



youth affairs network qld

MEDIA RELEASE

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Some homes are worse than Don Dale

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's Director Siyavash Doostkhah, has expressed strong concern that whilst the community is outraged about the treatment of children in youth detention centres that we legally allow parents to hit their children at home.

'Corporal punishment in home is a violation of basic human rights of children, and it is in violation of international law' Mr Doostkhah said. Common decency also demands that we protect the bodily integrity of children, their most basic human right. Hitting children is wrong and it doesn't matter if you are a detention centre officer, teacher, police or the child's parents.

Corporal punishment is defined as "the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for purposes of correction or control of the child's behaviour" ([Straus, 2001](#)).

Research suggests that children learn four primary lessons as a result of being the victim of physical discipline. Two of them are cognitive and two are emotional, but all four of them are powerful and destructive. The cognitive lessons are that: Big people hit little people to solve problems and that your body is not your own. The emotional lessons are that: You deserve to be hurt by people who say they love you and to internalise anger. It is ironic that some parents believe that corporal punishment will reduce problem behaviour, since one of the most reliable results of a child being disciplined physically is that the child will attempt to resolve his or her problems with physical violence.

Australia is a signatory to the United Nation's Convention On the Rights of the Child. The Convention states that signatories must take "all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence".

Physical punishment of children is banned in 47 countries worldwide and there is increasing support for this in Australia too. "Every time we raise the issue there are some who argue that parents have the right to hit their children as a form of discipline, that it's not harmful and that we are in danger of becoming a "Nanny State". The reverse is true, with evidence consistently supporting just how harmful corporal punishment can be – and often is - and that countries who have banned it have taken steps to educate their communities more fully about why it is unacceptable and what the alternatives are. This has led to greater public support for the bans. I guess It's like child labour or slavery which were accepted some generations ago but which are unthinkable in today's Australia."

The vast majority (almost 100%) of violent criminals in prisons were physically disciplined as children. Violence only begets more violence and the society's where "smacking" is most frowned upon (such as Scandinavia) are among the countries with the lowest rates of violent crime.

A peaceful world where people treat others with respect and dignity and solve problems cooperatively must start with the family. Our society has a vested interest in ensuring that children are free from violence in their homes.

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