



## 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.

An external party holds copyright on this material and therefore its re-use cannot be licensed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

## 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>	Sue Swinbourne
<b>Email Address:</b>	sue.swinbourne@southlandhelp.nz
<b>Phone Number:</b>	03 2184358
<b>Organisation Name:</b>	Rape and Abuse Support Centre (Southland) Inc. Known as Southland Help.
<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?)	<p><b>Our Mission:</b> To promote the safety and well being of children, young people, women and men, through advocacy, education, counselling, information, advice and support.</p> <p><b>Our Vision:</b> The elimination of all forms of rape and sexual abuse against children, young people, women and men and society.</p> <p>We are local organisation but part of a number of umbrella organisations such as Southland Respect, a network of those organisations who deal with family harm in Southland and TOAH-NEST Te Ohaakii a Hine – National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together.</p> <p>We saw 232 clients from 1 Jul 17 – 30 Jun 18 and of those 70 were under 17. Our clients would have received counselling or if they were younger play therapy to help with their exposure to sexual harm/abuse.</p>
<b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p>The impacts on Children and Youth wellbeing that we see through our service are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poverty</li> <li>Seasonal jobs</li> <li>Mental health</li> <li>Housing insecurity</li> <li>Co parenting arrangements</li> <li>Lack of social workers especially in schools</li> </ul>

## Submission Content

*We cover the Southland Region and we find the clients we deal with often have multi layers of things that are affecting their lives.*

- A number of children/young people shift around because of housing insecurity. The climate in Invercargill can be harsh and in the winter we see children that live in cold and damp accommodation. There is a lack of warm dry housing that is at a reasonable cost.*
- Mental health – A number of our young people are suffering from poor mental health or come from an environment where their caregivers are suffering from poor mental health. Our mental health workers down here are overworked and can only see high needs clients. We often find that if there is a hint of sexual harm/sexual abuse that Mental Health are very quick to refer to us and there seems to be a lack of engagement with Mental Health once they engage with our service.*
- Poverty - We find there are a number of grandparents who have custody of their grand children to protect their grand children from more sexual harm/abuse. Grandparents struggle with the costs of the children as many grandparents only have their pension. While a number of grandparents have social workers in their lives, the social workers are so stretched that there is not the help and support they should be. Grandparents live with the fear that what is going to happen to these children as they age and are no longer able to cope.*

*We help families with social work support and to engage with other agencies that can help with parenting programmes and other support. We also put clients in touch with foodbanks and financial planning and A & D services.*

- Seasonal work – Southland seems to have a high proportion of people working in seasonal work. Unfortunately the seasonal work is not often available in our winter. We tend to have a harsher climate than most and with the higher heating costs and families more confined the pressure on finances is very real and adds to the stress of families.*
- Many of our younger female clients talk of bullying especially in schools and even when schools are alerted to the problem there seems to be little they can do. Often bullying occurs through social media. It is not uncommon in a small place for our clients to have suffered sexual abuse and then because people somehow find out then they are then bullied. Some of our clients would love to change schools and have actually shifted out of the area completely to escape from their perpetrator and the bullying. There seems to be a culture amongst teenagers that sexual abuse is not a serious matter making light of sexual abuse/rape. Main stream schooling does not seem to suit everyone and maybe there should be other alternatives. There also seems to be a lack of adequate special needs help.*
- More social workers in schools are needed. It seems to be there is less preventative measures in keeping children and families safe and more help once an incident has happened.*
- Family splits – We find sometimes our children have to enter into unsafe co-parenting arrangements where children are forced to spend time with the perpetrator of their harm. It seems that even when children are asked to spend time with their perpetrator in supervised access the thoughts and feelings of children are not taken into consideration and are made to see the parent, even if the child is experiencing even more trauma. Our children are the most vulnerable*

*members of society and even though we pay lip service to this, our actions are often very different especially through the court system. It would appear to us that some children seem to be “pawns” in adults games.*

- *Help for adults who feel unsafe around Children – It would appear that there is very little help available where adults feel they could possibly harm a child through sexual abuse or are using pornography. It isn't until the person actually offends that they appear to be able to get all the help they need.*

*Our Society needs to re look at it's values around our most vulnerable members of society and value children.*

*Our young people that use our service have experienced trauma in some degree. There needs to be wider understanding on the effects of trauma. Often children who are being disruptive have experienced trauma.*

*We need to realise that the first 1000 days of a child's life is critical and their needs to be more support around children being able to experience the first 1000 days of their life in a warm loving environment, whatever form that may take. We need to take the pressure of parents/caregivers to make it a priority to have to work full time to support their children.*

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.