

# Australian Children's Rights News

Defence for Children International

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Dickson,  
ACT 2602.

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national movement for children's rights

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## AUSTRALIAN TROOPS AND CHILD SEX

Does the Crimes (Child Sex Tourism) Bill apply to Australian troops, as well as to tourists? DCI raised this question with the Defence Department last week, and gave them some food for thought in the form of recent issues of Children's Rights Monitor (Vol. 10.3 and 11.1) which describe the increase of child prostitution while UN troops were in Cambodia, Mozambique and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The section of the Crimes Act that relates to carnal knowledge and sexual exploitation of children has, for many years, been applicable to Australian troops. However there has never been such a prosecution. The Defence Department says this is because the troops don't do it.

Australian aid workers in Cambodia however doubt that claim. UN troops' use of prostitutes in Cambodia was so blatant that the UN Special Representative in Cambodia, Usushi Akashi, is reported to have advised them not to take their car! It is well documented that many of the prostitutes were underage girls from Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand, and many had been bought or kidnapped by brothel owners.

It seems highly improbable that the Australian troops were not doing it too. Especially since Australian men are particularly numerous in their use of Asian sex tours.

Still, only one Australian soldier tested positive for HIV on return from service in Cambodia. And there have been no prosecutions...

But the legislation to outlaw child sex tourism does also apply to troops. The bill does not define a tourist. It simply refers to persons. The widespread, bipartisan support in Australia for outlawing child sex tourism can also be read as an equally strong demand that the Defence Department tackles this issue too. It must stop turning a blind eye to the sexual exploitation of children by our troops.

A related matter is the safety of UN personnel. If UN troops are seen by the local community to be sexually exploiting their

women and children, this may trigger attacks on UN soldiers. International standards for the protection of UN personnel are currently being prepared. These begin with a statement of responsibility: UN personnel shall "refrain from any action or activity incompatible with the impartial and international nature of their duties, and respect the laws ... of the Host State." \*

The use of local prostitutes, especially children, is clearly incompatible with their humanitarian, peace-keeping role. UN troops cannot claim human rights protection unless they also respect them.

DCI has called for training for all UN troops in humanitarian law and children's rights. There must also be appropriate punitive measures, undertaken by the UN itself or the governments to whom the troops belong. Australian Michael Kirby, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on human rights in Cambodia, has called for "a Discipline Code and for a ready means of redress for the wrongs allegedly done by UN Officials and troops..."\*\*

\*Proposed UN Convention on the Safety of UN Personnel (April, 1994)

\*\*International Children Rights' Monitor (11.1), 1994, p. 18.

Helen Bayes  
National Convenor

### SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

12.00 noon, 16 July 1994  
Corroboree Park Community Centre,  
Paterson Street, AINSLIE, ACT

followed by LUNCH and WORKSHOP

### DCI PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

facilitated by BILL GODFREY  
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT  
(RSVP PLEASE, BY FRI 15th)  
CHILD CARE will be provided.

CURRY DINNER, Friday 15 July 94, 7.30pm,  
7 Fernyhough Crescent, North Lyneham, ACT  
\$18.00 pp, inc drinks (rsvp to 06-247-9395).

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