



MEDIA RELEASE
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Success Rate Shows Need for CYF Complaints Authority

Family First NZ says that figures provided by the Ministry of Social Development under the *Official Information Act* show that the recently established CYF Complaints Authority has upheld a majority of the complaints that they have considered.

Since the Authority was established in July 2008, just eleven complaints have made it to the Authority and of those, two have been upheld and five upheld in part. Only one case was found in favour of CYF. Three have decisions pending. Of concern is that 17 complaints were referred back to CYF to handle, and 12 complaints are yet to be dealt with – despite the potential urgency and ongoing effect that it may be having on the families concerned.

“The success rate of these complaints backs up our call for a complaints system but there is still an urgent need for a totally independent Complaints Authority,” says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

“An independent CYF Complaints Authority is in the best interests of the social workers,” says Mr McCoskrie, “as it will provide an independent body to ensure that appropriate policy and procedures have been followed. This will result in public confidence and accountability for actions and decisions by CYF workers.”

“Family First is being regularly contacted by families who claim to have been unfairly treated by CYF social workers - yet they have no independent body to appeal to. Their only option is either a costly court process where CYF have an unlimited pool of resources to defend its actions, courtesy of the taxpayer, or trying to get in front of the CYF Panel.”

“This is grossly unfair when families are being ripped apart, often just based on the subjective judgment of a social worker. The recent response to the *CYFSWatch* website shows just how deep-seated the concern is.”

“There is a Health and Disability Commissioner, a Police Complaints Authority, even a Motor Vehicle Disputes Tribunal. We desperately need an independent body to hear complaints about the highly sensitive nature of intervening in families.”

“The Advisory Panel has the inherent flaw of not being independent, and the Chief Executive still has the final decision as to the success of the complaint. The Panel can only make recommendations. This is inappropriate.”

Family First calls on all MP's, the majority who will have received anecdotal evidence of claims of unfair treatment by CYF, to support the urgent establishment of an independent CYF Complaint Authority.

ENDS

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