



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**
Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

National Office
Level 4 Central House
26 Brandon Street
PO Box 25-498
Wellington 6146
(04)473 76 23
office@ncwnz.org.nz
www.ncwnz.org.nz

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Submission to the Human Rights Commission on the National Action Plan for all New Zealanders – Theme “A Just and Safe Aotearoa”

Violence Against Women

Introduction

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 NCWNZ Public Issues Standing Committee after consultation with the membership of NCWNZ.

NCWNZ has formal policy with respect to Violence Against Women. At the recent Asia-Pacific Regional Council of the International Council of Women, the NCWNZ President, Rae Duff, highlighted as a top concern for New Zealand that one in four women have experienced violence, the lack of women in leadership roles and the gender pay gap.

This submission is based on discussion among the nucleus committee members of the NCWNZ Public Issues Standing Committee, and responses from the NCWNZ branch membership, affiliated NGOs, and individual members.

1. What are priorities for action on violence against women and children?

Questions from the Human Rights Commission on Violence: A Just and Safe Aotearoa were reworked and NCWNZ members were asked:

How would you prioritise these agreed actions? (1 – most important, 5 least important) Please list any other actions that you think should be included and indicate their priority.

The overall ranking of these actions is indicated below:

1. *National Strategy against violence against women and children that has clear actions, goals and timelines and has special regard vulnerable groups.* [Ranked 1]
2. *The collection and analysis of accurate (fit for purpose) data together with monitoring and evaluation of programmes and agencies.* [Ranked 3]
3. *Allocate adequate resources to implement the legislative and administrative measures taken in order to prevent violence against women.* [Ranked 2]
4. *Human rights and family violence training and capacity building for civil servants.* [Ranked 5]
5. *Awareness raising in the media and schools.* [Ranked 4]

National Strategy - 1

Across the variety of contributions to this submission, the majority indicated that a National Strategy with clear actions, goals and timelines was their number one priority.

Adequate Resources - 2

A large number supported the allocation of adequate resources to implement legislative and administrative measures to prevent violence against women as their second priority.

Data Collection - 3

The collection and analysis of accurate data and the monitoring and evaluation of programmes was ranked third. One large NCWNZ branch expressed the view that: "Simply collecting yet more evidence of violence against women just puts off the time to make a plan and take action." Others argued strongly that once any data is collected, there needs to be a clear plan as to which state agency should assume responsibility for action that is informed by this information.

Awareness raising - 4

Awareness-raising in the media and schools was ranked fourth. It was considered, however, that the statement about this was too broad. Awareness raising in schools should be linked to specific outcomes around appropriate behaviour and gender violence.

Training for civil servants - 5

Human rights and family violence training and capacity building for civil servants was ranked 5. Some respondents found this question nebulous and queried which civil servants the question referred to. However, a number of respondents support training for civil servants given their need to be sensitive and informed around issues of violence. They suggested that front-line,

primary care medical professionals, Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care and the NZ Police should be included under the designation of Civil Servants.

The Independent Police Conduct Authority's report released on 19 March 2015 indicates the urgent need for further intensive family violence training for NZ Police. Commenting on this report in a media release, NCWNZ President Rae Duff said "The police response to Roastbusters is evidence of how sexism in our society plays out within an institution and it has resulted in a travesty of justice for these young women"¹.

The underlying contributors to violence against women were identified as poverty, child poverty, alcohol, unemployment and women's low self-esteem - often driven by negative media images and their lack of societal equity.

2. How will these actions reduce violence against women and children?

The underlying contributors to violence need to be addressed, particularly poverty and child poverty. Recent government attempts to address child poverty have been insufficient. The close link between poverty and violence needs to be acknowledged. Children living in deprived areas, for example, are more likely to be hospitalised for injuries than other children and more likely to die from those injuries².

A cultural shift in the status of women in New Zealand - societal equity - is required if violence against women and children is to be effectively addressed. Education of young women and men should be a key component of achieving change in levels of violence against women, especially sex education and the modelling of respectful relationships in schools and in pre-school education. Attention is required with respect to the implementation of legislation relating to domestic violence and the extent to which there is co-operation among agencies. The implementation of legislation, policy and cross agency collaboration should be monitored.

The development by Government of a comprehensive system of recording and analysing data related to violence against women with data disaggregated by sex, type of violence and the relationship between the perpetrator to the victim should assist in identifying the extent to which violence is occurring and the relationships within which it occurs.

People should feel empowered to speak up about violence and encouragement should be given to the most vulnerable groups to bring their own resources to bear through such groups as Flourishing Whanau and Shakti New Zealand.

¹ Roastbuster issue wider than individual Police officer practice. NCWNZ Media Release 19 March 2015.

² Child Poverty Monitor Technical Report, Hospital Admissions and Mortality with a Social Gradient.
http://www.nzchildren.co.nz/hospital_admissions.php

Bullying in the workplace is widespread. An employer who is trained and has the respect of her/his workforce can often advise and encourage both parties to take positive action, for example, an anger management or assertiveness course. Women's experience of gendered bullying in workplaces can impact on their continued access to employment and financial independence.

3. Involvement in work relating to violence and abuse

Many NCWNZ members are involved in projects through the organisations they belong to – Shakti New Zealand, Zonta, Quota International, Business and Professional Women NZ, Girl Guides NZ, Rural Women, Anglican Women, Catholic Women, the Salvation Army and other NGOs. They support programmes such as It's not OK, Stop the Violence, Voices against Violence and so on. Some work with vulnerable women through their local medical centre, Child, Youth and Family, Work and Income, Opportunity Shops attached to churches, Food Banks or through Citizens Advice Bureau.

Violence against women is often related to poverty and those who support Food Banks, school Breakfast Clubs and the like are involved with children who are in danger of family violence.

Rural Women NZ are very concerned not just about violence to women and children but also to livestock. These issues come up at their regular meetings.

In response to the July 2012 New Zealand "Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination Against Discrimination Against Women", some NCWNZ members have been involved in setting policy for the National Council of Women of NZ and for Business and Professional Women NZ so that each organisation has the policy and power to lobby the NZ Government to prevent forced and underage marriages, to prevent dowry related violence and deaths, including by raising the marriageable age to 18 without parental exception. At present the legal marriageable age is 18, but with parental consent, this is 16 years for both males and females. NCWNZ members and their affiliated organisations have been working with Zonta Area 16 and Shakti Community Council Inc. NZ to raise awareness about the violence experienced by young Asian women in particular, and especially by those under the age of 18 years.

Family Planning health promoters support the delivery of comprehensive sexuality education in schools and communities, which includes a focus on skill development and training to prevent and reduce violence and abuse against women and children, and awareness and action to improve gender equality. Family Planning also have involvement at a policy level in the national NGO - Family Prevention Alliance. Their clinicians routinely screen all clients using their clinics for family violence using a standardised screening tool.

BPW NZ submitted resolutions relating to these situations to the Congress of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. They were adopted and accepted as significant issues to be addressed at the United Nations level, and specifically by the UN Commission on the Status of Women in 2015.

Other NCWNZ members are involved in gathering research in relation to violence experienced by women and girls with disabilities. Through BPW NZ and NCWNZ they are reporting on these issues to the UN Monitoring Committee for CEDAW. This is included in a comprehensive report, initially as a 2014 midterm NGO Alternative to the CEDAW Committee (in response to the request made in the Concluding Observations 2012), but will be included in a full Periodic Report in 2016 as a section on 'Discrimination and Impediments' experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

4. Groups particularly vulnerable to violence?

Māori and Pasifika women, women on low incomes or living in high-deprivation areas and older women are most vulnerable to violence.

Women and children who live in residential areas where there are many liquor outlets are also vulnerable to alcohol related violence and have reported a sense of powerlessness in preventing the opening of more liquor outlets; some are located right outside schools.

Women and children with disabilities. Women who are sole parents and women and children who live in low socio-economic areas in poorly maintained rental accommodation were also identified as at risk.

Women living with unemployed men and youth are vulnerable to domestic violence. Women who have to work two jobs on the minimum wage and still can't earn enough to support themselves and their families. Women without skill training and educational qualifications, immigrant women with little social/cultural support or knowledge about where they could obtain help are also vulnerable. While women in comfortable financial circumstances also experience violence, poverty and social isolation are key factors that intensify women and children's vulnerability to violence. Rural women are particularly vulnerable because of their isolation where there are no near neighbours to see evidence or hear the sounds of violence.

5. Who should be represented on a monitoring group to assess the implementation of this national strategy for action against violence against women and children?

This monitoring group should include people who have strong community connections. It should include Māori, Pasifika and those working with Asian women such as Shakti. It should also include people whom violence touches and also professionals working in this field and those with close contact to those vulnerable to violence: rape and domestic violence survivors, public health nurses, kindergarten teachers, CYF, Women's Refuges, Super Grans, Parent's Centre, Iwi groups, Accident and Emergency Department staff members, Police, Manline, DHB representatives, MSD, The White Ribbon Trust, Community Law, The Family Court and GPs.

6. How could the proposed indicators be improved? Are there other indicators which should be included?

In general there should be a strong focus on primary prevention and early intervention, including addressing gender inequality and challenging social norms that support male aggression and dominance. Support should be afforded to the inclusion of indicators relating to greater protection and support for marginalised women and children; this currently is focused on elder abuse. There should be indicators on the provision of culturally specific intervention and prevention services relevant to Māori, Pasifika and Asian communities in New Zealand.

Paid work is a major pathway out of a domestic violence situation as this gives survivors of domestic violence stability, finance and independence from a perpetrator. Indicators should include the access of women to these forms of financial independence.

Primary prevention and earlier detection: We recommend changing the wording of 5a to “Proportion of students in secondary schools who undergo age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education, which includes training and skill development on relationships, respect and consent.”

Other indicators under this heading could include:

- Proportion of the New Zealand public that recall social marketing campaigns which aim to prevent violence (e.g. It’s Not Ok, Are You That Someone?)
- Proportion of the New Zealand public who report taking action as a ‘bystander’ to prevent or challenge a violent or potentially violent situation.

Conclusion

We hope that these responses from the many NCWNZ members and affiliated organisations that responded to our request for responses to the questions posed by the Human Rights Commission are useful in the development and monitoring of national strategies relating to violence against women and children.



Rae Duff
National President



Judith Sutherland
Co-convener
Public Issues Standing Committee



Rosemary Du Plessis
Co-convener
Public Issues Standing Committee