

Media Release

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Section 59: a time for decisive leadership says Barnardos

Barnardos New Zealand has strongly re-affirmed its support for the repeal of Section 59 of the Crimes Act. The organisation also called on all Members of Parliament to vote for the Crimes Amendment Bill as reported back by the Justice and Electoral Committee.

“This is a time for Parliament to show decisive leadership based upon solid international research findings and best parenting practice,” said Mike Coleman, Manager of Barnardos’ Family Advocacy and Information Resources Centre.

“Every day our frontline staff see the consequences of inadequate and confused parenting in our country. Whether to use physical punishment or not is one of those points of confusion. On the one hand the Domestic Violence Act says that it is an offence for a child to even witness or experience the threat of physical violence in the context of family life. On the other hand Section 59 which dates back hundreds of years in English law says that it is OK for parents to use ‘reasonable force’. What parent is going to say in court that the force they used was not reasonable?

“At present the Government has committed millions of dollars to eliminate domestic violence and promote non-violent positive parenting techniques. Does it make sense therefore to have an archaic law on the statute books providing a legal defence for child beating?” he concluded.

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