

Press Release: Sunday 13 June 2010

### **Sexual Exploitation of Children an issue for New Zealand**

Senior Constable Mark Riddell of the Auckland central police youth action team said that in the past six weeks Operation City Door had identified at least 13 girls aged under 16 as active prostitutes in Auckland City.

In the past two weeks, Mr Riddell and his team have taken five underage girls off the streets and put them into Child, Youth and Family custody.

“This is a serious concern” says Alan Bell; Director of ECPAT Child Alert an agency that works to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. “These children need support and assistance as they are victims of exploitation. But the clients are the ones that the law needs to prosecute. These are the criminals and without the demand for underage commercial sex there would not be the same opportunity for young children to be involved.”

ECPAT Child Alert has recently been endeavouring to bring the risk of sexual exploitation of children to the notice of both the national and local body authorities. Children are always vulnerable and in particular circumstances they become even more at risk.

Mr. Bell says “We have concerns around the Rugby World Cup 2011 and Operation City Door confirms that there are already significant numbers of children at risk. Given the influx of over 50,000 visitors to New Zealand there is certain to be an increase in the demand for prostitutes during the World Cup. Our fear is that more young children will be seduced or forced into sex for money or other forms of reward such as food, drinks or drugs.”

The need for child protection measures coupled with greater deterrents for men seeking sex with children is part of ECPAT Child Alert’s programme to raise awareness around the issues of child prostitution, child pornography and child trafficking for sexual purposes.

“Recent evidence supplied by the Department of Internal Affairs indicates many New Zealanders are actively involved in accessing illegal child sex abuse images on the Internet. People believe that child prostitution and child pornography are problems experienced overseas only. However it is evident that New Zealand is not exempt from such issues and we should be aware of the risks” states Mr. Bell.

ECPAT Child Alert is a registered NGO in New Zealand and is part of the ECPAT International network in over 80 countries around the world fighting to protect children from sexual exploitation.

Mr. Bell can be contacted at ECPAT Child Alert Ph. 09 3765252; Cell 021 826137; Fax 09 3765253;  
ECPAT Child Alert; P O Box 41 264; St Lukes; Auckland