



Media Release
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Arie Smith-Voorkamp Decision Welcomed by Autism New Zealand

The news today that the police have decided to drop all charges against Arie Smith-Voorkamp has been welcomed by Autism New Zealand.

Alison Molloy, Chief Executive of Autism NZ, said "We know that these last few months have been very difficult for Arie and his family and are please for them that this burden has been removed."

"This case has raised public awareness of Aspergers Syndrome and autism. The publicity has caused people to examine their ideas of how the justice system should work when dealing with someone who has a developmental disorder that affects their behaviour, communication and socialising skills. There has been a wonderful ground-swell of support for Arie and we are very pleased that it has now come to an end and he can return to his life."

"We hope that this incident encourages police to include a segment on dealing with individuals with Aspergers and autism into their training," said Ms Molloy. "Autism New Zealand would be pleased to work with the police to achieve this."

It is estimated that **1 in 100** people have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the incidence appears to be rising worldwide – that's an estimated **40,000** New Zealanders! Worldwide surveys have shown that parents of children with autism suffer the highest stress levels of any condition, including terminal illness. It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and is four times more likely to strike boys than girls.

Started in 1969, today Autism New Zealand has over 6,000 members made up of people with ASD, their family/whanau and health and education professionals. Autism New Zealand aims to provide support, resources and information on autism spectrum disorders to those with these conditions, their family/whanau, caregivers and professionals working with them.

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Contacts

- ✉ Alison Molloy, Chief Executive, Autism New Zealand
Telephone (04) 470 7616, (027) 242 2441 or email alison.molloy@autismnz.org.nz
- ✉ Jon Boyer, National Marketing & Communications Manager, Autism New Zealand
Telephone (04) 470 7616, (027) 214 4765 or email jon.boyer@autismnz.org.nz