



MANAAKITIA A TATOU TAMARIKI

**CHILDREN'S
COMMISSIONER**

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Children's Commissioner applauds law changes to further protect children from abuse

Proposed changes to the Crimes Act to further protect children from abuse, assault and neglect have been welcomed by Children's Commissioner Dr John Angus.

"I believe these changes to the Crimes Act will offer a better level of protection to our most vulnerable citizens. The fact that intervention will be required by law is a strong statement to families and their wider support networks of neighbours and communities that we all have a part to play in keeping children safe, secure and well nurtured," Dr Angus said today.

"I have always maintained that those best placed to protect vulnerable infants and children are those closest to them – family members or guardians who can see that bad things are happening."

The Government announced today it plans to introduce a bill early next year to strengthen the Crimes Act to deal with violent offending against children, including a new offence of failing to protect a child.

"The proposed changes mean that adults living in the same household as a child under 18 whom they know to be at risk of death, serious injury or sexual assault, will be legally liable if they fail to take reasonable steps to protect them," Dr Angus said.

"The law will expand the duties of care these adults have for children living with them. When there are situations, such as the case of the Kahui twins, where no one is held accountable for an infant's death because the more serious charges of murder or manslaughter can't be proven, someone will be held accountable.

"This legislation intends to make it clear that saying you were not involved can no longer be an excuse, because if you lived in the household and knew of the abuse, you were involved.

"There have been a number of cases of abuse resulting in death of children in New Zealand where a wall of silence has prevented Police from being able to hold someone accountable. Yet there were adults in the houses where this abuse occurred."

For further information:

For further information please contact media advisor Josie Vidal on either 04 495 7805 or mobile 027 696 5101.

You can download the most recent photo of the Children's Commissioner Dr John Angus from:

http://www.occ.org.nz/media_speeches_and_submissions/images_of_john_angus