



**National Council of  
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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12 December 2014

S14.14

## **Submission on the Children's Action Plan: Approved Information Sharing Agreement**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 288 organisations affiliated at either the national level or to one of our 21 branches. In addition to our organisational membership, about 260 women are individual members of branches. NCWNZ's function is to represent and promote the interests of New Zealand women through research, discussion and action. This submission has been prepared by the Family Affairs Standing committee.

NCWNZ has long supported measures to improve the quality of children's well-being in New Zealand and has stated in past submissions that 'there need to be better protocols for speedy information transfer among agencies at local and national level - covering issues as diverse as housing, health, justice, courts, education and social welfare'<sup>1</sup>. NCWNZ believes that breaking down the barriers which prevent providers from working towards better outcomes would go some way to improve our children's futures.

To have a positive outcome for all concerned (including children, their families and all the agencies) shared responsibility between Government and Not For Profit organisations requires freedom to share necessary information. To encourage cooperation it is important that the Privacy Act is not used to prevent required information being shared when permission has been granted by the parties involved, doing so can be seen as negative and destructive.

Typically Memoranda of Understanding between concerned parties have proven to be an effective method of joint co operation and many members of NCWNZ see this as a first step forward in information sharing and improving outcomes.

As there is no single method to solve the problems which inflict families and children, having more options available to work towards resolving these problems requires trust, respect, greater

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<sup>1</sup> NCWNZ submission S12.04 to the Ministry of Social Development on *the Green Paper on Vulnerable Children* and NCWNZ submission S12.12 to the Health Committee on the Inquiry into preventing child abuse and improving children's health outcomes.

knowledge, tolerance, awareness and forward thinking. To achieve all these ideals there needs to be a greater acceptance that 'one size fits all' doesn't work and more communication is needed between all agencies while still working within the privacy principles.

NCWNZ recommends the need for a review of the Privacy Act so that that everyone involved with a child and the family can interact and share information<sup>2</sup>. This review should improve the ability of all agencies working with families and their children to work together with quicker sharing and therefore improved outcomes. Requiring all involved to come together increasing the integration of services should be a positive outcome for all. Flexible funding for these services enables families to work with the best set of knowledge and co operation available.

Regular audits of the secure information system planned by the Children's Action Plan will be required to reassure New Zealanders that shared information is secure. Measuring outcomes and making people aware of how successful this sharing of information can be will, in time, reinforce the general public's view on how successful the Privacy Act can be if treated with the respect. Educating everyone on how this sharing will work will have the benefit of more support for this.

## Conclusion

NCWNZ supports successful methods of working together to bring positive results. We believe that with more education the general public will come to support this as well. Hiding behind the Privacy Act to withhold information isn't seen in a positive light so being totally up front with sharing information for positive outcomes is a win/win situation for all. NCWNZ supports the Approved Information Sharing Agreement to give hope for better outcomes for our vulnerable children and their families.

Rae Duff  
National President

Belinda Greenwood  
Convener, Family Affairs Standing Committee

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<sup>2</sup> NCWNZ submission S12.12 to the Health Committee on the Inquiry into preventing child abuse and improving children's health outcomes