

## Media release

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### Anniversary of momentous law change for children

The Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act received its Royal Assent a year ago today. A year on, Barnardos NZ says the important law change seems to be working extremely well.

“The child discipline law brought a new and important standard onto our statute books: children deserve the same legal protection from assault as every other citizen. That was a momentous step on the path towards a society that doesn’t tolerate any form of violence, and one that truly values and appreciates children,” said Murray Edridge, Chief Executive of Barnardos NZ today.

“Since New Zealand passed the law five more countries have removed from their law books a statutory defence for parents who assault their children. Those countries are Portugal, Spain, Chile, Venezuela, and Uruguay.

“Our Members of Parliament are part of an international movement of parliaments who recognise their role in securing the best interests of children. Laws must be consistent with wider public education efforts to support parents to use positive parenting.

“The child discipline law will be subject to a full review after June 2009. In the meantime, it appears the law is working extremely well. The cases we have seen brought to court seem only to involve parents using high levels of violence, or those with prior convictions for violence offences. The first police report showed no noticeable increase in prosecutions and many of the cases brought to police were referred to family support agencies.

“Those campaigning for a referendum on “smacking” are doing so without reference to reality. The law is working, and it will be reviewed anyway. Instead of spending money on unnecessary referenda we should invest more in supporting parents,” concluded Mr Edridge.

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A full media kit is available at:

[http://www.barnardos.org.nz/AboutUs/Section59\\_Introduction.asp](http://www.barnardos.org.nz/AboutUs/Section59_Introduction.asp)