

# THE PEOPLE'S BLUE- PRINT AN OVERVIEW

## ANSWERING THE PEOPLE'S CALL

**For a developed country, free from internal strife and blessed with stable democracy, New Zealand's family violence rates are inexcusably high.**

We flash our human rights credentials while thousands of citizens, mainly women and children, have their basic human rights and dignity suspended whenever they cross the threshold or close the curtains.

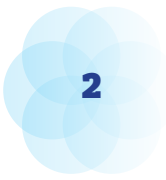
Many people are working tirelessly to protect, save and restore lives from abuse and violence but are severely stretched. We are not sure what works and what doesn't. Too often programmes and services are disjointed, poorly evaluated and competing for scant funding. Frontline staff may be poorly equipped and trained. Those they aim to help are often burnt by the system rather than protected by it.

The statistics remain stubbornly high. The economic cost is staggering and the human cost is too much to bear. New Zealanders deserve better, and they want better. The 500 people who shared their stories with the Glenn Inquiry (reported in *The People's Report*, published in June) are desperate to see changes for the better.

*The People's Blueprint* aims to answer their call. It is the last piece in a puzzle the Inquiry set out to solve in 2012 when, independently of government, Sir Owen Glenn established and funded a project to design a new, potentially world-leading model to address child abuse and domestic violence.

*The Blueprint* drives momentum for change in the way New Zealand deals with the entrenched and complex nature of family violence, built on a fit-for-purpose framework or system. Because this is a systemic problem, it demands a scale of commitment capable of transforming the way New Zealand approaches, plans and provides services to combat violence within our families and whānau.

The transformation will shift New Zealand's system, culture, leadership and services from weakness and fragmentation to strength and cohesion.



It will foster healthy relationships and better detect and prevent abuse and violence while dealing effectively with current and historic abuse in a way that is trusted, reliable and responsive.

It will be up to the challenge of breaking a cycle that is corroding the foundations of a decent society, and now spans generations.

*The Blueprint's* measures offer clearer escape routes from abuse and violence, lined with skilled, compassionate people who listen and don't judge, supported by government agencies and community networks working together.

Support and intervention will be backed up and coordinated by the full force of the State. This adds a potent new dimension to the court system so it can straddle civil and criminal jurisdictions to interrupt the cycle early, while also treating the hurt and vulnerable with dignity, holding offenders to account – and doing no more harm. ●

## CHANGE THAT TRANSFORMS

The views of those at the frontline documented in *The People's Report*, which the Inquiry produced earlier this year, have guided the Inquiry at every stage of its task. *The Blueprint* is grounded in the experiences of those directly harmed, those who inflict harm, and those who try to intervene and heal.

It combines their insight with knowledge gleaned from extensive research and academic application into a plan for transformative change. It reaches through all layers of society, from individuals and communities to political leaders and state agencies and institutions.

*The Blueprint* transforms:

- the system by treating it as a whole
- the culture through a national prevention campaign and alcohol reform
- leadership by taking a sustainable investment approach, establishing a stand-alone operational agency, upskilling the workforce, developing an evaluation programme and resting overall responsibility at the peak of government
- services with a national intervention programme, a new 'One Family: One Judge' Family Violence Court, long-term counselling and equitable responses for the high-risk and vulnerable.

*The Blueprint* champions the basic human right to be safe from violence. It gives New Zealand an opportunity to set things right.

Vulnerable people cannot go on risking their lives or being impoverished when they leave violent relationships.

People in fear should not be choosing to stay in violent homes because they consider the journey to help too dangerous or difficult to navigate.

Hurt and frightened people should not be reduced to choosing a lesser evil.

An underbelly of beaten and cowed women and children should not be a tolerated feature of New Zealand society.

Thugs and predators should not prosper because they can play a flawed system. ●



## THE BONES

A high-performing system needs a strong framework to support measures, programmes and services across the entire system. These are practical, achievable, child-focused and bring about change.

This 'whole system' approach replaces the current patchwork of piecemeal measures, which despite exemplary pockets, have failed to dent family violence rates.

The framework is the bones of the system.

It supports the whole system in an integrated way across the State and community sectors and at every level: national, regional and local or programme level.

It builds on existing strengths, addresses weaknesses and underpins the system with guidance and central coordination that is based on a cross-party national strategy and policy framework.

Its essential elements are: commitment, knowledge, resourcing, coordination and actions. ●

## THE FLESH

The essential elements drive policies and action that put flesh on the bones of the system.

- **Commitment** to reducing child abuse and family violence will start with all political parties and stakeholders unifying behind a long-term national strategy and policy framework.
- **Knowledge** is gathered to inform and keep the system alert to developments and new evidence. It features a national data strategy which includes improved research, data and research protocols and development of a national electronic platform to organise safe data collection and storage.
- **Resourcing** will ensure there are enough adequately funded services, plus tools to check they actually work. Funding of services is treated as an investment, and based on a series of investment plans supporting a long-term strategy. The approach involves communities in decisions, longer-term contracts to give more certainty to the community groups who provide much of the crisis and support services, but is also open to innovative new providers.
- **Coordination** of operations and activities gets agencies collaborating and sharing information more about at-risk families and case managing together. The range of services is mapped so providers know about each other, what knowledge each holds and how they can best help. Greater coordination identifies gaps, eliminates overlaps and ensures people needing support get the right service at the right time. It leads to agreement on workforce training standards and qualifications.
- **Actions** are taken to implement the priority prevention, response, recovery, and advocacy work that directly reduces family violence.

A new stand-alone, operational agency will implement the cross-party strategy and investment approach. It will coordinate and monitor operations through the prevention, response, recovery and advocacy services. It is also responsible for enacting a code of rights and a system of advocacy for those affected by family violence.

A skilled and compassionate workforce is key to an effective system. *The Blueprint* sets out who takes responsibility for this and what the workforce needs to know to understand the complexities of family violence – and to do no more harm.

The court system, particularly the Family Court, is an area where people report more harm is being done than good, often by poorly trained staff and legal professionals working in a dysfunctional environment. *The Blueprint* lays out a new jurisdiction of the District Court – a 'One Family: One Judge' Family Violence Court System.

An integrated treatment court, it is a hub for dealing with all family violence matters, both civil and criminal. It has specialist judges and staff with the tools and the mandate to treat people and families holistically, keep those at risk safe, and ensure those who inflict violence are tracked and held to account. Each family deals with the same judge right through the process. The court takes an inquisitorial approach to reduce the trauma many suffer in a combative adversarial system. ●

## THE BEATING HEART

No system can solve New Zealand's big family violence problem on its own. Individuals, families and whānau, neighbourhoods and communities must have in their hearts the will to embrace change.

The current statistics suggest a poverty of spirit in many families and communities that tolerates violence as a normal part of home life. *The Blueprint* challenges such attitudes, reminding us that the prevalence of family violence and its reach into every neighbourhood makes it everyone's problem. Therefore, everyone has a role to play in eliminating it.

Champions don't need to be celebrities. Small kindnesses can be as powerful as big systems.

The people who took part in this Inquiry said they want people to know what a healthy relationship looks like. They called for zero tolerance of violence.

They want children put at the heart of policy-making. They made impassioned pleas to restrict easy access to alcohol, blaming binge-drinking and drugs for fuelling violence and abuse.

Their concerns reflect how peer pressure, commercial interests and the entertainment media's objectification of women can form a powerful cocktail capable of undermining good parenting and the autonomy of women.

*The Blueprint* heeds their concerns through the action and policies it promotes – such as tighter liquor laws, compulsory relationship education in schools, rolling public awareness campaigns and strengthened human rights legislation. It honours the wisdom of their experience, and their bravery in speaking out.

The people who took part in the Glenn Inquiry were not bereft of hope. They cared deeply about solving this wicked problem. They believed that New Zealanders do care about child abuse and family violence, and that there is a will among us to eliminate it.

There is a will. *The People's Blueprint* is the way. ●