

*Clerk of the Committee
Justice and Electoral Committee
Parliament House
Wellington*

21 February, 2006

A SUBMISSION ON THE CRIMES (ABOLITION OF FORCE
AS A JUSTIFICATION FOR CHILD DISCIPLINE)
AMENDMENT BILL

In support of the Bill

On behalf of the participants in the 10th Australasian Conference
on Child Abuse and Neglect, held at the Michael Fowler Centre,
Wellington from 13 to 16 February, 2006.

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Dear Select Committee

The following resolution was put to the delegates at the 10th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (ACCAN) at the Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington, on 15 February, 2006.

“Delegates to the 10th ACCAN support repeal of s59 of the Crimes Act 1961 and oppose any amendment of the section.”

The resolution was carried on a voice vote, the call for ‘Ayes’ being met with a robust response from throughout the auditorium and the call for ‘Noes’ being met with silence. The voices of those who may have wished to abstain were not sought.

The propensity of parents in this country and others to strike their children and the support of the law for the practice in New Zealand and elsewhere were a major point of discussion at the conference. Keynote speakers, Dr. Joan Durrant of Saskatchewan, Canada and Prof. Anne Smith of Dunedin made it the main theme of their addresses.

Prof. Jaap Doek, Chairperson of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child made a point of referring to the New Zealand government’s non-compliance with his committee’s recommendation on the matter. Individual papers in the concurrent sessions reflected the interest in this theme. “Discipline and guidance of children” was one of eight conference streams.

ACCAN is held every two to three years. This is the first time it has been held in New Zealand. Attendees are a mix of policy-makers, advocates, researchers and practitioners. They are social workers, community workers, health practitioners, social scientists, lawyers, judges, members of parliament, policy advisers, police personnel and so on. Government and non-government sectors are represented. Their common interest is the prevention of abuse and neglect of children.

There were 900 registrants for the conference. Approximately 20% were from overseas, mainly from Australia, with a number from the Pacific countries and a few from further afield.

The decision to put the question to the conference was made at a meeting of about twenty people who were, in various capacities, preparing submissions to the Justice and Electoral Select Committee and met to share their experience.

We were delegated to put the resolution to the conference. We did so at the end of the plenary session at 2.30pm on Wednesday, 15 February, midway through the second full day of the conference.

Originally we proposed that a day should be allowed for delegates to consider the resolution but the mood of the conference was to offer their unanimous support there and then.

Respectfully

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