

**Government Response to the
Report of the Social Services Committee
on its
Inquiry into the funding of specialist sexual violence social services**

Presented to the House of Representatives

In accordance with Standing Order 252

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Introduction

- 1 Government has carefully considered the Social Services Committee's (the Committee) report on its inquiry into the funding of specialist sexual violence social services.
- 2 The Committee set out to inquire into the sustainability and effectiveness of specialist sexual violence social services for all New Zealanders.
- 3 Government welcomes the Committee's report, which represents a major contribution to its understanding of sexual violence in New Zealand, the needs of victim/survivors, and the range of issues facing those working to address sexual violence.
- 4 The Committee's report summarises a very comprehensive inquiry informed by extensive public submissions and expert advice.
- 5 Overall, the inquiry found that:
 - current specialist sexual violence social services do not provide adequate cover
 - current funding approaches are insufficient
 - having stable and effective services would significantly reduce the harm and costs of sexual violence in New Zealand.
- 6 The report concludes that 'an overhaul of New Zealand's sexual violence services sector is needed'. In particular, it identifies that Government leadership is critical and calls for the collaboration of all stakeholders to develop an 'integrated whole-of-system approach' to meet the needs of all people affected by sexual violence.
- 7 The Committee makes 32 recommendations to Government.
- 8 Government responds to the report in accordance with Standing Order 252.
- 9 Concurrent with the Committee's inquiry, Government has been focussing on the issue of sexual violence in New Zealand and the adequacy of sexual violence services. This began with the 2013 cross-agency review of sexual violence services. Since November 2014 the work has progressed under the oversight of the Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence (the Ministerial Group).¹ The Ministerial Group is responsible for oversight and direction-setting across government agencies in relation to sexual violence and family violence.

¹ The Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence is co-chaired by the Minister of Justice and Minister for Social Development.

The other Ministers in the group are the Ministers of Health, Education, Police, and Corrections, ACC, Pacific Peoples, Ethnic Communities, Senior Citizens, Disability Issues, Women, Māori Development, and Whānau Ora; Associate Ministers of Social Development and Justice.

- 10 The Committee's report acknowledges this work and suggests that the Ministerial Group could take up the recommendations and incorporate them into its work programme.
- 11 In December 2015 the Law Commission reported on its review of the justice response to victims of sexual violence. The Law Commission made a number of recommendations aimed at improving social support for victim/survivors of sexual violence, which are broadly consistent with the Committee's findings.
- 12 Government accepts the overarching finding of the Committee's report and accepts all of the issues raised within its recommendations. Government's responses to the recommendations reflect the context of the existing Ministerial Group work programme. Work that is currently in train in many areas is outlined, along with proposed additional work in other areas.

Recommendations and Government response

Recommendation 1:

We recommend that the Government develop an overarching policy framework for an integrated whole-of-system approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence, including a whole-of-Government statement of intent.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 13 Government acknowledges that an overarching sexual violence policy framework is needed to support an integrated approach across government agencies to prevent and respond to sexual violence, and to ensure sustainable and effective services are available to those who need them.
- 14 The Ministerial Group work programme includes a project to develop such a policy framework.
- 15 In response to the Committee's recommendation, Government will actively prioritise the development of this framework.
- 16 An overarching policy framework will establish intent, mandate, roles and responsibilities across government, and help set leadership and direction. It will incorporate and connect existing policies, and develop other necessary components.
- 17 The policy framework would build key principles into all Government responses to sexual violence, including sustainability, integration at the levels of governance and service, wide consultation, and kaupapa Māori principles.
- 18 Officials are scheduled to report back to Government on the progress of this framework in December 2016.

Recommendation 2:

We recommend that the Government clearly set out the mandates, roles, and responsibilities of government agencies for sexual violence services.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 19 The mandates, roles and responsibilities of Government will be set out as part of the overarching sexual violence policy framework as outlined in the response to Recommendation 1 (above).

Recommendation 3:

We recommend that the Government nominate a lead agency and establish an interagency organisation to lead and coordinate the Government's response to sexual violence.

Response: Government broadly accepts the recommendation to address weaknesses in governance arrangements.

- 20 The Committee's proposal to establish a permanent inter-agency organisation is something that is closely connected to current Ministerial Group work on governance and accountability, and the Law Commission's recommendation to set up an independent commission for sexual violence.
- 21 Substantial work is required to identify the most suitable governance arrangements including linkages with family violence, and any constitutional or other implications. This work is closely linked to development of an overarching policy framework and will need to be progressed in step with it.
- 22 Officials have been directed to undertake this work and are scheduled to report back to Government on the progress of this governance project in December 2016.

Recommendation 4:

We recommend that the Government support the specialist sexual violence social services sector to develop and manage itself.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 23 Government considers that there is a permanent role for it in supporting the sector related to policy, governance, investment, and the design of funding and service delivery models (See also Government's responses to Recommendations 1, 3, 7 and 8).

Recommendation 5:

We recommend that the Government consult widely with stakeholders on proposals affecting funding and infrastructure arrangements.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 24 Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders is one of the principles that will be used to guide work relating to the specialist sexual violence services sector, including work on funding arrangements, and infrastructure arrangements. Key stakeholders include victim/survivors, those providing specialist and non-specialist services, advocacy groups, academics, Māori and other vulnerable population groups, including other ethnic groups, older people and disabled people.

Recommendation 6:

We recommend that the Government enable Māori to fully participate in policy development and planning processes, and that kaupapa and tikanga principles be integrated into these processes.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 25 Inclusion of kaupapa Māori approaches is a key principle of Government's work in responding to sexual violence. The project to develop an overarching sexual violence policy framework (outlined in response to Recommendation 1) will include consultation with Māori about how they wish to participate in policy development and planning processes, and how kaupapa and tikanga principles are integrated.

Recommendation 7:

We recommend that the Government develop and implement an integrated, purpose-built funding and service delivery model for specialist sexual violence social services to achieve desired coverage and access.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 26 Government acknowledges the need to improve its approach to funding and service delivery arrangements for specialist sexual violence services across the continuum of intervention. This would help ensure that funding is adequate, coordinated and well-targeted; funding processes are not onerous to providers; and gaps in service are addressed.
- 27 Already in place is ACC's Integrated Strategy for Action on Sexual Violence, which included increased funding to primary prevention of sexual violence and the redesign of ACC's sensitive claims service (Integrated Services for Sensitive Claims - ISSC). The ISSC aims to help people more easily access long-term care and recovery services that are individually tailored, integrated and fully-funded.
- 28 The Ministerial Group has confirmed that purpose-built funding and service delivery models would support sustainable and effective first response services for victim/survivors and services for those with concerning or harmful sexual behaviour.
- 29 The Committee's recommendation to consider the Victorian model of service delivery in Australia (Recommendation 16) has been taken on board. The Ministerial Group has drawn on the Victorian model to sketch out possible options for first response services. MSD is progressing service development.

- 30 The resourcing necessary to design and implement such models is subject to on-going Budget processes.
- 31 Policy and infrastructure arrangements to support such models are under active development as outlined in the responses to Recommendations 1 and 3 (above).

Recommendation 8:

We recommend that the Government allocate funding that takes into account minimum levels of service (as guided by good practice) for clients in all urban and rural areas, including additional funding for specific high-needs areas or groups, particularly for Māori and whānau, to ensure consistent cover.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 32 Government recognises the need to increase investment in service quality and quantity to establish and maintain a minimum level of specialist sexual violence services throughout the country for the long-term.
- 33 Government acknowledges that some population groups are particularly vulnerable and that there are population groups with unique needs in terms of support and treatment.
- 34 The Ministerial Group is overseeing work across a number of agencies to improve the alignment and use of Government's current investment. This is happening across the continuum of intervention, including primary prevention, early intervention, crisis response and long-term care and recovery. The work is considering all those affected by sexual violence: victim/survivors, those with concerning or harmful sexual behaviour, and their families and whānau.
- 35 Examples of activities that are already underway to increase access and extend reach include ACC's ISSC, which is seeing a significant increase in claims since going live in November 2014, and ACC's Mates & Dates secondary schools based healthy relationships programme, which is continuing to expand, with growing numbers of providers and schools.
- 36 The possibility of further investment will be considered through on-going Budget processes.

Recommendation 9:

We recommend that the Government develop a long-term system for sexual violence data collection, incorporating a careful and consistent approach to data definitions, data capture, and information-sharing.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 37 Government recognises the value of a careful and consistent approach to data definitions, data capture and use, and information-sharing is essential to inform good service development, and contribute to research and evaluation of services.

- 38 Government knows that some social service agencies are using effective data management systems.
- 39 The Ministerial Group has confirmed that current data collection and monitoring processes in agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) are not always adequate and that systemisation is needed.
- 40 Consideration of the need for a sexual violence-specific data collection system is on the Ministerial Group's work programme. This includes its connection to work already underway across government to improve data collection and information sharing, and MSD's Community Investment Strategy.
- 41 Officials are scheduled to report back to Government on the progress of this work in December 2016.

Recommendation 10:

We recommend that the Government collect data about specialist sexual violence service use and costs from government agencies and NGOs.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 42 As noted in the response to Recommendation 9 (above), work is underway to improve the collection of data relating to the delivery of specialist sexual violence services.

Recommendation 11:

We recommend that the Government commission targeted population-level research about sexual violence in New Zealand.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 43 Government acknowledges that there is very limited population-level research about sexual violence in New Zealand. Currently the most useful source of data is the New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS), which is undertaken every five years. The NZCASS does not capture data on disability, nor does it capture key environments where abuse occurs for both disabled people and older people, i.e. in care settings.
- 44 The Youth2000 survey, which is a national survey of the health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand that is undertaken every five years, includes some sexual violence-related questions.
- 45 Population-level research is one of the aspects of a research and evaluation agenda, which is discussed in the response to Recommendation 12 (below).

Recommendation 12:

We recommend that the Government commission research into specific groups affected by sexual violence, including research into Māori understandings and

definitions of sexual violence, and research into the current effects of sexual violence within Māori whanau.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 46 Government is committed to developing evidence-informed services that meet the needs of New Zealanders.
- 47 While some research has been undertaken into the needs of Māori affected by sexual violence², on the whole there is insufficient research on the groups most affected by sexual violence in New Zealand.
- 48 The Ministerial Group has confirmed that current research on sexual violence is patchy, with no adequate oversight, coordination or sharing, and that some form of centralisation is needed.
- 49 Research and evaluation as it relates to family violence is on the Ministerial Group work programme. Active consideration is being given to developing a strategic research agenda for sexual violence similar to the draft *Family Violence Strategic Research Agenda*. Such a research agenda could include research into specific groups affected by sexual violence, research into the effects of sexual violence within Te Ao Māori, and consideration of the need for, and viability of, establishing a dedicated sexual violence research hub
- 50 Officials are scheduled to report back to Government on the status of this work in December 2016.

Recommendation 13:

We recommend that the Government develop a national violence prevention framework and action plan that would include sexual violence prevention as a major feature.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 51 Government is actively progressing sexual violence primary prevention through the work of the Ministerial Group. Work is well underway to progress a national primary prevention framework for family violence and sexual violence.
- 52 This framework will support integrated and coordinated approaches to ensure consistent primary prevention messages and activities across the country, and linkages to responses in other parts of the intervention continuum.

Recommendation 14:

We recommend that, over time, sexual violence prevention initiatives be informed by New Zealand-based research and evaluation.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

² Hamilton-Katene, S. (2009). *National stocktake of kaupapa and tikanga Māori services in crisis, intervention, long term recovery and care for sexual violence*. Te Puni Kokiri.

- 53 The Ministerial Group has confirmed that there is very limited New Zealand-based research and evaluation on primary prevention, and that it is currently not well coordinated or prioritised.
- 54 As outlined in the response to Recommendation 12 (above), research and evaluation are on the Ministerial Group work programme. Active consideration is being given to developing a strategic research agenda for sexual violence similar to the Family Violence Strategic Research Agenda. It is anticipated that, in the medium to long term, the development and implementation of initiatives to address sexual violence (including primary prevention initiatives) would be informed by New Zealand-based research and evaluation.

Recommendation 15:

We recommend that integration be central to any new policy framework, national strategies, infrastructure projects, and funding and service delivery models for specialist sexual violence social services.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 55 Government recognises the work undertaken by the Committee to understand the need for integration at the levels of sector governance, cross-government arrangements, and delivery of social, health and justice services.
- 56 Government agrees that integration is necessary across all levels of the social system, and the establishment of the Ministerial Group reflects this. Integration is a key principle underpinning current work on specialist sexual violence services.
- 57 Forward work will involve stakeholders across government and the sector in identifying ways to improve integration across the system. For example, from agency funding coordination to referrals between frontline service providers.

Recommendation 16:

We recommend that the Government draw from the Victorian funding and service delivery model in co-designing an integrated model for New Zealand, modified to meet New Zealand's unique environment, including an acknowledgement of Māori needs. We recommend that services for those with concerning or harmful sexual behaviour be considered in a New Zealand integrated model.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 58 Government acknowledges the value in learning from international examples of integrated approaches to preventing and responding to sexual violence. Learning drawn from the Victorian model (modified for New Zealand's environment) has been used in the development of the Ministerial Group work programme, with a particular focus on first response services, as noted in the response to Recommendation 7 (above).
- 59 Services for people with concerning or harmful sexual behaviour will be addressed as part of the policy framework and future service delivery model.

Recommendation 17:

We recommend that the Government facilitate an assessment of existing good practice guidelines, a discussion of whether it is necessary to make them more consistent with each other, and a discussion of whether further guidelines are needed. As part of this, we recommend that the Government lead the development of a system of national standards for sexual violence services, acknowledging the need for kaupapa Māori.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 60 Government acknowledges that work in this area is needed in order to ensure people have access to consistently high quality services, and are not re-traumatised by their service experience.
- 61 Issues of good practice need to be addressed alongside workforce, and are interdependent with the design of funding and service delivery models.
- 62 This is because good practice is understood and maintained through diverse cultural perspectives; and wide-ranging mechanisms such as policy development; professional networks; and training and accreditation systems.
- 63 Assessment of good practice guidelines and standards will occur as part of the workforce competency framework outlined in the response to Recommendation 20, and other existing projects on the Ministerial Group work programme. For example, overarching policy framework, governance, and work to develop funding and service delivery models.
- 64 Officials are scheduled to report back to Government on the status of this work in December 2016.

Recommendation 18:

We recommend that any new model for specialist sexual violence social services properly consider the work of the Law Commission on the court experience for victim/survivors.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 65 The findings of the Law Commission's report are being considered by Government. In particular, the recommendations about social support services for victim/survivors of sexual violence, outlined on pages 18 and 19 (R74-R82), are being considered alongside the Committee's recommendations.
- 66 These recommendations have significant implications for policy, governance, research, and service delivery. In the first instance Government is considering the question of governance as set out in the response to Recommendation 3 (above).

Recommendation 19:

We recommend that the Government assess whether changes should be made to the remuneration and working conditions of workers in the sexual violence sector, including

- *access to professional development*
- *access to support such as clinical supervision*
- *whether there are enough staff to prevent “compassion fatigue”.*

Response: Government broadly accepts this recommendation.

- 67 It is anticipated that the remuneration and working conditions of workers in the sexual violence sector will be factored into the service redesign outlined in response to Recommendation 7 (above).

Recommendation 20:

We recommend that the Government assess whether professional accreditation standards and regulations that include kaupapa Māori and other culturally competent practice should be developed and introduced for workers in the specialist sexual violence social services sector.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 68 Government agrees that work is required to assess the need for accreditation system, including standards and regulations that ensure culturally competent workers. Government is aware of the wider need to support those who work with people affected by sexual violence through opportunities for development and training.
- 69 Currently there are inconsistent accreditation arrangements within the specialist sexual violence workforce. Where practitioners have a qualification they will usually be members of a professional body, which maintains practice standards and offers professional development. These will not necessarily be specific to sexual violence service delivery. As well, there are unqualified workers who are not subject to regulations and have less access to support.
- 70 The Ministerial Group has agreed that workforce issues be examined as part of the work programme. MSD is leading an initial project to develop a workforce competency framework to address family violence and sexual violence, and align with the existing children's workforce. This includes development of cultural competencies, which is used in its broadest sense to include diverse social and cultural groups.
- 71 Future work will consider the need for an accreditation system and will clarify Government's role in supporting the sexual violence workforce.
- 72 Workforce issues are interdependent with policy, good practice, and the design of funding and service delivery models.

- 73 Officials will report back to Government about the workforce competency framework in November 2016.

Recommendation 21:

We recommend that the Government encourage shared training opportunities in the specialist sexual violence social services workforce.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 74 The opportunity for shared training in the specialist sexual violence sector will be considered as part of the workforce competency framework outlined in the response to Recommendation 20 (above).

Recommendation 22:

We recommend that the Government encourage training opportunities for general service providers in dealing with sexual violence.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 75 Training opportunities for general service providers in dealing with sexual violence will be considered as part of the workforce competency framework outlined in the response to Recommendation 20 (above).

Recommendation 23:

We recommend that the Government determine an acceptable minimum level of service, including appropriate geographic coverage of first response services.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 76 The acceptable minimum level of service will be addressed as part of the design of funding and service delivery model for first response services, as outlined in the response to Recommendation 7 (above).

Recommendation 24:

We recommend that the Government ensure that the opening hours of services are extended where necessary to achieve 24-hour, seven-day coverage for first response services.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 77 Issues of service coverage, including 24-hour, seven-day availability, will be addressed as part of the design of funding and service delivery model for first response services, as outlined in the response to Recommendation 7 (above).

Recommendation 25:

We recommend that the Government explore the use of diverse service delivery mechanisms, especially in remote areas.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 78 Consideration of the most appropriate range of service delivery mechanisms for different regions of New Zealand will be addressed as part of the design of funding and service delivery model for first response services, as outlined in the response to Recommendation 7 (above).

Recommendation 26:

We recommend that the Government take account of provider capability and capacity when contracting.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 79 Government understands that effective service delivery is achieved when providers are capable and have capacity to meet demand. Government has invested \$31.65 million in NGO provider capability and capacity through MSD's Capability Investment Resource over four years from 2012/2013.
- 80 The Ministerial Group has looked specifically at levels of funding going into the sexual violence sector and the ability of providers to meet demand. As a result the Ministerial Group work programme includes projects to address identified gaps in first response services for victim/survivors, services for those with harmful sexual behaviour, and male survivors of sexual abuse.
- 81 Government acknowledges its role in supporting the infrastructure necessary for a sustainable sector. This includes a commitment to ensure that providers delivering specialist sexual violence services have the resources they need to deliver any additional contracted services without compromising service quality.

Recommendation 27:

We recommend that, as part of a new model for specialist sexual violence social services, the Government ensure that services are accessible to all clients, including those with disabilities, and are whānau-centred, culturally competent, and responsive.

Response: Government broadly accepts this recommendation.

- 82 Government acknowledges the importance of accessible services, including for people with disabilities and Māori.
- 83 Government notes that disabled people are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, and may have special needs that have to be considered as part of therapy (e.g. individuals with a learning disability).

- 84 The Ministerial Group work programme includes consideration of accessibility and service appropriateness through its work to develop an overarching policy framework and improve funding and service delivery models (Select Committee Recommendations 1 and 7). Service appropriateness will be supported through MSD's project to develop a workforce competency framework outlined in response to Recommendation 20 (above).
- 85 These will include stakeholder consultation as outlined in the response to Recommendation 5 (above).

Recommendation 28:

We recommend that the Government engage with relevant parties to ensure that any new service delivery model includes whānau-centred, culturally competent service options for Māori.

Response: Government accepts this recommendation.

- 86 Government acknowledges the need for whānau-centred, culturally competent service options for Māori.
- 87 Government will engage in consultation with relevant parties through service development as outlined in the responses to Recommendations 5 and 7 (above).

Recommendation 29:

We recommend that the Government support mainstream service providers to become whānau-centred and culturally competent and work towards the integration of tikanga into practice.

Response: Government broadly accepts the recommendation that it support mainstream sexual violence service providers to be culturally competent.

- 88 Government's aim is to ensure all services are accessible and appropriate to all who need them, including Māori.
- 89 Government acknowledges the importance of embedding principles of cultural responsiveness and accessibility at each level of the specialist sexual violence service sector. This is reflected in MSD's project to develop a workforce competency framework, which includes cultural competence, outlined in response to Recommendation 20 (above).
- 90 At the service level, Government seeks to ensure providers are culturally responsive and appropriate through the use of contracting and monitoring mechanisms.

Recommendation 30:

We recommend that the Government support and strengthen existing kaupapa Māori specialist sexual violence social services.

Response: Government broadly accepts this recommendation.

- 91 Government notes that a high proportion of those affected by sexual violence are Māori.
- 92 Government is committed to strengthening responses to Māori whānau, hapu and iwi affected by sexual violence, and recognises the value of kaupapa Māori approaches.
- 93 Government will seek to engage specifically with Māori and kaupapa Māori providers in order to ensure that such service options are available.

Recommendation 31:

We recommend that an integrated approach include a strategy to help organisations that support specific population groups to develop expertise in dealing with sexual violence and links with specialist sexual violence service providers.

Response: Government broadly accepts this recommendation.

- 94 Government acknowledges that members of specific populations groups³ may prefer to seek help from a service that is familiar and that they trust. These services may not have staff with specialist sexual violence knowledge or skills.
- 95 Government knows that to effectively address sexual violence in New Zealand, services need to be accessible and appropriate for all who need them. This means that generalist services need to know how to respond to people making disclosures and seeking help, and where to refer them.
- 96 The training needs of workers and organisations that are not core sexual violence service providers will be considered as part of the workforce competency framework outlined in the response to Recommendation 20 (above).

Recommendation 32:

We recommend that the Government ensure that public information about services is in accessible formats and is well targeted to all audiences, especially high-need target groups.

Response: Government broadly accepts this recommendation.

- 97 Government is aware that the availability and targeting of information about services is inconsistent.
- 98 Tailored information about what services exist, and how to access them, will be actively addressed as part of the design of first response and harmful sexual behaviour services as outlined in the response to Recommendation 7 (above).

³ Specific population groups include Māori, Pacific, migrant, refugee and other minority ethnic groups, disabled people, and older people

Conclusion

- 99 Government recognises sexual violence as a serious, harmful and costly issue for New Zealand. It is committed to the prevention of sexual violence and to supporting those affected by sexual violence to receive the help they need, when they need it.
- 100 Government acknowledges the importance of specialist sexual violence social services and is committed to working with the sector to ensure their sustainability and effectiveness for all New Zealanders.
- 101 Government accepts all of the recommendations made in the report of the Social Services Committee inquiry into the funding of specialist sexual violence social services. It is pleasing to see the congruence between the conclusions reached by the Social Services Committee and the Government work initiated in 2013/14, which is being overseen by the Ministerial Group on Family Violence and Sexual Violence.
- 102 As outlined in this report, the Ministerial Group work programme includes work already underway or about to be started on all of the areas covered by the Committee's report, namely:
- Policy
 - Governance
 - Investment
 - Primary prevention
 - Funding and service delivery models
 - Monitoring, research and evaluation
 - Good practice and workforce
 - Service accessibility.
- 103 In keeping with wider Ministerial Group work, Government is working to develop agreed definitions, principles and outcomes to inform this work across agencies. Government is also planning in-depth stakeholder engagement in coming months to further improve specialist sexual violence services.