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CPAG Press Release

www.cpag.org.nz

3rd April, 2007

PRESS RELEASE: Child Poverty Action Group urges support for legislation to curb serious assaults on children

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) joins with other organisations concerned with protecting children in fully supporting the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Bill.

Passage of the Bill will have the vital effect of removing a provision in law which for far too long has been used as a defence by people who seriously assault their children, the group says. CPAG endorses the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which states that all children have the right to a violence-free environment - a right which adults already enjoy.

"International research demonstrates the significance of deaths and serious injuries to children in the context of parents administering physical punishment," says spokesperson Assoc-Prof Mike O'Brien. New Zealand has one of the highest rates of child-deaths at the hands of parents and caregivers in the OECD countries.

"Child death from maltreatment occurs predominantly in the context of poverty," O'Brien says, noting recent headlines have highlighted disturbing levels of hardship among families with children. However he emphasises that violence inflicted on children is not uniquely characteristic of families in poverty but occurs across the social spectrum.

CPAG urges public support for the development of a legal system which protects children from all forms of violence. But to make a real difference for children, this must be accompanied by the development of social provision which protects children from poverty.

Like the consequences of physical assaults, the effects of poverty can last a

lifetime.

CPAG supports this legislation because it will ensure that

- all children have legal protection from the worst excesses of adult violence
- New Zealand does not remain in breach of international human rights obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention against Torture
- there is congruence with the principles and/or provisions of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989, the Domestic Violence Act 1995, and the Care of Children Act 2004. Currently these laws do not fully protect children from parental assault because of Section 59.

Additional resources:

Last year CPAG wrote a short submission on the Bill in a previous incarnation:

28 Feb 2006

CPAG argues in this submission that Section 59 of the Crimes Act currently provides an unacceptable defence for parents who assault their children.

However we recommend the following websites for more in-depth investigation of the issues:

Action for Children and Youth
Children's Commissioner
EPOCH
Every Child Counts
UNICEF
SAVE THE CHILDREN
Paediatric Society of NZ
and

www.acya.org.nz
www.occ.org.nz
www.epochnz.org.nz
www.everychildcounts.org.nz
www.unicef.org.nz
www.savethechildren.org.nz
www.paediatrics.org.nz
www.repealsection59.org.nz

Papers:

- *Children at increased risk of death from maltreatment and strategies for prevention*, Ministry of Social Development, 2006
- http://aysps.gsu.edu/publications/2006/downloads/CurrieTeKin_ChildAbuse.pdf

