



## Proactive Release

### Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

#### Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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## Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: [childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz)

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

**Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.**

<b>Contact Name:</b>	9 ( 2 ) □ ( a )
<b>Email Address:</b>	
<b>Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Organisation Name:</b>	[Please include if you are submitting on behalf of an organisation]
<b>Organisation description:</b> (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	A concerned mother.
<b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	

## Submission Content

*I am sorry, I now see I have missed the deadline for submission. I will send this unfinished version anyway, and if it is still allowable, please let me know and I can complete it more thoroughly.*

*Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document and congratulate you for making this a priority for your government and our young people.*

*I have no formal affiliation to any particular organisation, but I am a mother of two young children aged 6 and 8. I feel in many ways this is the calm before the storm, the halcyon days before something will intrude their lives that will change them forever – they do not have cell phones.*

*It is frightening looking forward to what is like to come from the “tsunami of porn” as one commentator called it. All I know is that public places are increasingly becoming unsafe for my daughter, as boys and men lose any boundaries regarding personal respect and space toward women. In one week in our local newspaper, there were two stories in the court news which highlighted the growing problem around women’s lack of agency over their own bodies. One detailed a man who had hidden a camera in a shampoo bottle in a shower in his air b and b so he could covertly film women using the bathroom, and another, a man who had a camera set up so he could film up women’s skirts without their knowledge or consent. A schoolgirls’ gymnastics and dance routine which was on during the English cricket teams’ visit here had to be cancelled due to the crude and highly sexual catcalls from the male spectators, many of whom would have been fathers themselves. Safe space for women and girls is diminishing. We can congratulate ourselves ( as we have) on being the first country in the world to grant women the vote, but I fail to get excited about this when we continue to allow degrading and dehumanising filmed sexual torture (otherwise known as modern pornography) remain fully accessible to anyone. This material shows women to be submissive, to be pieces of a body rather than a whole human, to be ‘less than’ human.*

*What does this mean for our young people? This means that boys are confused as to what consent means, as most pornographic clips show women ‘enjoying’ violent, rough, or debasing treatment. “I thought because she was crying, it meant she liked it”, was one comment. It tells them women are “up for it” at any time. It tells them affection, respect, playfulness, attentiveness and tenderness do not play any role in human sexual activity. It tells them their sexual satisfaction is paramount, and women do not deserve respect.*

*Long term, it can lead to huge problems and porn addiction, whereby young men are unable to be turned on by an actual partner. This can happen to anyone – one of our finest athletes, Nick Willis, has publicly spoken about the problems porn addiction cost him and his marriage.*

*What does it mean for our young girls? It means having to deal with porn-obsessed boys. It means being pressured for nude photos. It means being forced to have sex without*

*protection. It means being expected to perform sexual acts and positions which are painful and unenjoyable, and which are leading to physical injuries for some girls. It means being seen as sexual only, not a human with thoughts, rights, a personality, with their own likes and dislikes. It means being seen as "less than".*

*New Zealand has appalling sexual and domestic violence statistics. I feel measures to address these have to start with the next generation, and the material available to them does not encourage caring, empathetic, or respectful attitudes toward women.*

*Please make sure this issue is not ignored as part of the Wellbeing Strategy. It is vitally important.*

*If this submission is still admissible, please let me know and I can prepare a more comprehensive submission or update.*

*Many thanks for your time. 9 ( 2 ) □ ( a )*

Please note that your submission will become official information. This means that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may be required to release all or part of the information contained in your submission in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may withhold all or parts of your submission if it is necessary to protect your privacy or if it has been supplied subject to an obligation of confidence.

Please tell us if you don't want all or specific parts of your submission released, and the reasons why. Your views will be taken into account in deciding whether to withhold or release any information requested under the Official Information Act and in deciding if, and how, to refer to your submission in any possible subsequent paper prepared by the Department.



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<b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	I am a concerned mother of 6 and 8 year old children. I applaud this effort to enhance the wellbeing of our most precious resource. I feel very strongly that the unfettered access our children have to toxic and misogynistic pornography is a harm to them, and it is our responsibility to protect them and society in general from that harm. The strategy framework outlines goals of enhancing mental and sexual health for our young people and empowering them to make informed and wise decisions regarding their sexual expression. Study after study shows consumers of pornography have their attitudes and therefore their behaviours towards women gravely hampered by what they see in modern day pornography, and their own ability to form supportive, respectful and successful personal relationships is also harmed. My submission takes the form of a letter I recently sent to the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern. It may be a little unusual for a submission as such, but says what I want to say. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute. All power to you all as you develop the strategy.

## Submission Content

Dear Ms Adern

*Thank you for the opportunity to write directly to you. I am so grateful in New Zealand we have such open access to our Ministers and Members of Parliament. Congratulations on your first year in Government. You and your team have shown you are not scared of making big, bold moves in response to urgent needs, and I applaud you for that. Your speech recently at the United Nations was nothing short of brilliant and made me ridiculously proud to be a New Zealander. I will show this speech to my children when they are older and say "This is what it means to be a New Zealander, and this is what New Zealanders can do."*

*You stated in your speech you wanted New Zealand to be the best place in the world to be a child. You have made improving the lives of New Zealand's children a priority and have made it clear this is your major focus. What I would like to do is to ask for your help in changing the landscape for our children in one particular way.*

*I am a nurse, and a mother of a six year old son and an eight year old daughter. Parenthood no doubt has always been a challenge through the ages, but no generation of parents (now you included, congratulations!) has faced the problems we do in dealing with and guiding our children through the digital age. And for me the most concerning issue is the effect and mind warping capability of what I call filmed sexual torture, otherwise known as modern pornography. The popularity of the cell phone and other devices mean that this utterly toxic material is available to our young people 24/7. For the purposes of this letter, I am going to focus on the legal trading or distribution of online pornography, not the illegal trade of child abuse images, which is a no less appalling, but slightly separate issue.*

*I am not a bible waving conservative, or a wowser. Nudity doesn't bother me, nor does depictions of respectful, affectionate and fun-loving sex between consenting adults. However, modern pornography, easily accessed by our children and youth either on purpose or incidentally, is now uniformly known to espouse and endorse violent, degrading and humiliating attitudes and behaviours towards women.*

*Worldwide, the evidence is amassing, and it is all saying one thing - our children's childhoods are being eroded by the pornography industry and it is having devastating effects on our youth, and on society in general.*

*Some facts: (taken from the EChildhood website, an Australian charity working to bring policy changes to protect children from pornography)*

*- Minors who have been exposed to pornography 1) have sex themselves earlier, 2) have less progressive gender attitudes, 3) are more likely to view women as sex objects, 4) are more accepting of sexual violence, 5) are more likely to believe that women enjoy being raped, and 6) are more likely to engage in sexual violence.*

*- A study of the most popular porn scenes showed 88% contained physical aggression, 94% of it directed toward women; in 95% of cases the victim was shown to respond either neutrally or with pleasure.*

*- Research has shown that consumption of pornography can lead to addiction, with similar neurological processes to those observed in substance addiction. It can lead to erectile dysfunction and an inability to gain pleasure from actual human sexual contact. (All study references are available on the website).*

*The research is unequivocal – we are exposing our children to damaging pornographic material before they are developmentally able to process it. I believe, and so do many others, that allowing this to happen is, in fact, child abuse by neglect. It leaves children confused, pressured and unable to deal with very adult concepts, which in turn affects their ability to develop their sexuality at their own pace. It is leaving our boys with the belief that during sex they should be dominant, violent and ignorant of their partner's pleasure and autonomy, including whether they consent or not. It leaves our girls trying to deal with porn-obsessed boys and feeling they need to act a certain way, and engage in activities they don't like, to keep their interest.*

*These attitudes of women being “lesser-than” or not deserving of rights as full human beings, are clearly evident in our appalling sexual and domestic violence statistics. I am also noticing how dangerous public spaces are becoming for women, as a flow-on effect of the idea that women's bodies and body parts are eternally available to men for their sexual pleasure and comment. In the last two weeks in our local newspaper there were two cases in the court news – one about a man convicted for hiding a camera in a shampoo bottle in the shower of his Air bnb rental; and another about a man convicted for ‘upskirting’ (taking photos up women's skirts) at a local shopping mall. Last year, a gymnastics troupe of 12 and 13 year olds had to cancel their public display in Wellington, due to the crude and sexual catcalls of adult men watching their performance. As a mother of a daughter, I am appalled that people are taking away my daughter's trust in the world. Where can she go and feel safe? Taking a shower in paid accommodation? Shopping with her friends at the mall? Performing with her dance group? Anywhere? Nowhere. The Women and Equalities Select Committee in the UK recently released a report which stated “sexual harassment pervades the lives of women and girls and is deeply ingrained in our culture.” They found roughly 2/3 of women will experience sexual harassment in public places, and this rises to 85% of women aged 18-24. There is no reason to think the statistics would be different here, if not now, then soon. The Committee recommended a ban on watching pornography in public places such as trains, buses or in lecture theatres and advised an evidence-based approach to addressing the harms of pornography along the lines of road safety or anti-smoking campaigns.*

*And for my son, the pornographers are not worried about how his natural interest in sex is going to be influenced by the toxic material they produce. They won't mind if he is unable to have a loving relationship with an actual woman because he is being hardwired to consume artificial sex between people with engineered bodies and scripted misogynistic story lines. As parents, we are told to “keep talking to your children about sex” and “monitor all devices.” He is only six and he is already my go-to guy for things technological in the house. His no. 1 item on his Christmas list is an I-phone X, (whatever that is, and no, Santa will not be getting him one). It is not logical to expect me to be able to monitor everything on his phone or his friends' phones when they get them, particularly if they or the software developers do not want me to find it. And I am more than happy to have the birds and the bees discussion with him. What I resent is having to talk to him about some of the extreme scenes he can and will see when he and his friends start exploring. “Actually, son, women don't like being urinated on; actually son, they don't like being hit, slapped, strangled or gagged. They don't like being called degrading names or to be hurt.”*

*I apologise for being so emotive, but we are drowning in this. It is too much for parents, and it is too much for schools. We need action from government. We are signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We must protect their right to be kept safe from harm. Before, we could claim ignorance on the issue, but now the evidence is unequivocal and now we know better – violent, degrading and misogynistic pornography is harmful, to everyone, but particularly our most vulnerable.*

*Globally, pornography is slowly being recognised as the public health crisis that it is. Bold, innovative moves are needed and some governments are stepping up. The UK government has passed legislation requiring internet providers to provide an ‘opt-out’ clause for pornographic consumption and next year, will require pornographic distributors to gain age -verification. David Cameron, in his time as Prime Minister, was particularly instrumental in moving this issue forward. He pointed out the “lack of action in this area has led to harmful and in some cases truly dreadful consequences for our children” and urged a more active, aware and responsible approach by governments, internet providers, parents, educators and charities. Australia, Canada, and Norway are all looking closely at this issue.*

*Here in New Zealand, there have been some encouraging signs that this issue might be taking hold under your Government. Your Minister for Children, Tracey Martin, has indicated she wants to move forward in this area, as has the Chief Censor, David Shanks. His office has just released New Zealand based research indicating that a quarter of under 12s have accessed pornography and that children themselves have asked for this to be better regulated. I have heard there is a cross -agency Pornography Working Party in the pipeline but am unsure as to its jurisdiction or who it comprises. I am aware the Governance and Administration select committee is currently working on a response to a petition by Family First to have an expert panel look into the effects on pornography in New Zealand on society as a whole, and to make recommendations to Parliament. I also plan on making a submission to the Government’s Youth and Child Well-being Strategy on this topic.*

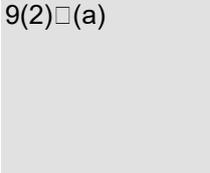
*This is all encouraging. But any progress seems to be at a glacial pace. We are by neglect conducting a huge social experiment on our youth and we are playing recklessly with their future and ours. Brave, bold initiatives are what we need in New Zealand, and what your government is making a name for itself for. I realise you have so much on your plate and will field requests from many people daily to take up their cause. I just ask for whatever help you can give to those working on the issue, and for you to personally take an interest as part of your passion for improving the future for our beautiful tamariki.*

*As Dame Whina Cooper famously said:*

***“Take care of our children. Take care of what they hear, take care of what they see, take care of what they feel. For how the children grow, so will be the shape of Aotearoa.”***

*Thank you for your time and all the very best.*

9(2)(a)



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