

Media Release

Monday February 10, 2025

New charity launches with silent march in Nelson

We are pleased to announce the launch of New Zealand-based charity the Saint Nicholas Children's Trust, which aims to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation.

The Saint Nicholas Children's Trust was founded in 2024 by Angela Francis, former Chief Executive of Nelson Bays Primary Health, Asthma Foundation of New Zealand, and former Executive Director of the Federation of Primary Health.

Angela was inspired to create the charity after seeing firsthand the horrors of the child sex trade on her travels and visiting the United Nations Headquarters in New York to learn more about the issue.

“We are here to speak out.. We are here to spread the word.. we are here to make a difference..” says Francis.

UNICEF estimates that at least two million children and young people are exploited in the worldwide sex trade every year¹. The issue continues to worsen, with sexual exploitation of children, both online and in person, increasing².

The Saint Nicholas Children's Trust aims to shed light on this critical issue and strive to create a world where no child has to endure such suffering again.

Francis said: “Child sexual exploitation is a scourge on our society. It is a concerning issue and one that must be prioritised at every level in society.”

¹ UNICEF Innocenti - Global Office of Research and Foresight

² [2] U.S. Department of State. (2024). 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report

To mark the launch, over 40 supporters gathered at Nelson's Trafalgar Square on Saturday February 8 where they conducted a silent march. Supporters wore masks to symbolise how children's voices are diminished through this trade.

Also, in attendance were Nelson Mayor Nick Smith, Nelson MP Rachel Boyack and Maungakiekie MP Greg Fleming, who introduced the Crimes (Increased Penalties for Slavery Offences) Amendment Bill to Parliament in 2024. The bill aims to strengthen New Zealand's approach to human trafficking by increasing the penalties for domestic trafficking offences to the same level as international trafficking.

Francis says: "It was great to have so many people in attendance who are interested in this issue and committed to making a difference."

Mayor Nick Smith says: "the founding of this charity focused on raising awareness of sexual exploitation of children is welcome and timely."

"The recent Royal Commission of Inquiry outlining historic sexual abuse and the recent convictions of a former local school deputy principal and a political party president highlight the problem in New Zealand."

Mayor Nick says: "the growth of the internet and the ease with which people can travel the world to sexually exploit children in poorer countries also compounds the problem."

"I took the initiative as an MP 30 years ago with a Member's Bill to criminalise sexual abuse by New Zealanders offshore through amendments to the Crimes Act in 1995. This has helped but more needs to be done."

"My hope for this new Saint Nicholas Children's Trust is that it can help galvanise public and Government support to better protect children here and abroad from these crimes," Mayor Nick says.

Maungakiekie MP Greg Fleming says: "I congratulate Angela Francis and the Trustees on setting up this Trust. Ending child sexual exploitation begins with being aware of it, which is why this kind of work is so essential. And over the coming months, Parliament will significantly strengthen our laws to prosecute any form of this abuse."

ENDS

More information on the Saint Nicholas Children's Trust can be found on our website: <http://www.snctrust.org>

Trustees:

Ross Abernethy, Lawyer

Hemon Dey, Electronics Engineer

Adrienne Hill, HR Consultant

Angela Francis, Health Consultant

Contact Details

Laura Grevatt, Executive Assistant/Trust Secretary Saint Nicholas Children's Trust

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Angela Francis, Chair Saint Nicholas Children's Trust

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Available for interviews:

- Monday 10 February, anytime
- Tuesday 11 February, 2.30pm-5.00pm,
- Wednesday 12 February 2.30pm onwards,
- Thursday 13 February up to 10.00am and after 2.00pm

Mayor of Nelson, Hon Nick Smith

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Angela Francis, Chair Saint Nicholas Children's Trust



A selection of supporters



A selection of supporters marching



From L to R: Mayor of Nelson, Hon Nick Smith; Angela Francis, Chair
Saint Nicholas Children's Trust; Greg Fleming, MP