

Kia ora tatou, Ko Hellen Swales taku ingoa Leonie Dobbs

The New Zealand Federation of Business & Professional Women (BPW NZ) wants to ensure that women are empowered in their homes, workplaces and communities. We also advocate for human rights, work to increase women in leadership, call for action on reducing the gender pay gap and for the elimination of violence against women.

The New Zealand Federation of Business & Professional Women (BPW NZ) supports and applauds the government on introducing a bill that will ensure that all women and their families will live their lives free from high risk of serious sexual or violent offenders being placed back into the community. We have advocated for the protection from violence against women for many years.

We agree there needs to be a protection mechanism in our justice system that allows for the ever so few people that manage to fall between the obvious gaps and limits those dispensing sentencing under the present regime. Whilst we have provisions under various other pieces of Legislation it is not prescriptive enough to cover those that still pose a very high risk of imminent, serious sexual or violent reoffending.

Whilst this Bill gives the appearance that the Government is wielding a sledgehammer to capture a few at “High Risk” *imminent and serious sexual or violent reoffenders* the safety of the New Zealand community should always be paramount for those responsible for the safety of the wider community.

We appreciated the need for balance when considering the application of this Bill, public safety versus the rights of the individual. When you have very serious criminals being released into the community who have shown a tendency to be repeat offenders the need for public protection we believe should be paramount.

We believe the criteria that needs to be met before a Public Protection Order can be granted is sound and offers the offender the right of reply under the provisions set out in the Bill. The monitoring and the annual review of these public protection orders gives protection to both the offender and the community to ensure that no one is a victim in this process and whilst there is a possibility that the offender may never be released from the public protection order, there are processes in place that can be met for the public protection order to be revoked.

But speaking with those that have been the victims of repeat offenders or those that have been in violent relationships etc... and we begin to appreciate just how real their fear is and the frustration that this have been allowed to happen. This Bill will go a long way to addressing these issues for them and not forgetting it's about the protection of New Zealand as a wider community.

We appreciate that in the wider community, especially among the legal fraternity, there are those that might see this as a huge human rights breach but let us remember that we as a country have been known to lead the way when testing the waters. If it was felt that a sunset clause needed to be inserted and that a mandatory review would take place in 5 year's time we would also support this.

We congratulate the government for the introduction of this Bill which will address the need to provide for the protection of the community at large.

And as elected representatives of New Zealand you have a duty to draft, debate and pass legislation that ensures the safety and drives the change in behaviour that is so badly needed to protect our community.

Please have the courage to do it.