

Media Statement

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers questions the decision to discharge without conviction the woman who left children in a car at Sky City.

The President of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW), Jane Maidment says “people need to be aware that poor life decisions might hinder their future choices and make them unsuitable for social work as a career” following the discharge without conviction of a woman for leaving her children locked in a car while she and her partner gambled at SKY City Casino. The woman had told the court she should be discharged because she “wanted to study to become a social worker”.

The District Court Judge allowed the discharge after hearing evidence that the woman wanted to study to become a social worker. The Police appealed against that decision to the High Court at Auckland, where the Crown said the District Court Judge had made an error of law. Justice Peter Woodhouse however, found the District Court Judge did not make an error of law and the discharge without conviction was upheld.

ANZASW is concerned that people will get the wrong message from this case; that poor judgement and leaving children alone unsupervised is appropriate parenting and a practice that social workers would condone. Social workers are at the forefront of protecting children from abuse and neglect. Service users and the public have every right to expect that social workers have the highest level of integrity and professionalism.

At present registration of social workers is voluntary as is membership of the professional body, ANZASW. In this environment anybody can claim to be a social worker with no requirement to have completed training and any form of screening. This is an unfortunate situation leading to compromised professional accountability that exposes the vulnerable in society to risk from unsafe “social work” practitioners and reflects poorly on professional social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ends

For more information contact:

Lucy Sandford-Reed 027 349 0190 / (03) 349 0190 lucysandford-reed@anzasw.org.nz