

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 2.00PM TUESDAY 11 DECEMBER**

## Media Statement

### SAVE THE CHILDREN WELCOMES PAPER ON PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Date: 11/12/2018

#### Statement from Save the Children NZ's SCNZ Advocacy, Strategy and Research Director, Jacqui Southey:

Save the Children New Zealand (SCNZ) welcomes the release of the latest discussion paper from the Chief Science Advisor to the Justice Sector, Dr Ian Lambie, *Every 4 Minutes*'.

Family violence is a significant issue affecting our children, families and wider society; every four minutes there is a notification to Police or a child protection agency in New Zealand. Is this the New Zealand we wish to see our children grow up in?

Family violence is more than statistics; it is a very real issue affecting real children and families in our society – children and families just like our own that are suffering painful and long-lasting harm.

The discussion paper shows there is a clear relationship between family violence, criminal offending and our high incarceration rates.

Our current response to family violence focuses most of our resources on punishing the perpetrator. Whilst there must be consequences for those who commit acts of violence and abuse, this does not do enough to prevent the violence occurring in the first place. Children who suffer maltreatment are not only harmed by the violent incidents, in many cases damage from the harm is long lasting and has serious impacts on their wellbeing and their potential to have a bright and fulfilled future.

Most criminal offenders have themselves been targets of violence:

- 80% of child and youth offenders have experience of family violence
- 87% of young offenders aged 14-16 years in 2016/17 had prior care and protection reports
- 75% of women in prison have reported family violence and sexual violence
- A history of sexual abuse is the strongest predictor of reoffending by young females.

We fully support strategies to prevent family violence as more is to be gained from preventing harm that predominantly focusing on the response. Every child has the right to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect, and Save the Children has extremely high expectations that every effort is made to prevent children from being harmed, including in their homes. The strategy makes several key recommendations, and we know from decades of experience, that many of these recommendations are necessary if we wish to effect change to support the healthy development of children, the prevention of violent treatment of children, and the reduction of violence in our society.

We support initiatives that:

- Support parents and society to understand the importance of the early years of childhood; pregnancy through to around three years of age, and the provision of adequate income, health and education resources to support this important time
- Initiatives that support parents in their knowledge and skills to raise their children in non-violent ways in peaceful, safe and loving homes
- Quality early childhood care and education, to support the psycho-social development of young children
- School programmes, such as KiVa an evidence-based anti-bullying programme, that also supports children and adults in treating each other with kindness and empathy
- Equipping schools and child care agencies to support and nurture children who have been maltreated
- Decent incomes and living standards for all families to reduce extreme stress that can contribute to substance abuse and violent behaviour in homes
- Financial as well as emotional support for victims of family violence to be able to leave their violent situations
- And, neighbourhoods and communities that feel empowered to support each other and stand up against violent behaviours.

Further to this, it is essential that findings in this paper directly link to important work currently taking place to improve wellbeing and outcomes for children and their families in Aotearoa New Zealand such as, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, the Child Poverty Reduction Bill and Treasury's Wellbeing Budget.

Save the Children is committed to raising awareness of the issues that continually impact on the rights and wellbeing of our children such as poverty and violence. We continue to work toward a culture in New Zealand that will nurture all our children and uphold their rights to be included, safe, happy, healthy, and educated to ensure they reach their fullest potential.

## **ENDS**

### **About Save the Children**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

For more information please contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email [ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz](mailto:ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz)