



WOMEN'S REFUGE

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission towards the work the Productivity Commission is undertaking around *'More Effective Social Services'*.

This submission is made on behalf of the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR). NCIWR is New Zealand's largest provider of domestic and family violence services. We have 41 Refuges across New Zealand delivering services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We provide crisis accommodation and support, and also work with women and their families in the community.

Question 1

There are several trends that policy and law makers need to be mindful of as they look towards the future of social services in New Zealand.

We have a growing and aging population. Urbanisation continues to have an adverse impact on regional New Zealand with small towns suffering from declining populations and dwindling services.

A third of New Zealander's live in Auckland. The city is experiencing a housing affordability crisis and demands on its infrastructure and services will continue as its population grows.

Today New Zealand is a more unequal society than it was three decades ago. New Zealand was 9th out of 34 in the OECD ranking of inequality in about 2009, after adjustment for population and per capita GDP. It was about 20th in 1985.

Roughly two-thirds of New Zealanders in 2012 were in households with an annual income of between \$29,000 and \$48,400 per person. In 2013, 14% of New Zealanders said that there were times during that year they did not have money to buy food.

We now have the 'working poor' whereby families with a parent or both parents in full time work can no longer meet their living costs. The proportion in poverty is higher among solo parents, those without jobs, living in rental accommodation and for Maori and Pasifika. More women than men are poor.

In October 2014, UNICEF reported that child poverty rates in New Zealand have come down by less than .5% since 2008. Australia, within the same time period, has reduced its child poverty rates by 6%. The Report also showed that in three of the four well-being indicators (including food security and whether children had an opportunity to learn and grow) had worsened between 2007 and 2013.

It is beyond dispute that there is considerable income inequality in New Zealand, with the top decile receiving about 2.4 times the average income and 7.5 times as much as the bottom decile. The gap between the very rich and the very poor is growing.

Inequality impact on social mobility, like is already the case in the United Kingdom.

Pay equity still does not exist for women and women's representation within governance positions is poor. The Global Economic Forum has reported in 2014 that New Zealand has dropped from 7th in 2013 to 13th this year in gender equity measures.

Gender base violence is a significant issue in New Zealand, with no signs of abating. Last year, Police attended nearly 95,000 incidents of family violence, which the Police believe only represents

Social enterprise funding does allow more flexibility for providers as to how they can deliver services. This model works well for Māori and Pacific providers because the populations that they service are unique.

Question 5

There are more opportunities emerging for Mori whare (at local and regional levels) to partner with private businesses, not-for-profit social service providers and government than there are at national levels. Many of these relationships are driven by community need and therefore the impact and results tend to be more effective than national standardised approaches.

More support from government for local and region partnerships is needed (as opposed to encouraging small local providers to align with large organisations or national bodies). Although large organisations and national bodies have a role to play, it is the local and regional providers that are the experts in the delivery of services that meet their community needs (and should therefore be recognised by Government by increasing the number and availability of local and regional contracts).

Barriers include unrealistic expectations that private business may have on social service providers. They may see community providers as having more capacity than we do.

Question 6

Social bonds see private and not-for-profit organisations partner to fund and deliver services to improve social outcomes. If they achieve agreed results, government pays the investors back their investment – plus a return. We note that they have been used internationally but seem to be narrowly focused around reducing recidivism and increasing employment.

We understand that some market testing has been carried out in New Zealand to assess whether there was an interest in social bonds. According to the Ministry of Health website, over 50 potential investors and providers signalled an interest. Interested service providers ranged from small local providers to large national organisations. Potential investors might include community trusts, philanthropic foundations, banks, or iwi groups.

The obvious criticism is that the Government is interested in social bonds as a means of transferring its responsibilities to the private sector.

We have looked at the models in the UK and the USA and note that social bonds are still in relatively infancy. We would need to assess what would the risks, costs and benefits be of using social bonds in New Zealand. Work would also have to be undertaken to assess which areas may be suited to social bonds.

Question 7

We absolutely support Maori working with Maori and delivering services within their own communities.

Question 8

We think the obvious answer to this is the ability to make a profit. Only some areas within the social services are able to be run for a profit – e.g., some aspects of healthcare and aged care. It is impossible to imagine a private for profit provider providing core domestic violence services.

Question 9

ISO has been a successful process for our organisation. However, everything will depend on the follow through. The process sets up expectations we will be unable to meet long term. For example, the Maori Growth Strategy has been very important for Refuge but we have no money to maintain the work under it going forward. The issue is whether organisations are being set up to fail with one off grants which do not support long term work. Chronic and historic underfunding

has to be acknowledged and addressed.

Question 10

As noted above, ISO has the potential to be very successful.

Question 12

Any comparison of international experiences has bear in mind the unique characterises of New Zealand and its citizens. First, we have the Treaty of Waitangi which confirms the position of Maori as tangata whenua. The Treaty is underpinned by principles of partnership, good faith, active protection, the need for compromise and the duty to consult. Treaty considerations are paramount in policy developments.

We are a small island nation, in the South Pacific with relatively significant migrant populations. Our population is growing and aging. We share some history and many traditions with the United Kingdom but we also have our own unique culture.

Question 13

Whānau ora has been a successful initiative for Māori and Pacific whare because it allows whare to deliver the entire services needs for the clients instead of delivering some services and then referring the client onto another provider (or providers) to complete the next steps. We know that being referred on is be a difficult process to experience for many of our clients.

FVIARS on the other hand has not been as successful as it should have been.

Question 14

For Māori and Pacific whare the decision as to whether service integration is important will be based on what is in the best interest of the population being served. Some Māori and Pacific whare have been cautious about who they partner with to ensure that the relationship is going to be of benefit to their community and that the service that collectively will be delivered will make a difference.

More generally, we need to see good monitoring, resourcing, transparency and auditing.

Question 17

For Māori and Pacific whare the regional and local contracts with MSD and Te Puni Kokiri makes the delivery of services more relevant to their populations. The service specifications in these contracts have been developed in consultation with the provider to ensure the benefit of the service is achieved.

Question 19

In our experience, having national decision making with limited money has had some success. An oversight of needs in different communities allows for appropriate allocation of money and resources.

Question 20

We see an issue of concern to be that the Government's recent focus of having competitive tendering has seen individuals and groups tender (and sometimes get) work that is outside their core role and potentially do not have the skill to deliver on.

Question 21

We believe it's very important to build trust via a good partnership model. Trust is also earned through a proven track record of delivery.

Question 22

In our view, high trust relationships come about from a history of success. This is a two way thing though. Organisations need to be able to prove they can deliver and the Government has to work in good faith with organisations. Agreements between the Government and community organisations should be clearly defined.

NGOs also need to be able to have high trust relationships in the context of them still be independent. For example, agencies like Refuge have to be allowed to raise concerns about policy and/or legislation and still be 'trusted' by government agencies.

Question 23

Yes. Our organisation has been able to do this. Flexibility allows us to manage our money and financial obligations better. We can plan and manage our own risk.

Question 24

Yes. We have been very sad to see organisations in our sector close due to losing government money. This is despite them delivering essential services.

Also, there are examples of community agencies that appear to be favoured by the Government. This can be demoralising and frustrating for others.

Question 25

From our own experience, having a robust and expansive data base (and access to relevant Government statistics) enables us to identify needs.

Question 26

Services should be delivered by experts. In many cases, this expertise does not exist within government agencies. In this regard, we have noticed over the past few years money being stripped from the community sector and redirected in to government agencies – to deliver exactly the same services (e.g. domestic violence training).

Question 31

We agree with the issues raised in the Paper and believe that further work needs to be done in this area. It is pointless making tendering a burdensome and costly process. Agencies who may well be the best out there to deliver a particular service may be put off from contesting. This is a loss for us all.

Question 32

Some considerations include:

- Is going out to tender necessary in the first place? Is the service currently being delivered well?
- Transparency;
- Open and meaningful consultation;
- A sound evaluation process.

Question 34

It is important that for services such as Refuge, where our clients have experienced a traumatic event, that the transition between service providers is seamless and appropriate.

Many of the clients that present to refuge require not only safety and support, but also a complete holistic service experience. Some clients are very cautious about engaging with other agencies and so their transition needs to be one that allows them to make choices about who they want to work with and when.

The ability for Māori and Pacific whare to be whānau ora providers creates the opportunity for the client to be transitioned through services without having to endure other agencies or have repeat discussions about their circumstances (which can be a re-victimising experience).

Question 36

Māori and Pacific whare are essential to meeting and responding to client needs. It is important that culturally appropriate services (for Māori by Māori, and for Pasifika by Pasifika) are available to our Māori and Pacific peoples. The issue for many Māori and Pacific whare is that they are small providers and so are impacted by the perceptions that bigger (organisations) are more cost effective,

If Māori and Pacific specific services were not offered it would reduce the choice that clients have and therefore potentially impact on the desire of the population to access services that they did not see met their needs, therefore creating bigger issues for New Zealand – people not seeking health services will create greater costs down the track.

Many Māori and Pacific peoples prefer to access culturally appropriate and relevant local services because of the experience they have knowing the person serving them understands them and has similar values, principles and beliefs to them (more so than any mainstream services on offer).

Question 37

In Māori and Pacific culture there is a clear hierarchy to decision making and it is important that through proper consultation approaches, these cultural processes are recognised. It is important to recognise that not all Māori iwi have the same opinions or processes of decision making and that the term Pacific covers over 10 different island nations and each one has their own decision making processes. It is not appropriate to consider all Māori iwi and all Pacific nations as the same.

Currently the government uses a number of advisory groups or a specific consultant to act as an advisor on cultural appropriateness. The government must invest more either through established organisations (such as Whanau Ora Commissioning Agencies) in consultation with the public so that it is a more informed opinion on the development of services rather than just that of one or two people that may have not been involved in service delivery for a number of years.

Question 38

There is still room for improvement in this area. As previously mentioned the government tends to use a number of advisory groups or a specific consultant to act as an advisor on cultural appropriateness. The issues with this approach is that for Māori and Pacific not all Māori iwi have the same opinions or processes of decision making and that the term Pacific covers over 10 different island nations and each one has their own decision making processes. It is not appropriate to consider all Māori iwi and all Pacific nations as the same.

Question 39

It is too early to tell how commissioning agencies are managing this space. To date none of the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies are purchasing services, but the comfort with these

agencies is that they are focused on supporting Māori and Pacific innovation and service delivery.

Question 40

The two Māori Whānau Ora Commissioning Agencies have strong intentions to acknowledge and respect the Treaty of Waitangi. In other provider contracts it may be noted and referred to, but this does not necessarily mean it is applied or actioned appropriately.

Question 41

In terms of securing a safe outcome for women and their children, Women's Refuge can only do so much. We can deal with their immediate safety issues, support them in crisis accommodation or in the community and advocate with them for access to different services but there are no guarantees this will occur. We cannot guarantee her a house. And we know that safe housing is critical to her outcomes. We cannot guarantee access to justice or an effective protection order that will keep her safe. We cannot guarantee her access to mental health or addiction services. We cannot guarantee her financial security. All of these things are critical to a woman being able to leave violent relationships.

Question 43

Referring back to the points made in our answer to question 41, we play a significant part in keeping women and children safe. However, many other factors will contribute. These factors must be acknowledged and understood by Government agencies when considering outcomes.

Question 44

No

Question 45

We have done this and can attest to some benefits namely being in charge of our own finances and being able to make our own decisions. Improvements could still be made.

Question 46

It has been frustrating that the deep knowledge and skill base in our sector (family violence) has mostly been ignored by decision makers for several years. The Government commissions research that tells us the same things time and time again. It is wasteful and pointless. We know what needs to be done and how.

Question 48

We believe that in our area of family violence this approach has real risks attached to it and we do not consider it appropriate at all.

Question 49

We have been pursuing more fulsome data from government agencies for years. International organisations such as the UN have pointed out how limited the data is in New Zealand around violence against women and girls and has recommended the Government action this.

Question 50

We will speak to this question in our interview.

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