



MEDIA RELEASE

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Families Still At Risk Under ‘Three Strikes’

Family First NZ and Sensible Sentencing Trust both say that opposition to the Three Strikes legislation is misguided and misleading, but that even the amended legislation still puts families at risk.

“In our submissions to the Select Committee on the amended bill which we support in principle, both groups highlighted a number of shortcomings that still exist,” says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

“The worst aspect of the amendment is young offenders do not receive any warnings by way of a ‘strike’ for violent offending. This means that offenders such as Bailey Kuariki Jr, and Kerikeri teenager Hermanus Kriel who was convicted last month for the murder of Liberty Templeman, receive no warnings because of their age. Yet statistics show that almost half of serious youth offenders are repeat offenders.”

“If we allow a young person to become a career criminal at an early age, we simply victimise both the young person and families in our community.”

“We also argued that a ‘qualifying offence’ should be expanded to include aggravated assaults and the manufacture and/or sale of ‘P’ (methamphetamine). The recent spate of attacks on police officers shows that aggravated assaults are simply a variation of other violent offences, and the harmful effect and the resulting violence that we see exhibited by users of P means we must do much more to stem the growth of this industry.”

Family First also argued that the ‘second strike’ should have a mandatory sentence of imprisonment determined by the court. A qualifying offence is a serious violent offence in the first place, and an important aspect of protecting the community is to isolate violent offenders from the rest of society for a period of time. Sensible Sentencing Trust have also argued that previous history should be taken into account.

“Opposition to the legislation by the anti-prison lobby groups fails to acknowledge that this law will allow police, prosecutors and judges to intervene early enough to save and protect victims of crime instead of waiting for a violent offender to victimize yet another family member. There is also discretion when it would be ‘manifestly unjust’ to apply the law without qualification – a fact conveniently ignored by opponents of the legislation,” says Garth McVicar of the Sensible Sentencing Trust. “The ideology promoted by opponents of this legislation is a major contributing factor to NZ’s escalating violent crime rate.”

“The Three Strikes law will also reinforce the *“Its Not OK”* message by taking victimisations seriously. A slap on the wrist for violence undermines our efforts to reduce tolerance for violence and the career choice of repeat violent offenders,” says Mr McCoskrie.

ENDS

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