

*For oral presentation to the Hastings/Havelock NZEI meeting 17 September 2008*

## **Quentin Duthie, Green candidate for Tukituki**

### Introduction

I apologise for being unable to join you this afternoon. I currently work in Parliament advising the six hard-working Green Party MPs. One of the things I am doing today is working on next steps for environmental education for the Greens' education spokesperson Metiria Turei. So, while I may not be present in person, I am in spirit!

Thank you to whoever has the job of reading this speech. If you get a tomato lobbed at you, just think of how yummy tomatoes are in a Green salad! And if you are tempted to vary from the script, please don't make promises we can't keep – we may just be part of the next Government!

More seriously, let me begin with some general policies and principles before addressing funding, pay and early childhood issues. For detailed information, please visit the Greens' website where, unlike some other parties, you will easily find our very detailed policies. My contact details are there also if you have questions after this meeting.

### Green education policy

The Green Party believes in a free education system that fosters participation, sustainability, equality and peace. We will strive to fund and support learning environments and a curriculum that fosters these values, and fund and support teaching to meet a high-quality standard.

The Greens will support local and rural schools threatened with closure; ensure maximum class sizes of no greater than 20 children; and increase teacher-child ratios in early childhood services. We will continue to oppose the bulk funding of teacher and support staff salaries.

We place an emphasis on improving special needs education; we will pursue effective ESOL programmes for all migrant children in state schools; and we will

improve resources for community-based 'not for profit' early childhood services, including playcentre, kohanga reo, and Pacific Island language nests.

In honouring our Treaty commitments, we will provide more funding for Maori language, immersion and bilingual programmes; and work towards te reo and tikanga Maori being available to all learners.

We also think wider on education: we want better and safer transport to rural schools; we have led the repeal of the section of the Crimes Act that sanctioned child abuse; and we will stop the sale of junk food on school property.

It will be of no surprise that we will incorporate education for sustainability into the core curriculum at all levels. There's nothing like children getting their hands dirty in the worm-farm, except if you have to clean them up!

We also recognise the immense value of parental engagement in education, both formal and informal. I recommend a read of our new Children's Policy available on our website for more on how we will support parents as well as children directly.

For a sustainable and supportive education system, Party Vote Green.

### School Funding

The Green Party commits to increase education funding, NOT cut it. Our proposed income tax cuts (focused on the lowest tax band) will be cancelled out by the introduction of environmental and capital gains taxes, so there will be no net reduction in government revenue. We will increase funding to public education, because our schools are under-funded.

Our priority action will be to immediately increase the Operations Grant by 10%, then progressively increase that funding until it meets the needs of students. We will also increase the ring-fenced funding for children with special needs, including children with specific learning difficulties, children with other disabilities and children with behavioural problems.

We support public ownership of schools, and do not see any advantages to public-private partnerships. Provision of education should be on the basis of co-operation,

not competition. Corporations are understandably keen on sponsorships which allow them to bypass parents and market their brands directly to children in schools, and it is precisely for that reason that we do not want to see schools relying on teaching material supplied by the private sector.

### Access to quality early childhood education

We support 20 hours free early childhood education, and will extend it to include Playcentres and Kohanga Reo. We want to see early childhood education returned to community not-for-profit centres. To do this we propose a moratorium on extending the 20 hours free to further profit-driven private centres. We don't think corporations should be profiting from our children's early years in education. We oppose the expansion of the for-profit sector in early childhood education, because the combination of public funding and private provision leads to inefficiencies.

Many children are currently missing out on early childhood education, and we support increasing the number of publicly-owned early childhood education centres to the point where there will be enough capacity in the sector for all 3 and 4 year-olds to attend.

### Teacher and Support-staff pay

The Green Party supports pay parity for early childhood, primary and secondary educators.

The Green Party rejects performance pay for teachers. In an area as complex as teaching, performance pay has the potential to encourage teachers to focus their efforts on the particular areas that the performance measure is capable of measuring, to the detriment of those areas that are not capable of being measured. Additionally, performance pay in the United States has led to teachers falsifying test results.

Last, the Greens support NZEI's call for core support staff positions to be funded centrally rather than through the operations grant.

### Conclusion

The Greens have achieved much, including in the education area, with just six MPs in this Parliament.

We are proud to have boosted Education for Sustainability by \$13 million in 2006. This funding is for four years, so we will need Greens in the next Parliament to ensure it at least continues, but hopefully expands.

You may have detected Green Party fingerprints in the new secondary-school curriculum, getting sustainability moved more prominent, and the Treaty of Waitangi reinstated.

The Greens recognize the power of education: that the long-term future sustainability of our society, economy and environment is in the hands of our children. That is why we have prioritised environmental education. It is no coincidence that our election hoardings feature children, thinking and playing, and say: “Vote for me” and “Vote for us”. Children represent the hope for a sustainable and fair future. The Green Party represents that future, and represents children.

We also recognise that the ability of our children to have a sustainable future is in our hands today. If the world we leave them is trashed, and if we do not adequately equip them for the future, then their future is bleak. The contemporary realities of climate change, the end of cheap oil, the pollution of our rivers, declining biodiversity, unaffordable unsafe and unhealthy food, and the continuation of child poverty in New Zealand – these are our issues, today, and the responsibility to address them is also ours. That’s what the Greens will do.

As a friend said to me this week: “If you think telling your kids there's no Santa is hard, try telling them there's no North Pole”.

**For a future worth teaching for, Party Vote Green.**