

## **Beehive Chat 18 August 2008**

### **Parenting: In Need of some Brand Refreshment?**

#### **Hon Tariana Turia, MP for Te Tai Hauauru**

The wild speculation around how many millions the Department of Conservation was intending to spend on its 'brand refreshment' got me thinking. Perhaps this nation could invest in 'brand refreshment' about the role of parenting.

Shock research revealed last week that in a study of approximately 3000 women in Auckland and rural Waikato, 22% of the Maori women studied had suffered violence during pregnancy. The research also showed that domestic violence was linked with higher rates of abortions and miscarriages.

I was raised to know that every child was regarded as the prized treasure of our whanau. They are the living face of your ancestors – to raise a hand to them, therefore, is to raise a hand to your tupuna.

If the child is our most precious treasure, then those that care for te ira tangata, the life principle, must also be nurtured, including respecting the sacredness of every pregnant woman.

It was, therefore, disappointing last week to learn of the National Party's proposal that people on the domestic purposes benefit should spend at least 15 hours a week in paid work. The fundamental flaw in Mr Key's plan is that it assumes that the most important thing any parent can do for a family is to get a job.

That's all very well of course if there is work available that neatly fits between the hours of 9 and 3, and allows leave for school holidays, teacher only days, public holidays, the times when children are ill and so on.

It is against the law to leave children under 14 unsupervised. So single parents will have the challenge of who is going to look after the children before and after school, are there affordable after-school programmes, are they providing quality supervision?

The thing is, parenting is hard work, it is extremely demanding, and particularly so on your own. Schools and sporting activities require more and more of parents, the thriving commercialism of our marketplace places new pressures upon parents, let alone all the other impacts of popular culture that prey on children.

There are of course many issues in this debate. I believe that investing in these beneficiaries to undertake tertiary study will benefit their whanau for ever rather than low paid work. I am also of the view, that if the unemployed were able to participate in properly paid work on a minimum wage of at least \$15 an hour, there would be far greater interest.

The Māori Party believes that we must be careful to avoid promoting the perception that paid work has more value than parenting. We must stop penalizing those parents who want to stay at home. I wonder, what sort of community would we create, if we rewarded parents who spend quality time with their children?