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ACC cuts to sexual abuse counselling

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is outraged by the proposed changes to ACC funding rules for survivors of sexual abuse and sexual assault, due to come into force on October 27, and commends all organisations and individuals involved in the national day of action.

“We believe that it is irresponsible to burden survivors of sexual abuse with bureaucracy by only offering support to those who have been diagnosed with a mental illness,” says Elizabeth Bang, NCWNZ National President.

“The proposed changes undermine the severity of sexual abuse and disempower people who, by no fault of their own, have been the victim of a serious and traumatising crime”.

NCWNZ has policy in place that “supports flexibility of access by victims of sexual violence to fully subsidised counselling and therapy by registered practitioners”.

The consequences of sexual abuse are well documented and undeniably amount to the ‘significant mental injuries’ that ACC requires before offering assistance. Therefore, access to subsidised counselling and support is the right of all victims of sexual abuse.

NCWNZ believes that these cuts have crossed the line, with proposed changes not only limiting the number of people who have access to counselling, but also requiring that sexual abuse survivors visit three separate ACC therapists for diagnoses, before possibly being eligible for counselling support.

By requiring claimants to speak to three separate therapists, in a bid to prove that the sexual abuse has led to mental illness, it will put extra emotional stress on the victim and may lead to many victims not asking for help.

Even once the bureaucracy is over, the sexual abuse survivor will be stigmatised in the future with the ‘mental illness’ being listed on their permanent record – declared when applying for jobs, benefits and education.

“ACC is supposed to help people, not to create further pressure and anxiety during an already difficult time,” says Elizabeth Bang.

“The proposed new rules are in conflict with the intent and purpose of ACC and should therefore be reconsidered immediately.”

Further Information:

Laurel Keats, Communications Officer
National Council of Women of New Zealand
Ph 04 473 7613
P O Box 12 117, Wellington
Email: oa@ncwnz.org.nz

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