



For a better working life

New Zealand Public Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

Inquiry into the funding of specialist sexual violence social services

Submission to the Social Services Committee by the Public Service Association: *Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi*

10 October 2013

Introduction

The New Zealand Public Service Association *Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi* (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 58,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, and the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities, state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors).

We have a Women's network, Maori and Pasifika networks, a Deaf and Disabled network, and thousands of members who work in the Community Public Services/NGO sector, including the sexual violence sector.

PSA submission

This submission comments on the state of specialist sexual violence social services, including those for Maori and other diverse communities, including Pasifika, refugee and migrant women, and disabled women.

The PSA acknowledges that while this is an issue overwhelmingly affecting women it is also an issue for men as victims.

New Zealand's international obligations require it to provide adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence.

1) New Zealand has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. The United Nations Committee that oversees the implementation of that treaty in New Zealand stated in its latest monitoring report (2012) that New Zealand needs to provide "adequate assistance and protection to women victims of violence, including Maori and migrant women, by ensuring that they receive the necessary legal and psychosocial services." The current funding model does not enable this to be achieved. Adequate assistance and protection requires:

- a) higher levels of funding
- b) for longer time frames

c) which support NGOs, small and large, to carry out their difficult task of supporting sexual abuse survivors.

The government grossly underfunds the voluntary sector which provides sexual abuse services.

2) Government funding for sexual abuse services is far too low. As a consequence, all sexual abuse services must depend on funding received from non-government sources to survive. While the percentages vary from agency to agency, all are low enough to ensure agency survival is determined by the availability of external funding. Wellington Rape Crisis for example only has 25% of its funding provided by government, leaving the majority of funds to run the organization to be found via fundraising and philanthropic bodies. This leads to skilled staff, whose time and energy would be better directed at client work and project development, having to spend valuable hours applying for funding and strategizing for survival.

This has meant NGOs need to spend time doing fundraising instead of helping sexual abuse survivors.

3) In a clear illustration of how chronically underfunded the sexual violence and community sector is, last year Wellington Rape Crisis was forced to stop opening on Fridays, cutting its services by 20 per cent. Government funding to organisations such as these is inconsistent and unsustainable, while at the same time community demand for their services has increased significantly, together with basic running costs. NGOs should not have to rely on cake stalls to meet a funding shortfall which is forcing it to cut back on services.

In some instances, NGOs have been forced to shut their doors.

4) This in turn directly impacts on how many hours each staff member has available for client contact and/or can increase the workload of each employee beyond what is manageable/sustainable. This kind of environment, where basic survival is a challenge, actually prevents project development, innovation and agency responsiveness - key elements for best practice - as there is simply no time or funds to invest.

Government funding for sexual abuse services is too short term.

5) Government funding for sexual abuse services is too short term. Government funding for services comes for short chunks of time. This means it becomes difficult for agencies to develop longer term strategies and projects within their communities. When funding is questionable and may be removed or reduced in the next year this again stifles development, creates job insecurity and allows for only short term planning.

Government funding favours large mainstream organisations, thereby eliminating diversity.

6) Government funding in its current form favours large mainstream organisations, eliminating diversity. With a severely limited pool of Government money generating heavy reliance on community and philanthropic donations smaller, more targeted organisations are at a distinct disadvantage. Mainstream organisations that provide a generic service are easily understood by the public and often have greater access to sponsorship and publicity. Organisations that should be working alongside one another for the same ends are placed in adversarial positions as they have to compete for funding to survive. Kaupapa Maori organisations or services that provide for refugee and migrant women are left behind and are often unable to survive and/or get off the ground.

New Zealand is in breach of its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action

7) The above issues mean that the current Government funding of sexual abuse services is in violation of our commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a global pledge to attaining equality, development and peace for women worldwide. The Beijing Platform for Action requires the New Zealand government to address violence against women in specific ways. The most notable violations are in the Government responsibility to: “ a) Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence” and e) “Organize, support and fund community-based education and training campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women as a violation of women's enjoyment of their human rights and mobilize local communities to use appropriate gender-sensitive traditional and innovative methods of conflict resolution.” (Beijing, China - September 1995 Action for Equality, Development and Peace).

Inadequate funding has impacted negatively on staff wages and training.

8) Inadequate funding has impacted negatively on staff wages and training. What New Zealand spends on sexual abuse services is not enough to maintain a stable workforce able to meet the needs of sexual abuse survivors. Sexual abuse services rely on an underpaid workforce. Low pay leads to high staff turnover and the loss of skills and experience, compromising the quality and availability of services. Moreover, there is little ability for investment in staff training.

The underfunding of the sector has particularly disadvantaged certain groups of sexual abuse survivors, including Maori, Pasifika, refugees, migrant women, and disabled people.

9) At the end of the day it is sexual abuse survivors who miss out on much needed services. Amongst those, there are particularly vulnerable groups of survivors, including Maori, Pasifika, refugees, migrant women, and disabled people. These groups would benefit from culturally appropriate specialist sexual abuse services. The 2009 Report of the Taskforce for Action on Sexual Violence, a government-community partnership, recommended funding which allows for training for staff to provide culturally appropriate services for Pacific peoples and those from other cultures. In the spirit of diversity, this should also encompass appropriate specialist services for refugees, migrant women and disabled people, all of whom are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Government funding needs to match the size of this serious social problem, the real costs of providing services, and the increasing demand for services.

10) The Report also recommended sustainable and consistent funding for these organisations. Sadly little action has been taken. It is vulnerable women who pay the price. That report noted that sexual violence is costly, common and remains largely invisible. Treasury has estimated that sexual offending costs the NZ economy \$1.2 billion a year and is by far the most expensive crime per incident.

11) Government funding needs to match the size of this serious social problem, the real costs of providing services, and the increasing demand for such services. The community values the work specialist sexual abuse services provide, and the

survivors they help certainly value these services. It is time for the government to ensure they remain available by appropriately and sustainably funding the sector.

Sexual violence is a workplace issue.

12) Research has noted that victims of child sexual abuse are less likely to work full time, more likely to be engaged in part time work, and more likely to be unemployed than those who had not reported child sexual abuse.¹ Moreover, there is international evidence that those with a history of family violence have a more disrupted work history, are consequently on lower personal incomes, have had to change jobs more often, and are employed at higher levels in casual and part time work than those with no experience of violence.² A well-funded sector, and therefore more effective services to support sexual violence survivors, will have wider economic and social benefits. This is because sexual violence survivors receiving appropriate support will be more likely to stay in work and therefore maintain lifetime earnings and economic independence from the state. A well-funded sector will contribute to better outcomes for sexual violence survivors and their families.

Funding should also address comprehensive prevention programmes and evaluations.

13) Our members working in specialist sexual violence social services have also highlighted the importance of funding comprehensive prevention programmes. There is a need to work both with survivors, including high risk youth populations, as well as those exhibiting harmful sexual behavior. New Zealand needs prevention programmes that not only educate and bring about awareness, but also that utilize community development approaches that seek to empower communities to create sustainable social change. There is also a need for robust evaluation research to inform effective practice in New Zealand settings.

An ideal solution would include sufficient funding for NGOs to pay their staff a living wage and provide for training.

- 14) What would an ideal solution look like?
- a) Specialist organisations would not have to seek the majority of their funding through contestable funding applications, donations and fundraising events.
 - b) NGOs would be able to pay their staff a living wage and provide appropriate training for them to fully carry out their jobs.
 - c) Specialist services would be sustainably funded.
 - d) Funding arrangements for support services would provide for holistic, wrap around and client centred services.
 - e) Government funding processes support collaboration and cooperation in local communities, rather than competition.
 - f) Sexual abuse services would be able to meet the demand for their services.
 - g) Appropriate organisations would be funded to provide specialist services to specific groups, for example Maori, disabled, Pasifika, refugee and migrant women, male survivors, treatment for perpetrators, and so on.

¹ Hyman, B., *The Economic Consequences of Child Sexual Abuse in Women*, 1993, p119-127.

² www.psa.org.nz/CampaignsAndIssues/FamilyViolenceAndNewZealandWorkplaces.aspx

For further information about this submission contact

Chantelle McCabe, Policy Advisor

E: chantelle.mccabe@psa.org.nz

T: 04 816 5040

www.psa.org.nz