New Zealand caters to and supports people living with ASD. The Government needs to address the true costs of disability as the current situation is complex and confusing. A more accessible method for enabling disabled people and their families/whanau to know where to go for financial assistance and access remuneration for the costs of disability is needed.

Organisations such as Autism New Zealand do a great job in supporting families and autistic children to cope and achieve their potential. While they know that the overall economic situation is tight, it is simply impossible for them to continue to absorb the funding cuts of the last couple of years.

- **Please feel free to outline any other policies relevant to people with ASD and their families**

New Zealand has a reputation as a world leader in in this field, with the development of the 2008 New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidelines, on the back of the 2001 New Zealand Disability Strategy, but funding constraints threaten this progress.

Labour will work inclusively with disabled people, in partnership to support their efforts to have the best and fullest lives they can. Labour will involve and resource people with disabilities and

impairments to participate in decision-making and will enable their voices to be heard and their needs to be considered and met.