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Where are the children in this debate?

“As we watch the ongoing contentious debate between petitioners, political aspirants, and politicians from all political parties about the referendum on the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act, we seem to have forgotten about children,” says Murray Edridge, Chief Executive of Barnardos New Zealand.

“This whole issue stems from a commitment to ensure that children are safe, treated with respect, and that the resolution to our culture of violence needs to start in our homes.”

“New Zealanders and all political parties should be proud of the Crimes (Substituted Section 59) Amendment Act as a law that is a precondition for a domestic culture of non-violence towards all members of families.”

“A year ago, 113 Members of Parliament did the right thing when they voted in support of the new law that gives children the same legal protection from physical assault as every other New Zealander. It was a momentous stand in the interests of New Zealand children and all New Zealanders and politicians should continue to stand behind it.”

“We understand the need for people to be heard on issues of public interest through petitions and referenda, but in so doing New Zealanders need to remember the purpose and solid evidence behind the law change.”

“Supporters of a referendum are creating a climate of fear about the law when the police statistics released on 23 June 2008 show the law is working very well and is not resulting in parents being criminalised unnecessarily.”

“A referendum, whenever it takes place, will not increase understanding of the law. Nor will it support parents to use the most effective parenting techniques: positive parenting. We need investment in public education about the law and in positive parenting.”

“We continue to support the law as an important step towards changing the culture of violence against children. We would like to see more public education on the law to clarify what it means and to remove the confusion around it”, concludes Murray Edridge.

ENDS

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