



Youth

Young people are the future of New Zealand. It is important they are able to learn the skills and knowledge they will need to thrive in the modern world. They need employment opportunities that will enable them to take control of their lives and set themselves up for success.

We need to ensure clear pathways through education, on-the-job training and employment so young Kiwis have the best possible start to their careers. We know this recession will hit our young people particularly hard, so it is vital we implement policies that will grow the economy and generate jobs. Sustained unemployment at a young age can have damaging long-term effects, so National will focus on getting young people into education, training or employment.

We also need to ensure our young people have the mental health support they need as they make the often challenging transition into adulthood.

Policy highlights

National will:

- National will invest in programs initiatives to ensure young New Zealanders are in training or employment.
- Target Government assistance, using the social investment approach, to assist young New Zealanders with the transition into adulthood.
- Increase the support available for tertiary students to be able to complete their studies in an economic environment where fewer part time jobs are on offer.
- Implement mental health and resilience training in primary and secondary schools.

Getting young people into training and employment

There has already been a significant increase in the number of young people applying for a benefit, and with unemployment forecast to surge in 2021, this will only get worse. Sadly, if a New Zealander finds themselves on a benefit before the age of 20 they will spend, on average, another 13 years on welfare. National has a proven track record of reducing youth unemployment. In Government we reduced youth unemployment from 18% in 2012 to under 13% when we left office in 2017. We believe it is vital to invest in our young people to avoid the long term social and fiscal costs a tail of unemployed youth would impose on New Zealand.

National will:

- Create specialist Under 25 Job Coaches at WINZ offices, who will work with young adults who find themselves on JobSeeker Support to develop a personalised, intensive 'Path to Work' plan that supports their journey back into employment.
- Offer ongoing support from the Under 25 Job Coaches for young people who transition off JobSeeker into employment to help resolve pastoral care issues.
- Provide targeted support to young people who would otherwise struggle to get their drivers licence.
- Extend He Poutama Rangatahi – Youth Employment Pathways, into more regions to move young people who are not in employment, education or training into work.



Investing for better social outcomes

The last National Government introduced the pioneering social investment approach. This sees the Government invest in initiatives and programs with an evidence-basis for improving life outcomes. In Budget 2017, for example, National funded 14 initiatives in a \$321 million Social Investment package where the most significant area of funding was \$100 million for a Mental Health Social Investment Fund to trial new, innovative approaches to those battling mental health and addiction issues. Not only does this benefit the individuals who receive the investment, it helps alleviate the long-term social and fiscal costs to New Zealand. The social investment approach will drive the decisions of the next National Government and youth will benefit significantly from social investment.

National will:

- Set targets to ensure cross-agency work focusses on reducing the number of people receiving benefits, and reducing the number of children in benefit-dependent homes.
- Extend money management to all beneficiaries under the age of 20, and to those up to the age of 25 who don't fulfil their obligations.
- Establish a wraparound service for parents under 20 to increase the number who achieve NCEA, and the number who go on to complete post-secondary study.
- Maintain the First Home Grant we established in Government to assist youth to get on the property ladder and buy their first home.

Improving the mental wellbeing of young Kiwis

The number of Kiwis with mental illness is growing across all age groups, but it is growing fastest among young New Zealanders. Most children have their own phone or access to digital communications and there is growing concern about cyberbullying. Bullying has always been there but now it is hard to

escape. Cyberbullying can happen anytime, anywhere. The nature of technology means it can be seen by a wide audience and is permanent.

Students who are taught resilience and specific techniques for managing stress and anxiety report their mental health improves. National believes resilience training will make sure Kiwi kids have the best chance in life and will improve their mental wellbeing. Undertaking resilience training while young can also help stave off lifelong mental health problems. Of those with lifelong mental health issues, 50 per cent have symptoms before the age of 14 and 75 per cent before the age of 24.

National will:

- Require schools to deliver a skills based mental health and resilience training program from years 1 to 13 to promote mental wellbeing with a focus on cyberbullying and how to build cyber resilience.

Preparing our young people for the future

The jobs of the future will require more graduates with expertise in subjects such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Through targeted investments in our tertiary education system, we will deliver the skills and knowledge needed for the high-growth sectors of the future to achieve their potential and help us grow our way out of this economic crisis. This will mean more young Kiwis in high-paying, future-proofed jobs.

National will:

- Establish 1000 tertiary scholarships per year targeted at students from low decile schools to undertake STEM degrees.
- Restore funding to ICT Graduate Schools to lift the number of skilled graduates available to technology firms and deepen business connections with the University sector.



- Maintain funding for Māori and Pasifika Trades Training (MPTT) to increase access for Māori and Pasifika learners to vocational and pre-employment training.

Supporting students

The recession coupled with the loss of international tourists will hit sectors like hospitality and retail particularly hard. Students have traditionally relied on these sectors to support themselves while studying. With part-time work drying up over the next year in the short-term, while some students are supported by their families, this will not be the case for everyone. National will provide targeted assistance to ensure students facing real financial hardship can continue with their studies:

National will:

- Double funding to the student hardship fund for the next year to support those students most affected by the economic impacts of the recession.
- Establish a pilot fund to improve pastoral care and support for first year tertiary students to support completion rates, as we know that students who finish their first year are considerably more likely to complete their qualifications.
- Investigate a Young Persons Card to enable youth to access discounted public and private services.