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ACC guidelines must be postponed

The independent clinical review of the new guidelines to be used by the ACC unit that deals with sexual abuse and rape victims, announced by ACC Minister Nick Smith, should take place before any changes are implemented according to the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ).

“The changes to ACC funding rules for survivors of sexual abuse and sexual assault should be postponed until the review is completed,” said Elizabeth Bang, NCWNZ National President.

“Survivors of sexual abuse should not have to wait six months before they are given access to the support and assistance they deserve.”

The changes, which officially came into force yesterday, will limit the number of people who have access to counselling. Sexual abuse survivors will have to visit three separate ACC therapists and be diagnosed with a “mental injury” in order to be eligible for support.

The number of professionals who can assess claims will be dramatically limited, as only people who have been trained at a tertiary level in the use of the American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM IV) will be able diagnose “mental injury” from sexual abuse.

NCWNZ predicts that the bureaucracy involved in these new guidelines will create barriers for both survivors of sexual abuse and counsellors alike. Allowing these barriers to exist, even for 6 months, could have huge consequences for everyone involved.

“This is an extremely important issue, especially for women, and we will not let this issue be buried under red tape for 6 months,” concluded Elizabeth Bang.

Further Information:

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“Women Influencing Policy”