



Amy Adams, Anne Tolley

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Early and effective intervention at heart of family violence changes

Sweeping reforms to our laws will build a better system for combatting abuse and will reduce harm, says Justice Minister Amy Adams and Social Development Minister Anne Tolley.

The Government is proposing a broad overhaul of changes to family violence legislation, stemming from the comprehensive review of the 20-year old Domestic Violence Act.

“New Zealand’s rate of family violence is horrendous. It has a devastating impact on individuals and communities, and a profound impact that can span generations and lifetimes,” Ms Adams says.

“Our suite of changes are directed to earlier and more effective interventions. We are focused on better ways to keep victims safe and changing perpetrator behaviour to stop abuse and re-abuse.

“This is about redesigning the way the entire system prevents and responds to family violence. The reforms are an important part of building a new way of dealing with family violence.

“For many, family violence is an ingrained, intergenerational pattern of behaviour. There are no easy fixes. Our reforms make extensive changes across the Domestic Violence Act, Care of Children Act, Sentencing Act, Bail Act, Crimes Act, Criminal Procedure Act and the Evidence Act.”

Changes include:

- getting help to those in need without them having to go to court
- ensuring all family violence is clearly identified and risk information is properly shared
- putting the safety of victims at the heart of bail decisions
- creating three new offences of strangulation, coercion to marry and assault on a family member
- making it easier to apply for a Protection Orders, allowing others to apply on a victim’s behalf, and better providing for the rights of children under Protection Orders
- providing for supervised handovers and aligning Care of Children orders to the family violence regime
- making evidence gathering in family violence cases easier for Police and less traumatic for victims
- wider range of programmes able to be ordered when Protection Order imposed
- making offending while on a Protection Order a specific aggravating factor in sentencing
- enabling the setting of codes of practice across the sector.

“These changes are the beginning of a new integrated system but on their own have the potential to significantly reduce family violence. Changes to protection orders and the new offences alone are expected to prevent about 2300 violent incidents each year,” Ms Adams says.

The package makes changes to both civil and criminal laws, and provides system level changes to support new ways of working. It will cost \$132 million over four years.

“Legislation is part of but not the whole change required. These legislative reforms are designed to support and drive the change underpinning the wider work programme overseen by the Ministerial Group on Family and Sexual Violence. The work is about comprehensive and coordinated system change with a focus on early intervention and prevention,” says Mrs Tolley.

“Social agencies and NGOs I’ve been speaking with are desperate for a system-wide change so we can make a real shift in the rate of family violence.”

“Laws alone cannot solve New Zealand’s horrific rate of family violence. But they are a cornerstone element in how we respond to confronting family violence. It sets up the system, holds perpetrators to account, and puts a stake in the ground,” Ms Adams says.

The full pack of reforms are set out in the Cabinet papers and are available at www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/key-initiatives/reducing-family-and-sexual-violence/safer-sooner

Related Documents

[Safer Sooner Factsheet](#) (pdf 675.2 KB)

[Safer Sooner Summary Document](#) (pdf 3.62 MB)

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