



MEDIA RELEASE

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‘Honest’ Report on Child Abuse Welcomed

REPORT LABELLED AS ‘POLITICALLY INCORRECT’

Family First NZ is welcoming a report from the Children’s Commissioner on child abuse released today, and says that it backs the call for a Royal Commission on child abuse.

“The report entitled *‘Death and serious injury from assault of children aged under 5 years in Aotearoa New Zealand: A review of international literature and recent findings’* makes an honest assessment of the real causes of child abuse and reinforces the findings of previous UNICEF and CYF reports that we have quoted,” says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

“The anti-smacking law was a smoke screen for dealing with the real, and much harder to deal with, causes of child abuse. It has meant that ‘normal’ families have been targeted because they’re easier to deal with, rather than the dysfunctional non-compliant families who need support and possibly intervention. This report identifies those causes and is so honest that it could almost be labeled politically incorrect.”

Risk factors for child abuse in the report included:

- ethnicity (including the high rate of abuse amongst Maori)
- drug and alcohol abuse
- mental illness
- unsupported young mothers with little or no antenatal care
- presence of a non-biological parent
- family breakdown, severe conflict and ongoing domestic violence
- poverty, instability and unemployment

“The report also identifies that families are often brought to the attention of CYF and other agencies on repeat occasions and that this should sound ‘alarm bells’. It also calls for a multi-agency approach which Family First has consistently supported.”

“While it acknowledges that home visitation programmes may reduce the likelihood of future maltreatment, their effectiveness depends on the relationship between the worker and the family. Unfortunately we have created an ‘adversarial’ approach which immediately puts families under suspicion and therefore on the defensive.”

“It is also significant that some of the research quoted comes from countries which have smacking bans. Once again, it reiterates that smacking bans simply don’t affect child abuse rates,” says Mr McCoskrie.

“At last we are getting down to the nitty-gritty of the causes of child abuse and our unacceptable child abuse death rate.

Report: http://www.occ.org.nz/data/assets/pdf_file/0018/6345/OCC_Deathand_seriousinjury2009_040609.pdf

What we've been saying for 3 years: www.stoptheabuse.org.nz

ENDS

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