

SMACKING

Don't punish parents

THEY NEED TO BE TRAINED

Charis Chang

A SMACKING ban could be effective if coupled with parental education but punishing offenders is not the way to go, a Brookvale psychologist says.

"Charging people with abuse and having that kind of punitive response is probably equivalent to smacking a child, except that it's done by adults within the legal context," Dr Veronica Harris said.

Her comments come after Dr Gervase Chaney, the head of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Paediatric and Child Health Division, called on his colleagues to support a legal ban.

In a letter published in the Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, Dr Chaney said people should not keep saying smacking was OK and "never did us any

harm". "There is no delineation between what was acceptable as a smack and what is child abuse," he said.

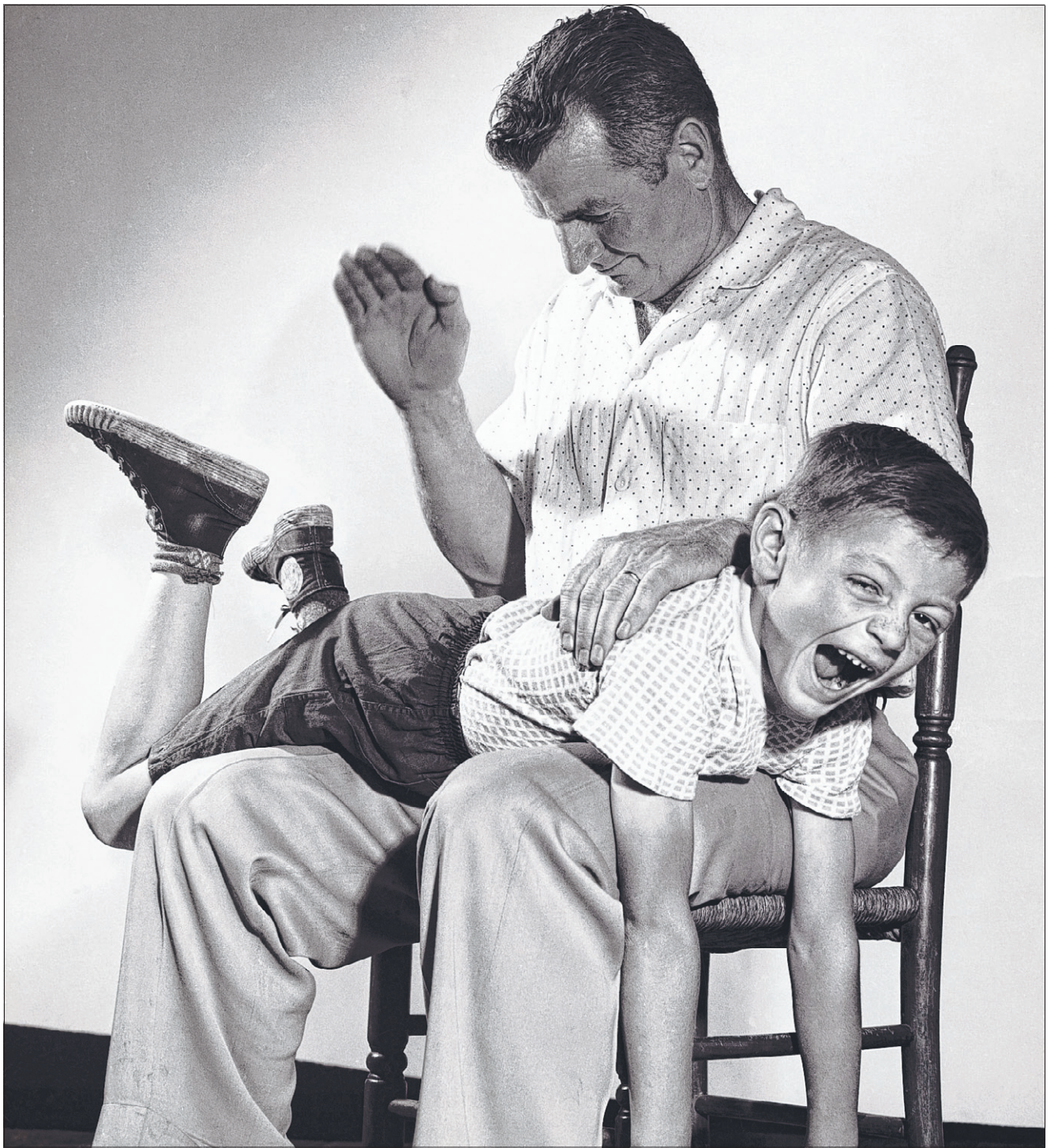
Dr Harris, a clinical and child psychologist at Kids First Children's Services, agreed with Dr Chaney that smacking was not a good strategy to help children develop inner discipline.

"You are just reinforcing that someone who is bigger and stronger can assert their authority over you."

But Dr Harris said blaming parents was not helpful and made them defensive.

"Most parents admit to smacking or shouting, what they need is training on other strategies they can use as a parent."

She said rather than smacking, parents should praise their children when they did well and reinforce the consequences of their actions.



A psychologist says charging parents who smack their children is the wrong way to go.

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VOX pop DO YOU AGREE WITH THE PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE LAWS BANNING SMACKING?

CAROL LAYTON
Avalon

I don't agree with smacking but I don't agree with a law to stop smacking. Just make people feel guilty. Social pressure is better than laws.



HELGA BONELLO
Queenscliff

I brought up three daughters and six granddaughters and if you smack them spontaneously when they've done something wrong, that's fine.



BILL PHILLIPS
Manly

I don't know how (lawmakers) could control it at home. I think smacking is dying out anyway and I don't see how they can control it.



JANE PETERSON
Beacon Hill

I don't think smacking is a bad thing. A gentle tap is fine but anything more is not the right thing to do. I've got two kids and I smack them but I don't belt them.



JAMES KENNEDY
Manly

It depends on what you define as smacking. In my day, a smack was full-handed and you never did it again. If a kid puts his hand near the fire and you tap it, is that a smack?



ALAN PERT
Manly

Yes, don't smack kids. There are lots of people who weren't smacked as kids who turned out OK, too. It's harmful to a child...



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