



Supporting the best
future for wāhine Māori

Lawyers and politicians attack proposed
protection for sexual violence survivors

What Women Need from
the Next Government

Lawyers and politicians attack proposed protection for sexual violence survivors

A bill that aims to make the court process fairer and less traumatic for victims of sexual violence is currently the target of heavy lobbying by defence lawyers, who wish to see its protections watered down. This has put New Zealand First and National party support of the bill into jeopardy.

“Sexual violence victims are yet again being kicked around as a political football,” says Auckland Women Centre manager, Leonie Morris. “A few weeks out from an election, it’s not surprising but it is very disappointing. Justice and women’s lives are treated as a lower priority than scoring campaign points.”



The bill would allow victims to give pre-recorded evidence so as not to be intimidated in a court room, and would require a higher threshold to be met before a victim’s sexual reputation or experience could be used as evidence, including any sexual history with the accused.

Defence lawyers – including at least 20 Wellington women who wrote to MPs – say they are concerned that defendants’ rights to a fair trial will be contravened by these proposals. But the Bill is based on Law Commission

recommendations, and the latest known conviction rate for reported sexual violation is only 13 per cent.

“Those statistics show that it is not the accused, but the victims, who do not have a right to a fair trial,” says Leonie Morris. “The proposals in this bill are only small steps towards true justice, but victim advocacy experts tell us that they are important steps. Currently, defence lawyers talk about victims’ sexual history with the accused, and juries jump to the conclusion that ‘she just changed her mind’, as if consent granted once means consent granted for all sexual activities forever.”

Please write to New Zealand First and National MPs in support of the Bill as it stands now, before parliament rises on the 6th August – a list of their email addresses is on the [parliamentary website](#). ■

Supporting the best future for wāhine Māori

Laura O'Connell Rapira: Our work must be values-based

A long-term vision for our earth mother Papatūānuku will help create the best future for wāhine Māori and for all of us, said Action Station director Laura O'Connell-Rapira at an Auckland Women's Centre's community forum in May.

Laura delivered her inspirational kōrero to nearly 100 participants in the first-ever online AWC forum, chaired by Stacey Morrison (Ngāi Tahu, Te Arawa).



Laura - whose whakapapa includes Te Ātiawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa and Ngāti Whakaue - advocated for core Māori values of whakapapa, rangatiratanga, manaakitanga and kotahitanga to be guiding government decision-making.

She focussed particularly on whakapapa, “the long and never-ending line from the atua [gods] to the whenua to our tūpuna to us to our descendants.” Laura linked this to long-term planning for the generations to come. She continued: “[W]hat that means is: All political and economic decisions should be made with the health of Papatūānuku, our earth mother in mind first.”

One of the consequences is “investing more in low-carbon jobs like caring, healing, teaching, nursing, gardening.” Most of the low-carbon occupations listed by Laura are overwhelmingly held by women, demonstrating an overlap between centring whakapapa and Papatūānuku, and centring women in decision-making.

All up, whakapapa combined with rangatiratanga, manaakitanga and kotahitanga (see box) can help create “a society based on listening, trust, whanaungatanga, power sharing and aroha.”

How far away are we from making this vision reality? Laura found hope in recently seeing Tā Mason Durie speak about constitutional transformation “like we are almost there”. For example, it is now possible to be educated entirely in a Kaupapa Māori system from kōhanga reo to tertiary wānanga.

Guiding principles

Laura O'Connell-Rapira's values for government

1. Whakapapa

Ensuring all decisions work for Papatūānuku and all the generations to come

2. Rangatiratanga

Ensuring whānau, hapū and iwi have the decision-making power and resources to look after all their members

3. Manaakitanga

Uplifting people's mana

4. Kotahitanga

Bridge building; bringing people together

“That exists because years ago ordinary nannies and aunties and uncles came together to pass on their learnings to the next generation and then it grew.”

Would Laura ever consider entering parliament? No, she laughs, “it's a bit too bureaucratic and a bit too ‘Crowny’ for me!”

As Laura says: “My theory of change has never really sat with people in government; it sits with people connecting like this, [like we are this evening].” The power is in our hands. ■

What Women Need from the Next Government

Following the principles recommended by Laura O'Connell Rapira including whakapapa and caring for Papatūānuku to encourage long-term thinking, we call on politicians to carry out these policies for Aotearoa New Zealand's wellbeing for generations to come.

Thanks to COVID-19, we now know that if politicians believe in a policy they will support it regardless of the cost. And these are policies we can't afford not to have.

Priority 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Moving towards tino rangatiratanga

- i. Start devolving power to Māori in all activities
- ii. Prioritise the voices and experiences of wāhine Māori in all decision-making

Priority 2: Eradicating violence against women and children

- iii. Ensure understandings of gender, colonisation and equity inform all family and sexual violence support and prevention approaches, because successfully eliminating violence against women requires an upheaval of all our public and private cultures.

- iv. Fully resource all safety initiatives required, including Kaupapa Māori services, to prioritise gender equality; address the impact of colonisation (including the well-founded fear of wāhine Māori of social services); and promote social norms that value women and children. The government must consult with victim-survivors in safe ways to help inform the development of policy and services.

- v. Change the culture of the Family Court where domestic violence is currently disbelieved and discounted. Many of the women in the Family Court are abuse survivors but the court does not recognise this. The Government needs to stop the application of the discredited 'Parental Alienation Syndrome' in the Family Court. When this theory is applied mothers

seeking to protect their children find themselves accused of being liars and see children removed from their care and placed in the custody of the abuser.

- vi. Domestic and sexual violence is so prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand that preventing it requires a multi-pronged approach and sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders. Prevention needs to be at all levels, from identifying and intervening with those at the bottom of the cliff, as the strangulation law does, to preventing people falling off the cliff in the first place.

Priority 3: Eliminating poverty for women

- vii. Increase the rate of all benefits to liveable incomes, as women are most likely to receive income support.
- viii. Individualise benefit entitlements to ensure financial independence, regardless of relationship status.
- ix. Increase the amount people can earn before their benefit abates as good quality, part-time work should be a genuine option for parents and others, assisting with self-confidence and wellbeing.
- x. Reduce the cost of housing and increase housing stock to ensure all people are housed in affordable, stable, adequate, appropriate, warm, dry, housing.



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What Women Need from the Next Government continued

Priority 4: Valuing unpaid and caring work

- xi. Implement paternal leave of 15 weeks for the child's father, second parent or nominated caregiver, to be taken either as a block or at regular intervals (eg a day a week), to set up the expectation of shared care between genders and co-parents.
- xii. Establish funding that generates a variety of initiatives encouraging men who share households and/or co-parenting with women to share domestic responsibilities and labour.

Priority 5: Encouraging equity for women via Government contract procurement

- xiii. Implement a government contracting strategy that favours businesses paying a Living Wage and who have a plan to improve gender equity as part of delivering their contract. ■



We are very grateful for our clever and committed Board members. Back row: Charon Lessing, Sarah Herbert (Ngāti Kahu ki Whangaroa) Katherine McAlpine and Sarah Dunn, Front Row: Rewa Grimsdale (Te Āti Awa, Te Arawa, Ngāti Toa, and Ngāti Raukawa and Tūwharetoa), Mira Taitz and Margo Athy. Absent: Ruth Busch and Jo Elvidge.

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Contact

09 376 3227 x 0
info@womens.org.nz
www.awc.org.nz

Centre Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Library Hours

Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Services

- Women's Support: free support, info, advice and referral
- Community Education
- Community Events
- Counselling
- LGBTQ support
- Low Cost Massage
- Self Defence Classes
- Opportunities to talk and support feminism
- Diversity Forums
- Support Groups
- Support for High School Feminism

Designed by Toni Chase