



Press Release

Agency applauds move to protect children

New civil detention measures promised.

National will introduce a law that keeps high-risk sexual or violent offenders in jail indefinitely if re-elected. Law and Order spokeswoman Judith Collins said the law will keep offenders in jail until the Parole Board is convinced they are safe for release. "These will be offenders who have been clinically assessed as being at imminent risk of serious sexual or violent re-offending - people too dangerous to be set free in our communities."

"Public safety is being jeopardised by a small number of serious sexual and violent offenders who are released at the end of their sentences and who present a very real, current danger to the community," Collins said.

Alan Bell, Director of child protection agency ECPAT CHILD Alert endorses this move *"This is encouraging news for parents of young children who may be targeted by recidivist child sex offenders. Children are among the most vulnerable in our society and it is up to the government of the day to provide the maximum amount of protection for them by introducing robust legislation to minimise the risk of them being sexually exploited."*

And Prime Minister John Key said the government wasn't going to ease up on stronger sentencing or bail and parole laws after tightening them up with 18 new laws during its first term.

He said that if it won a second term on November 26 there would be longer sentences for producing, trading or possessing child pornography and there would be random drug testing for offenders who were on bail on condition that they stayed drug and alcohol free.

"This is a welcome deterrent measure" says Bell. "But on its own it is not enough. Law on its own does not change people's basic behaviour. Strong laws are essential and law enforcement is paramount but we all need to take some responsibility for the protection of children. We need to develop an environment in which our children are safe from predators and where attitudes are such that the dignity and individual worth of every child is highly valued."

"More than 650 parole hearings are held every year for prisoners who have not completed part of their offender plan. The chance of these offenders being granted parole at their first hearing is remote," Collins said. "What this does mean is that their victims face the stress of regular scheduled parole hearings for prisoners who are unsuitable for release."

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ECPAT Child ALERT is a registered charitable trust working to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.