

Submission - Green Paper for Vulnerable Children

I, _____ of _____ make the following submission:

I would like to commend the Government for undertaking this Green Paper process. Child abuse is an epidemic problem in New Zealand, we have the fifth highest rate of death by child abuse in the OECD. For every death, thousands of children are neglected and abused – physically, sexually and emotionally.

That is why **I support the introduction of training in the prevention of child abuse** as a requirement for all professionals that work directly with children.

Government policy has to move from dealing with child abuse to **preventing child abuse**, and from treating the urgent and vocal to **eliminating the causes**.

The **Government has identified four key areas** where it would like to do more:

- **Share responsibility**
- **Show leadership**
- **Make child-centred policy changes**
- **Make child-centred practice changes**

In all four of these areas **training** would improve the outcomes and help the Government achieve its desired goals and help **eliminate the causes of child abuse**.

There is no point in introducing mandatory reporting of child abuse if people are not taught how to identify the abuse. Child abuse will only be eliminated when every adult has the knowledge and ability to recognise the warnings signs and the confidence to take action. Professionals working with children whether in education, health, social services or sport, ought to be required to undertake some form of training.

- **Parents and caregivers** with vulnerable children should be given access to workshops and programmes that teach about child abuse prevention.
- **Communities** should also be given access to child abuse prevention programmes as it takes more than just one person to raise a child.
- **The Vulnerable Children's Action Plan** should include the goal of having all frontline public sector workers who have direct contact with children undertake child abuse prevention training.
- **Legislation changes** should be made that require all professionals who have direct contact with children to undertake child abuse prevention training.
- **Whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori leaders** should have child abuse prevention programmes and workshop services available within their communities.
- **Government should reprioritise spending to provide** child abuse prevention programmes and workshops so social workers can identify and address problems as they begin to surface.
- **Improving the workforce for children** can only be achieved by equipping those professionals with the right tools to identify and prevent child abuse.

(Signature)

(Date)