



PRINCIPAL YOUTH COURT JUDGE OF NEW ZEALAND
TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O TE KŌTI TAIOHI
Judge John Walker

23 October 2019

Statement for immediate release

Principal Judge raises concerns about silent victims of family violence

The Principal Youth Court Judge, Judge John Walker, is warning that the high number of children exposed to family violence will create a huge problem in the future if their needs are not addressed.

The police are responding to more than 130,000 family violence calls a year and in two-thirds of those cases, children are present. There is a low rate of reporting family violence, so the number of children affected is even greater.

Judge Walker raised the concerns during a speech to the International Blue Light Conference in Queenstown last week.

Blue Light works in partnership with the police to deliver youth programmes and activities, aimed at reducing the number of young people offending or becoming victims of crime.

Judge Walker told conference attendees that those brought up in a climate of family violence have a high rate of offending in later life.

“It is about learned behaviour and the serious effects of exposure to any trauma, including witnessing family violence.

“The child looking around the door frame when the police arrive should be seen as waving a red flag.”

Judge Walker posed the question “who is looking after these children?”, saying they are too easily ignored when the focus is on the victim and perpetrator.

Long term interventions for these children are necessary if the long-term effects are to be avoided.

“Children who witness family violence are the silent victims, and ways need to be developed to help them and give them a voice.”

Judge Walker’s full speech is available on the District Court website [here](#):

Ends

Media Contact: Annie May, 027 291 7573