



TE KOROWAI TURE O WAITAKERE  
WAITAKERE COMMUNITY LAW SERVICE

28 January 2010

The Editor  
The New Zealand Herald  
Box 32  
Auckland

Sent by Fax: 373 6421

**Re: Letter to the Editor**

Judith Collin's (Minister for Police and Corrections) *Less Power to the offender, more to the victim*. NZ Herald, Jan 27 2010.

We are alarmed at the lack of understanding and vision demonstrated by Judith Collin's (Minister for Police and Corrections) opinion piece *Less Power to the offender, more to the victim*.

The Justice System is certainly in need of a shake-up. However, the focus of that shake-up should be on removing the causes of crime. The casues of crime strongly correlate with the incidence of poverty. Where families are locked into cycles of poverty, domestic violence, illiteracy, poor housing, and little chance of escape you will often find violent crime.

If New Zealand is serious about becoming a safer, more cohesive society then we must take a long-term approach that draws together all social-sector government departments. That approach needs to focus on removing the causes of violent crime by building strong, cohesive whanau and communities. On a long term view, only massive investment in our families and communities will deliver the society we all wish for.

There is no doubt that victims have a right to more from the justice system. Victim's needs should be met by generous government efforts that co-ordinate a range of state resources. However, linking the needs of victims, as the Minister appears to do, to how we deal with offenders is of limited value. Although violent offenders and victims are for ever linked by the offending their needs and those of the community cannot be met by a common tool such as three-strikes.

Certainly, violent offenders who are likely to re-offend should not be given that opportunity. Creative, humane and cost effective solutions need to be found to this problem. In other jurisdictions, a three strikes policy has failed to deliver its key objectives: deterring violent crime and making our communities safer. Sadly, we suspect it is destined to fail here also.

Yours faithfully,  
Waitakere Community Law Service

Darryn Aitchison  
Senior Lawyer