



MEDIA RELEASE

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Police Admission On Bus Case Sends Worrying Message

Family First NZ says that the admission by the police that they would prosecute other cases similar to Gore bus driver Jim McCorkindale shows that there is an urgent need to clarify the anti-smacking law and the 'reasonable force' law relating to adults and teachers supervising children.

"The admission by senior police in Gore that other adults will go through the hell that Mr McCorkindale and other parents have already gone through will have the adverse effect of parents and teachers becoming too afraid to administer any physical control or restraint of children," says Bob McCoskrie, National Director of Family First NZ.

"There is a fundamental principle that the law should allow us all to know in advance what is lawful and what is not."

"Children have received the message that adults can not touch them or even tell them what to do. This seriously undermines the authority of parents, teachers, and even the police themselves – hence the increasing violence and disrespect towards teachers and police."

In 2007, the UK gave schools the statutory power to discipline pupils for inappropriate behaviour or disregarding instructions, designed to stamp out the "you can't tell me what to do" culture among pupils. The new powers explicitly state that teachers have the right to physically restrain pupils, use "reasonable force" to break up fights when a youngster or teacher risks being injured and remove disorderly pupils from classrooms.

"The law needs to be clarified in NZ so that teachers, parents, and supervisors of children are able to operate with the knowledge of a clear and consistent application of the law."

Family First is calling on the government to adopt ACT MP John Boscawen's private members bill to decriminalise non-abusive smacking as requested by 87% in the recent Referendum, and to clarify the law around reasonable force used by adults supervising children.

"We are quickly creating an unsafe environment where children know their rights, but not their wrongs. Restoring authority will make our children happier and our communities and schools safer," says Mr McCoskrie.

ENDS

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