



MEDIA RELEASE

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Police 'Taxi Service' for Truant Sets Dangerous Precedent

Family First NZ says that a dangerous precedent is being set by the police by taxiing a truanting 14 year old to school every morning, and fails to deal with the underlying problems.

"The causes of truancy are predominantly a lack of parental supervision or a breakdown in the functioning of the family to the point that the parent has no control over the actions of the child," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

"In this case, reported from Christchurch and under a new scheme called Rock On, the police are simply fulfilling the role of the parent and are providing a short term solution to a potentially longer term problem."

"The problem, which is becoming more common, is that a student is being left to fend for themselves – in this case from 6.15 in the morning. Schools are already expressing concerns that children are being dropped off at schools earlier and earlier."

30,000 students are absent without leave every week in NZ, and the truancy rate has increased 41% since 2002.

"Research is quite clear that parental supervision needs to be in place at key times of the day, including before and straight after school, to ensure that the child doesn't become at-risk."

"Unfortunately, the expectation on both parents to work, economic pressures on families, and the hours that parents work, means that children and teenagers are more likely to be unsupervised at key times," says Mr McCoskrie. "Shift work can also mean that mum and dad are at home at completely separate times for their kids."

"It is time we expected and enabled parents to fulfil their important and essential role of supervising their children rather than trying to put 'rescue nets' and programmes in place which simply mask the problem."

"But this will mean a huge 'mind-shift' in terms of respecting the role of parents and supporting that role."

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For More Information and Media Interviews, contact Family First:

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