



Office of Hon Paula Bennett

MP for Waitakere

Minister for Social Development and Employment

Minister of Youth Affairs

15 FEB 2011



E-MAILED

Dear 

Thank you for your emails and attached letter to the Prime Minister about the child abuse case concerning a student in your class. Your emails were referred to me for reply as Minister for Social Development and Employment. I received your emails on 30 November and 22 December 2010. Let me assure you that the transfer of your emails to me is simply because I am leading the Government's responses in this area. The Prime Minister cares deeply about protecting vulnerable children, as I do.

No child should ever experience abuse, especially in their own home where they should be able to trust those around them to keep them safe. It is my priority.

You have asked for a review of the procedures and practices currently in place within the Ministry of Social Development's social services.

Please be assured that this case is being thoroughly investigated. You may be aware that I have recently announced a Ministerial Inquiry which will include an investigation into all the professionals and agencies involved with this family.

Obviously, the case is also currently before the Courts, so there is little more that I can say to you at this stage, without prejudicing the maintenance of the law. However, I would urge you to give all co-operation to both the Police and the Ministerial inquiry I have set up. We need your experience of this case to help protect others.

Since being in Government we have already introduced a number of new initiatives, with substantial funding going to educational programmes and innovative grass roots schemes to reach out to our most dysfunctional families. I have also established an independent expert's panel solely to examine maltreatment of children. It is a complex issue. To make a difference, we have to think differently, act differently and respond differently. I know we still have a long way to go.

You can be certain that I will keep asking the tough questions, I will keep reviewing our practices, and I will continue to meet the challenges of reducing child abuse and maltreatment in this country.

Thank you for raising your concerns about this case. Your voice is being heard.

Yours sincerely

Hon Paula Bennett
Minister for Social Development and Employment