

## Oral for the Inquiry for Funding of Sexual Violence Social Services

10:50 to 11:00am, Paataka Room 1, Novatel Auckland Airport, Ray Emery Drive

### **Social Services Select Committee.**

**Present:** Chair Melissa Lee (List MP), Hon Phil Heatly, Hon Chris Tremain, Dr Cam Calder (List MP), Claudette Hauti (List MP), Carol Beaumont (List MP), Lousie Wall (List MP), Dr Rajen Prasad (List MP), Jan Logie (List MP),

Thank you for inviting BPW NZ to speak to the select committee to further support our written submission. I am **Carolyn Savage**, President of the New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women and my colleague is **Helen McCann**, from BPW Auckland. Helen has worked for a period of time within as a councillor in this area and will be presenting her perspective on the importance of correct funding for the successful operation of these support services.

**Introduction.** BPW NZ supports and applauds the government on undertaking this inquiry and are aware that through this process there will be different cases presented. BPW NZ's position is two-fold:

- that for the victims, the women and their families who should be able to access funding to assist them through their recovery without any forms of discrimination, and
- secondly for the women that work at the coal face, they are under incredible stress not only working with some incredible cases but to ensure they have sufficient funding to perform their roles effectively.

I will now hand over to **Helen** to speak.

Currently funding levels and processes detrimentally affect the ability of organisations to deliver fully core services in a time when more women are choosing to disclose their experiences of sexual violence. Secured government funding with streamlined processes is paramount.

Sound levels of secured government funding will enable organisations to retain staffing levels that meet the face to face counselling needs of their communities thus reducing waiting lists for women to access services and to ensure other services such as crisis responses team and court support services are operational and sustainable. Workers in this field need equitable pay, good working conditions, and professional development to do this complex and traumatic work. Funding needs to allow for budgeted access to professional supervision a requirement for ACC funding and membership to the New Zealand Association of Counsellors. Stable funding realistically set further offers the possibility of job security to attract specialised clinicians, counsellors and educators to the field.

With the struggle of many organisations to remain operating, it came as no surprise for BPW to learn there is a shortage of ACC counsellors particularly in rural areas. Personally, I left the field after nine years as the sole ACC approved counsellor in a rural area. I set up an organisation with a team of dedicated women to support survivors of sexual violence by providing

- counselling,
- group work,
- preventative programmes,
- education material and
- a safe place to heal

To receive funding we had to affiliate with Rape Crisis. Yearly we applied for grants from multiple sources that allowed for one part-time and one full-time staff at minimum wage rate, overheads for rooms and minimal administration costs. Curiously funding for ACC approved clients sessions hasn't changed nor having to apply to multiple funders since I left. For example, a Wellington group posted on their website a thank you to 14 funding bodies. I also experienced what many small organisations are experiencing still today. That is one or two counsellors who rely on volunteer help to survive are most likely doing

- all the face-to face counselling,
- managing the business,
- training volunteers,

- educating the community and so on.

The impact of tenuous salary arrangements, expanding workloads and limited resources to meet the growing needs of the communities they serve, compound the stress of the work environment. When more counsellors refuse to work under these working conditions and fewer choose to work in the sexual abuse sector, who will do this critical work?

**Helen** has covered of the key issues of stress and the demands for women at the coal face, now I would like to identify the stress for the women, the victims who have been continued to victimised as they go through the process to access any funding before they can access appropriate care.

There is an obligation by our Government, on a national and international level and as noted under the Universal Periodic Review 2010 to the General Assembly of the UN, Human Rights Council to *ensure the economic and social rights of vulnerable persons are protected....*

As noted in our submission BPW NZ has lobbied government over a number of years to provide the proper level of funding for both victims and employees in this critical field. One example we are aware of is where the closure of a rape crisis facility occurred due to no funding, it resulted in its re-opening, only due to the generosity of donations and by the financial management of the Board members, who the majority are women, to see this facility open 3 days out of 7. Who pick up the pieces in between.

To ensure a sustainable future in this area, on both sides, there needs to be secured funding to let both employees and victims to concentrate on helping women and their families to be productive members of our society for the future.

I challenge members of the select committee, if you only had a third of your operating budget, could you work effectively as a team and would everyone be able to work with security of knowing where their funding is coming from?

## **Conclusion**

The Federation of Business and Professional Women acknowledges the work that has been undertaken for this inquiry to take place, but will stress there has to be sustainable funding to ensure long term operation, this in turn will provide the opportunity to empower women through change and to ensure there are women who will continue this work.

Changing a sexual violent culture is not going to happen overnight, not in two years or maybe not in 10 years therefore there has to be a fence put at the top of the hill that is strong enough to withstand any storm....or changing governmental leadership, and to not rely on the ambulance services and police to pick up the broken and shattered pieces at the end.

### **Questions from:**

Carol Beaumont:

Statistic Page 7: asked is there for a need to be recorded. **CS:** Yes currently no true record of current levels of cases reported, nothing to gauge true results.

Page 12: Costs are BPW members aware of all levels of costs. **CS:** Aware of all costs especially to victims not being able to be fully employed, or regression of victims suffering from child abuse later in life, turning to alcohol and drugs.

Jan Logie: how long to get someone up to competency level? **HMcC:** Depends on the background, life experiences/educations. One year to just get themselves established.....clients, funding..... training time can be longer in this area of service.

Lousie Wall: Position of ACC: **CS:** BPW NZ spoke out strongly when ACC implemented changes and the victim was required to be declared mentally ill before being entitled to funding. This affected them through being branded as mentally unfit, impact on work, stigmatism and being victimised again. There is a focus on funding for perpetrators through education and support but the victim is continually punished by having to apply for funding to pay for counselling or being branded as being mentally unfit before any assistance is provided. It is discrimination.