



28th April 2017

To the Committee Secretariat, Justice and Electoral

Parliament Building

Wellington

Online:

Re: Submission on Domestic Violence – Victims’ Protection Bill

Submission:

The submission is from the NZ Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW NZ) Inc.

Our Organisation

BPW (Business Professional Women) is an international organization with representatives in over 100 countries. Our organisation’s aims are to link Professional and business women throughout the world so that they may provide support to each other, lobby for change and promote the ongoing advancement of women and girls. We work for equal opportunities and status for all women in economic, civil, and political life and for the removal of discrimination in all countries. We promote our aims and organise our operating structure without distinction as to race, language, or religion.

International Status:

BPW International has General Consultative Status at the United Nations through the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC). This enables BPW International to appoint official representatives to UN agencies worldwide and to accredit members to attend specific UN meetings.

BPW International upholds the outcomes of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee at state party level. BPW International upholds the outcome documents of the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which evaluates progress, identifies challenges, sets global standards and formulates policies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment worldwide.

BPW International also upholds the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women which was adopted by the General Assembly in 1993 and affirms that “violence against women

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constitutes a violation of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and impairs or nullifies their enjoyment of those rights and freedoms ".¹

BPW NZ Policy 18.5.4.

Urges Parliament, the Leaders of all Parties, and all government departments to work together to strengthen themselves and ensure that there are well-resourced long-term cross-party, cross department strategies that collaborate with relevant members of civil society, to change social norms and eliminate violence against women and families.

BPW believes this Bill will be a step toward achieving the above-mentioned policy.

General comments: Domestic Violence—Victims' Protection Bill

BPW NZ congratulates MP Jan Logie on the introduction of this important and potentially lifesaving legislation. BPW NZ supports this legislation as an important step toward assisting victims of domestic violence and its subsequent impact and cost to our businesses.

Submission

1. Domestic violence is a significant and deadly problem in New Zealand:
 - In the four years from 2009 to 2012, an average of 13 women, 10 men, and 9 children were killed each year because of family violence;
 - There were over 110,000 family violence investigations recorded in 2015;
 - 1 in 3 women experience physical and/or sexual violence from a partner in their lifetime;
 - 76 per cent of recorded assaults against females are committed by an offender that is identified as family;
 - 14% of young people report being hit or physically harmed intentionally by an adult at home in the last 12 months;
 - Family violence is estimated to cost the country between \$4.1 and \$7 billion each year.²
2. BPW NZ acknowledges this bill for recognising the importance of employment for victims of domestic violence. Some of the many reasons why a victim of domestic violence finds it more difficult to stay in work include: increased absences, home life causing distraction in the workplace, or a violent partner emotionally manipulating a victim while they are at work.

¹ Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, G.A. Res. 48/104, U.N. Doc. A/RES/48/104 (Feb. 23, 1994)

² Ministry of Social Development, areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics



Employment is particularly important to a victim for their sense of self-worth and financial stability. Losing employment could impact a victim's ability to leave a violent relationship.

3. BPW NZ acknowledges the significant impact of domestic violence on employers. Domestic violence costs New Zealand businesses millions of dollars per year in reduced productivity, alongside recruitment, retention, re-training, and health and safety costs.³ As an advocacy group for business and professional women and business owners, BPW supports this bill for the value it can achieve for employers, as well as for victims and their families. It is much less expensive to retain an employee than to hire a new employee and this Bill encourages employees and employers to find a way to keep victims of domestic violence in employment.

Conclusion

BPW NZ believes this Bill could have several essential consequences:

- **Raising awareness.** This Bill brings the issue of domestic violence into the workplace. Whether requiring workplaces to offer flexible working arrangements or offering paid leave for victims (among other provisions). It suggests to victims that they are entitled to consideration and support. It reminds employers to be considerate of victims. The best scenario would be for the bill to enable anyone concerned about domestic violence to seek external advice, (such as from areyouok.org.nz) to help us all, as a nation, tackle this significant issue.
- **Reducing costs for employers.** The Bill encourages employers and victims of domestic violence to seek an arrangement that enables the victim to stay in employment and work in a safe environment. By tackling the issue of domestic violence as a whole, hopefully fewer cases will occur in the future. This will result in directly reducing turnover costs for businesses and potentially preventing decreased productivity in the workplace.
- **Employability of victims.** The Bill provides for businesses to offer alternative arrangements for victims. This better enables victims to stay in work and maintain consistency in their work-life that can be crucial for their wellbeing, where there is upheaval in their personal life.
- **Breaking the domestic violence cycle.** The financial means and sense of self-worth that employment offers, are crucial to enabling victims to leave or otherwise change a cycle of domestic violence.

³ Public Services Association; *Productivity Gains from Workplace Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence*



Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission and we hope that our comments are of use to you.

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On behalf of

New Zealand Federation of Business and professional Women Inc.

Hellen Swales
President

Janet Gibb
Vice President, Issues

Letter Starts here 😊