

# Churches' Agency on Social Issues

## Executive Summary

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The Churches' Agency on Social Issues (CASI) believes there are two vital issues facing New Zealand. One is the destructive impact of violence on society. The other is the fragile state of the ecosystem.

CASI believes it is part of the mission of the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to take steps now to address these issues at local level, as well as at national level.

CASI's account of work done since General Assembly 2004 is posted on the PCANZ web-site.

## Recommendations

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1. That the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand urges Parliament to enact legislation that removes legal support for a parent, or person in place of a parent, to use force by way of correction towards a child. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. That this General Assembly urge congregations to take pro-active steps within their communities to foster non-violent values and behaviour. \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. That this General Assembly urge congregations to be conscientious in ordering congregational life on sound principles of sustainability, and honour our responsibility to be God's stewards for Earth. \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. That this General Assembly urge congregations to be pro-active in their local communities in challenging and educating people about sustainable living. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Report

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### 1 Repeal of Section 59

- 1.1 CASI has thoroughly examined the issues around Section 59 of the Crimes Act and supports the Crimes (Abolition of Force as a Justification for Child

Discipline) Amendment Bill, currently in the hands of the Justice and Electoral Committee of Parliament.

- 1.2 CASI asserts that repeal of Section 59 is necessary because current legislation frames public debate on any issue. In this case debate on appropriate discipline and guidance of children starts with the assumption that inflicting physical punishment on children is acceptable and the only point for discussion is whether force, when used, is reasonable.
- 1.3 CASI believes careful reading of the Bible as a whole supports the repeal of Section 59. God's justice aims at restoration and reconciliation rather than retribution.
- 1.4 Discipline is not to be confused with punishment. Discipline of a child requires encouragement and good example, correction and occasionally punishment.
- 1.5 CASI does not believe it is possible to define 'reasonable force' in any meaningful way.

## **2 Violence**

- 2.1 Violence is a huge topic and apparent in a wide range of situations. Christians are called to be peacemakers, helping people to become reconciled to God and to each other.
- 2.2 CASI urges each congregation to use its local knowledge and community links, together with members' available skills, time and resources, to plan action that offers peace and harmony to people suffering from, or perpetrating violence, in the local area.
- 2.3 Possible starting topics might be: prison visiting, interfaith dialogue, alcohol and drug abuse, women's refuge, youth development programmes, media and violence, Decade to Overcome Violence.

## **3 Sustainability**

- 3.1 CASI believes there is overwhelming evidence that Earth's ecosystem is in crisis now.
- 3.2 CASI believes there is overwhelming evidence that human activity and greed have caused this crisis.
- 3.3 CASI believes the Bible calls Christians to care for God's creation and be responsible stewards of the ecosystem God has entrusted to us.

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Presbyterian Convener

