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Is there anybody out there?

Are there any professionals working in the field of treating victims of sex crimes, abuse or trauma in New Zealand supporting the ACC sensitive claims clinical pathway, questions the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ).

“The Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care certainly don’t,” said Elizabeth Bang, NCWNZ National President. “Likewise Social Workers, Counsellors, Therapists, Psychotherapist, Clinical Psychologists, Specialist Sexual Violence Agencies (SSVAs), Community Support Agencies, such as the National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges, Massey University, the NCWNZ and the average person on the street – are all singing from the same song-sheet. The assessment system needs to be rolled back to what was in place before the clinical pathway, the clinical pathway needs to be reviewed immediately, and ALL specialists in the field, academia, medicine, community representatives need to be invited to ACC’s consultation table.”

NCWNZ’s perspective on the clinical pathway is that the policy is blatantly discriminatory.

“An analysis according to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been undertaken on what effects this policy has now and in the future,” said Elizabeth Bang. “The fact that fewer victims of trauma are presenting themselves for assessment and recovery ticks the first box in demonstrating the current clinical pathways are a discriminatory barrier.”

Women are the main users of ACC subsidised treatments for recovery. An estimated 30% of women in New Zealand will be victims of sex crimes. Within this group, many women will experience trauma, which requires treatment for them to recover and advance in life. Women are also the major providers of community-based sexual violence and victim support; the social work, therapist and counselling professions. No longer having the ability to provide an assessment undermines the viability and retention of these services. The DSM IV diagnostic tool, now used for assessments, classifies women as having mental illness, thereby limiting their access to insurance, mortgages, and advancement in employment.

NCWNZ believes that the sensitive claims “clinical pathway” causes the following direct and indirect discrimination under CEDAW:

- Article 3: limiting a women’s opportunity for functionality and advancement in all facets of life.
- Article 5: limiting a woman’s opportunity to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct; no longer accessing essential skills to break cycles of violence, intergenerational dysfunctionality, which in the longer term may result in an increase in criminal behaviour in the community.
- Article 6: limiting youth’s ability to access recovery treatment (ECPAT: 64% of underage prostitutes have historically been victims of sex crime) and potentially increasing the level of prostitution and sexual exploitation with less youth/women moving out of the sex industry.

- Article 7: creating a financial barrier for women re-presenting for further recovery treatment, and reducing women's participating in the formulation of government policy, holding public office and performing all public functions at all levels of government.
- Article 10: without recovery, fewer women will present themselves for continuing education. Potentially more girls will leave school in advance of completing their qualifications.
- Article 11: limiting a woman's opportunity for promotion in employment, increasing the likelihood of substandard performance, increasing the vulnerability to exploitation and sexual harassment, market shrinkage in the 'recovery' professions.
- Article 12: increasing teenage pregnancy, increasing levels of STI's, increasing levels of self-harm and suicidal tendencies.
- Article 13: limiting economic opportunities, limiting the financial independence of 'recovery' professionals, limiting women's ability to enjoy social life at an equal level to men's.
- Article 14: women residing in rural areas are the sub-grouping most adversely affected by the changes implement through the clinical pathway. The level of discrimination increases further if they are also of Maori, Pacific or any other ethnicity, other than NZ-European.
- Article 16: limiting the ability of victims of sex crimes, who have experienced trauma, to recognise and break cycles of violence and poor functionality.

"The clinical pathway, without any professional support has literally imploded," says Elizabeth Bang.

"NCWNZ encourages the Minister of ACC to take the necessary action that all believe he wishes to take. The Minister doesn't have time to support this nonsense, it's time to intervene," concludes Elizabeth Bang.

Further Information:

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