

Media Release

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FAMILY OF TURANGI SEXUAL VICTIM DONATE MONEY

The family of the 5-year-old girl sexually assaulted in Turangi on 22 December last year today announced they have donated \$20,000 to four organisations who helped them in the weeks after the attack.

The girl, her 3-year-old brother and parents are now home in Europe.

Here is the list of people they would like to thank:

- The excellent staff of Waikato Hospital, the Police and Victim Support.
- All the people who sent us presents and messages of prayers and support – this was very helpful!
- A special thanks to children who gave up their Christmas gifts or money for our daughter!
- Everybody who donated to the Operation Turangi fund, your generosity was incredible!
- Special thanks to the Turangi community for the huge amount collected.
- Our wonderful hosts in Dunedin/New Brighton, Queenstown, Hamilton and Takapuna, as well as all the families who offered accommodation, we couldn't take any more.
- The companies who helped make our stay in NZ easier and enjoyable:
 - o Air New Zealand
 - o Juicy Rentals
 - o AVIS
 - o Taupo Tourist Board
 - o NZ Holiday Park Association
 - o Ventura Inn in Hamilton

The \$20,000 will go towards purchasing playground equipment in Turangi, Victim Support (Hamilton), ECPAT Child Alert NZ Ltd and Waikato Health Trust for paediatric surgical instruments and items in Waikids Ward 26 at Waikato Hospital.

In the days after the attack, New Zealanders donated more than \$62,000 to the family. The Turangi community itself raised more than \$13,000. In addition, hundreds of gifts were received for the little girl at Waikato Hospital and at the family's request distributed among other sick children.

“We were amazed at New Zealanders’ generosity. We in no way blame the Turangi community for what happened and so we wanted to give something tangible back. We understand they are fundraising for a new children’s playground and so we want \$5000 spent on a piece of equipment that young people in Turangi can enjoy,” the parents said in a statement released on their behalf by Waikato District Health Board.

Jen Shieff, chair of the Turangi-Tongariro Promotional Association said she was moved by the generosity of the family and encouraged by their support for Turangi.

“That they can do something so positive for Turangi in spite of their terrible experience here is heart-warming and remarkable.

“The people of Turangi will appreciate the understanding shown by the family and it will help us to move on with our plans to revitalise the town, feeling hopeful and grateful.”

Gary Keepa, Taupō District councillor and Turangi/Tongariro Community Board chair said it was “heart-warming that the family has decided to do this following such an event. I know that the Turangi community will be humbled by their generous act of kindness and humanity.

“We are certainly thankful for this opportunity to make a real start on a playground that will benefit the entire community. There are no words to summarise this sort of kindness, except “thank you”.

Victim Support assisted the family during their stay.

Victim Support chief executive Tony Paine said the \$4000 would go towards helping victims of crime and trauma in the Hamilton area.

“Victim Support is humbled at this very generous gesture from a family who have been through so much.

“All the money will be used towards our services in Hamilton.”

ECPAT Child ALERT works for a world where sexual exploitation of children is no longer tolerated. In New Zealand, research shows one in four females are likely to experience sexual exploitation before the age of 16.

Alan Bell, national director of the child protection agency ECPAT Child ALERT says he feels humbled by the \$2000 donation.

“ECPAT stands for Ending Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Child Trafficking and the focus is to prevent any form of sexual exploitation of children.

“Unfortunately New Zealand has shocking statistics that reveal a poor record in terms of child sex abuse.

“In this (Turangi) case the abuse was horrific and an absolute tragedy. We will use this donation to continue our work towards preventing all forms of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

“We cannot expect law enforcement to achieve this on their own. What is needed is a change in attitudes – particularly from our young men.

“Our communities need to know without doubt that child abuse in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We all need to watch out for our most vulnerable,” said Mr Bell.

The parents say it is now difficult to assess the incident's future impact on their daughter's life. The balance of the money left from Operation Turangi will be devoted to her well-being and future development.

“One day we want to return to New Zealand with our family – we want our son and daughter to see what a beautiful country this is and realise how much love, care and attention your country gave us.

“We must make mention of the people at Waikato Hospital. What they've got is very special and it is something we have not seen in Europe. Everyone including management, doctors, nurses, mental health staff, social workers, receptionists, telephone operators, attendants, those in the mailroom and so many more all showed compassion and worked together as a team to help us.

“Donating money to purchase paediatric equipment is a small way we can thank them.”

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