

## ChildSafeNZ.org / Media Release

### **A response to the proposition / petition currently circulating by email that *"the NZ legal system is letting down our children"*.**

**NZ Children ARE NOT being "let down" by the legal system any more than a broken corpse at the bottom of the cliff can be said to be "let down" by the ambulance arriving late.**

To those who may not fully understand this:- the "legal system" is not a child care agency, and regardless of how draconian and Kafkaesque some people may wish to make it, it never will be! The knee-jerk reaction of those who seem to think that a more repressive, punitive, draconian legal system can stop child abuse saddens me and does absolutely nothing to abate the endemic child abuse that is part of the society that we live in. It is also the misuse of the tragedy of abused children to sidestep the real issue. Is it 'child welfare' or 'crime and punishment' that is the key issue in such petitions? They are not the same thing.

The same society that gives us our 42" plasma screens and our hot tubs and our comfortable cars and houses and the huge and profligate salaries we pay some of our number is what is "letting down" our children. At the same time that this society is providing for the comfortable lives of many of the people who will sign this petition - it under funds and ignores education, parental support and coal face medical and social support, presuming, contrary to increasingly overwhelming evidence, that people can largely look after themselves in the totally unnatural environment society has created for them.

Where you increase stress, you increase violence and callous behaviour. If you want to understand some of the real reasons for stress and violence in our community, as an example, take a look at increasing mortgage rates and the fact that family homes are left empty while both parents are forced to work to make ends meet at the expense of properly attending to important business in the family home such as creating a nurturing, stress free environment for the children. Inherent in the undermining and dismantling of the 'welfare state' and its replacement with the American model of corporate fascism that we live under today, is violence, crime and child abuse. We could "improve" the legal system to the point that we had storm troopers marching the streets subjecting anyone who even looked like they might abuse a child to summary justice at the end of a gun barrel and all we would succeed in doing is promoting even more child abuse.

Put aside ignorant and inane petitions and take some responsibility rather than trying to sidestep it. If you think you have done your bit simply by adding your name to an email and forwarding it on you are subscribing to a delusion. The 'legal system' is not letting our children down: 'We' are they who are letting down our children!

Where was this petition last year when a pakeha farmer in the Taranaki let his 4 year old daughter ride off on a death trap unsupervised while he turned his back to indulge a cell phone call? The 4 wheel farm bike, known by the farmer to have faulty steering and brakes, overturned and killed the 4yr old child: The child was killed for the convenience of a cell phone conversation. And when she was killed, society was more concerned for the poor father than it was for the dead child. The police did not prosecute; they did not use the powers they already had! Where was this petition then?

Let me repeat it because its true: NZ Children are not being let down by the legal system any more than a broken corpse at the bottom of the cliff can be said to be "let down" by the ambulance arriving late. Enforcement is also letting them down as is education and support for good parenting... What happened to the Plunket nurse? How many cases of child abuse and neglect would be nipped in the bud if children were being regularly visited by skilled child care professionals? Why do we feel the need for incessant rounds of commissions of inquiry and huis, investigations into child abuse and useless petitions for harsher punishments while, behind all this self indulgence, coal face welfare services like the Plunket Nurse fade into history taking the welfare of our children with them? The irony is palpable and yet otherwise intelligent people routinely subscribe to this cyclic nonsense which trundles around every three of four years each time achieving absolutely nothing. Oh – it gives us something to do while the child abuse continues to get worse.

Do something positive, talk about this amongst your friends and workmates. Write letters to your MP - go and talk to your MP and ask them what they are doing as your elected representative to improve the lot of children. Pay attention to the children around you - take action when its needed, not when its too late. Be a good parent so your child will make a better parent. Encourage those around you to do the same. Do this all the time, not just when some email chain letter turns up on your desktop. Try and find the real issues that add stress into the lives of those around you; discuss ways of abating this stress; ***discuss ways of educating our children so that they make better adults and parents; so that they afford social harmony and welfare a higher priority in their lives than profit, crime and punishment.***

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