

## **Strong and safe communities – effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence**

### **Report on hui with Māori practitioners and researchers in Whangarei**

#### **Background**

- 1 On 13 December 2007, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) held a hui with Māori who work in the area of sexual violence. The hui was organised with the support of Te Puni Kōkiri in Whangarei and Wellington and was held at Te Puni Kōkiri premises in Whangarei.

#### **Purpose and format of the hui**

- 2 The purpose of the hui was to outline the sexual violence research project's (the project) scope and aims and to hear Māori service providers' views on the project. The agenda is attached (Appendix A). Eight Māori women attended from five organisations. A list of participating organisations is attached (Appendix B).
- 3 After a round of introductions, the project's Research Manager, Dr Denise Lievore, gave a presentation on the prevalence and nature of sexual violence against adults in New Zealand and an overview of the project's objectives and approach.
- 4 The discussions centred on:
  - sexual violence research – concerns and suggestions
  - strengths and weaknesses in current systems.
- 5 This report finishes with a summary of points of difference between the discussion at this hui and workshops with other stakeholders.

#### **Summary of key themes**

- 6 The first theme covered a range of topics relating to the project, from general concerns and suggestions about the project to specific issues related to the work streams. These concerns are reflected in the sub-headings for the next section. They cover:
  - general concerns and suggestions
  - interviews with victims
  - key informant survey
  - case tracking/attrition study
  - literature review.

- 7 The second theme covered issues related to strengths and weaknesses in current systems. They were:
- victim services
  - the criminal justice system.

## **Theme 1: Sexual violence research**

### ***General concerns and suggestions***

- 8 The participants believed that this research should provide opportunities for women to speak, be heard and, more importantly, to be believed.
- 9 The participants agreed that all survivors would benefit from this research if it is conducted appropriately. The challenge will be to address key issues across all four strands of the research. If this is achieved, the potential of the research to make a difference is enhanced.
- 10 The research will need to ask the right questions to provide good outcomes for Māori women and, ultimately, their whānau or the collective they belong to.
- 11 A number of key issues were raised.
- Māori have been over-researched. What makes this research so different from previous projects?
  - Māori women are invisible and have no traction in research. What outcomes will the research have that will benefit Māori women in reaching their potential?
- 12 There needs to be a level of assurance from the sponsor of the research that the 'so what question' will ensure Māori women reach their full potential.
- 13 As practitioners, these participants felt humbled to be working with the people who tell their stories. Maintaining that trust and respect is paramount to those victims who have told the story to them. Establishing trust in relationships does not happen overnight. Building trust with Māori is time-consuming but will benefit the final outcome. This will need to be built into the research timeframe and be an integral part of the researchers' skill base.
- 14 The participants stated that the research is bold and very ambitious. The research timeframe is very tight.
- 15 General concerns about the project centred on access issues.
- Telephone surveys would be difficult for the far north, as many areas in Northland do not have reception.
  - Some people in the far north do not have a phone.
  - Advertising Requests for Proposals (RFPs) on the portal 'GETS' is an issue for Tai Tokerau, as they are unable to access it. This will need to be considered in the RFP process.

### ***Interviews with victims***

- 16 The participants believed that the use of the term ‘victims’ comes from a deficit-based approach. Referring to ‘survivors’ of sexual abuse is more in keeping with a strengths-based approach.
- 17 Service providers can be the brokers between the researchers and the researched. The risk is that the brokers, in exercising their judgement, may act as gatekeepers and exclude some women. Researchers can consider other conduits, such as the Māori Women’s Welfare League network.
- 18 The participants raised the issue of how to reach victims who do not go to formal organisations for help. Researchers need to think creatively to come up with alternative, safe ways to recruit. Some strategies could include:
- public notices in women’s rest rooms
  - engagement through District Health Boards
  - advertising for participants or placing a survey in women’s magazines.
- 19 Care must be taken to avoid re-victimising the victims. Survivors need to be assured of decision-making processes associated with the research. They need to know that they can opt out at any time.
- 20 The participants wanted to see the questions that would be asked of victims. Including participants along each part of the research process is important for Māori to be participants. The comparative analysis of different cultural groups – Māori and non-Māori should include commonalities and themes.

### ***Key informant survey***

- 21 According to the participants, victims generally do not present themselves directly to formal victim services. To identify best practice, the research needs to cover a range of key informants or services where sexual violence is not the reason for attendance. These include:
- midwives
  - providers of mental health services
  - alcohol and drug service providers
  - emergency medical services/emergency after hours services.
- 22 The important message is that no one size will fit all. Other key informants include ACC practitioners, multi-disciplinary teams, a range of professionals, community people, and agencies such as Victim Support.
- 23 Where sexual violence has occurred in childhood, Māori women can be isolated from their whānau. The likelihood of obtaining cultural solutions is less remote because of the dislocation from whānau. Victims may have interacted with services or experts such as matakite (seer) and tohunga (expert) rather than going to formal service providers.

- 24 The applicability of cultural paradigms that underpin practice may not be captured in this research unless it includes informants who may be able to provide specific information, such as matakite, tohunga or kaumatua (elder), and wairuatanga (spiritual wellbeing). These cultural paradigms need to be considered in the context of Māori victims.
- 25 Violence has become a norm for some people in society. Both researcher and victim need to be aware of tikanga, which refers to a way of doing things or behaving. Violence can become an impostor tikanga. Services or individuals that are available to some victims will be applicable but unknown to others.

### ***Case-tracking/attrition study***

- 26 The participants asked about the legality of using this type of information. They were advised that MWA and New Zealand Police were seeking Crown Law opinion on these matters.
- 27 The participants believed that most cases in the north fall out of the criminal justice system well before the court stage. They suggested it would be useful to talk to local Police Officers, as they will have a view of why women pull out of the process.
- 28 Sexual violence becomes invisible when family violence occurs. Lawyers who come into contact with women for reasons such as family violence will not ask about sexual violation. It is not mentioned in protection orders and not usually disclosed until later.
- 29 Suggestions put forward in relation to this study included:
- using the emergency departments at hospitals to access victims who do not report to Police
  - consulting with Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care (DSAC) to shed light on matters relating to drug-rape cases, which are difficult to prove.

### ***Literature review***

- 30 Participants provided some sources of information for the literature review:
- research conducted by Te Puna Māori Women's Refuge in November 1990
  - He Kanano research with Māori survivors in the 1990s
  - Haare Te Wehi and Maynard Gilgen – Stopping Violence
  - work by Christina Lyndon
  - the work of Māori researcher, Michelle Erai, who is based in the United States of America.
- 31 In terms of the scope of the literature review, they suggested it should cover alternative models of justice, such as restorative justice. It could also cover studies that look at forensic issues.

## **Theme 2: Strengths and weaknesses in current systems**

### ***Victim services***

- 32 The participants reported that people do not want to go to ACC counsellors. Reasons were not given, other than local community knowledge.
- 33 The participants raised the question of whether women over 60 years of age access sexual violence services. They were not sure whether this group did so, or how they dealt with sexual violence.

### ***Criminal justice system***

- 34 The participants believed that the criminal justice system does not work for victims for various reasons.
- Complainants are unsupported through the process.
  - Complainants are not believed.
  - Some victims do not remember the sexual violence attack.
  - Defence lawyers' attacks on victims' credibility and use of prior sexual history undermines credibility and marginalises women.

### **Points of difference from previous workshops**

- 35 The participants commented that the term 'victim' is inappropriate, as it indicates a deficit-based approach. The term 'survivor' would be more in keeping with a strengths-based approach.
- 36 They suggested that there should be a communication plan that sits alongside the project and is integrated throughout the research process. This would have several aims.
- The public would be made aware that this research is happening.
  - The research would become real and valid in the public consciousness.
  - The research would be taken seriously and not easily dismissed, as was the University of Waikato report on protection orders.
  - The communications strategy would decrease the risk of media and other critics undermining the key messages and outcomes.
- 37 The research needs to be robust. This could be promoted through triangulation of methods across the work streams. If the statistics show that Māori women are more likely to be harmed and violated, Māori women's voices need to be heard. There is a question around whether the public are ready to listen.
- 38 There needs to be ongoing dialogue and contact to maximise opportunities for feedback from stakeholders. The participants would like to:
- see the final questions to be asked in victim interviews
  - be kept up to date with what is happening.

## Effective Interventions for Adult Victims of Sexual Violence

### Hui with Māori practitioners and researchers in Whangarei

Thursday, 13 December 2007

#### Agenda

#### Objectives

The purpose of the workshop is to introduce the research project to service providers and advocates for sexual violence survivors and to establish a sound platform for the research by gathering their ideas on key issues.

Time	Task
10.00 am	Welcome / karakia / mihi (Sonya Rimene)
10.30 am	Effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence project (Denise Lievore)
11.00 am	Discussion
11.30am Morning tea	Summary of key points
/ light lunch 1.00 pm	Conclusion

## **Participants**

### **Non-government organisations**

Te Puna O Te Aroha Māori Women's Refuge

Rape Crisis Whangarei

Miriam Centre

Amokura

Northland Health DHB

### **Government Agencies**

Ministry of Women's Affairs