

# Reality hits parents



Just a few months ago, the politicians refused to listen to 83% of New Zealanders who said they didn't want a ban on light smacking. Despite the outcry, the Anti-Smacking Bill was passed into law and the country's parents waited anxiously to see how things would unfold. Here are just a few examples of parents who have been reported as a result of the anti-smacking law:

## School dubs mum to CYF for hand smack

*Sunday Star-Times 28 October 2007*

A Wellington mother says her family has been left traumatised after her son's school reported her to Child, Youth and Family for smacking him on the hand. "I don't want to feel like a child abuser, and I don't want to be labeled as a child abuser because I smacked my son," she said. "It's brought a lot of trauma to our family unit and unnecessary stress." The woman, who did not wish to be named because she fears losing her children, says another smacking several months later resulted in a visit from police and referral to a foster care agency – despite police not charging her.

## Police investigate grandmother for smacking grandchild in shop

In October, a woman and her young granddaughter had been shopping for a bubble blowing kit at a Warehouse store in the Bay of Plenty. They had decided on a kit when the granddaughter spotted a more expensive version higher up and insisted they buy that one instead. When the grandmother

said no, the granddaughter made her feelings known in an offensive manner using the 'F' word amongst others. Grandma responded with a smack. As they left the store, she was surprised to find a policeman waiting to interview her. According to store management, a complaint had been made by a member of the public. They did not press charges but the grandmother was shocked.

## Solo mum investigated by police when child falls over

In October, a South Auckland mother took her five year old shopping. As they were leaving the supermarket, the mother chased some money which the daughter had dropped. She then grabbed the child's hand to lead the child to the car, but the child tripped and fell over. When mum got her daughter back to the car, she gave her a hug and kiss. An hour later, two police officers were at her door interviewing both her and her five year old after a complaint had been laid. The police said it was a waste of time, but the complaint would be held on file. The mother said "They could have phoned. Their visit surprised me. It made me feel like a criminal. It made me question my parenting skills. I may have been frazzled but in no way did I abuse my child."

## Boy calls 111 to report parents

*Eastern Courier 3 August 2007*

A boy called 111 after learning about the new child discipline regulations at school. The 11 year-old turned to police believing he had been assaulted by his parents. Upon investigation, it became clear he had simply been disciplined in an appropriate manner. "He was engaging in offensive and obstructive behaviour and his parents intervened with reasonable force," said Howick-Otara family violence coordinator, sergeant Brett Woodmass. "The boy said he had learnt about the law at school and I believe he was misinformed".

## Toddler's bedtime tantrum brings three cops knocking

*NZ Herald August 14, 2007*

When Karyn Scherer's two year-old threw a bedtime tantrum, the last thing the busy working mother needed or expected was three police officers knocking on her door. But that's what happened on a Saturday night after a neighbour of the senior Herald journalist called 111. The responding police said they had to check everything as quickly as possible, given the number

of children who suffered harm. Police made no apologies for responding to the emergency call from a neighbour who told them: "I can hear a child screaming...and I've heard it before."

## Just scaremongering?

No doubt anti-smacking proponents will call this "scaremongering". But scaremongering is the alarmist spreading of frightening rumours. The above accounts are certainly frightening. But they aren't rumours. They are the real outworkings of a law that unfairly shackles good parents.

## Will you be next?

Hopefully not. But are you confident that you'll never be targeted? Meanwhile, Police and CYF resources are diverted from at-risk families that do need investigation and children that do need protection. And the government continues to fail to deal with the real causes of child abuse: (To see Family First's 5-point Action Plan, go to [www.stoptheabuse.org.nz](http://www.stoptheabuse.org.nz))

For more details on these cases, go to [www.familyfirst.org.nz](http://www.familyfirst.org.nz)



Defending the role of parents and the well-being of our children