



26 April 2017

**Domestic Violence-Victims Protection Bill 2016**

**(Member's Bill – Jan Logie)**

Feedback from: New Zealand College of Midwives  
PO Box 21-106  
Edgware  
Christchurch 8143

Phone (03) 377 2732

---

The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are around 2,900 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to on average 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby. It provides women with the opportunity to have continuity of care from a chosen maternity carer (known as a Lead Maternity Carer or LMC) throughout pregnancy and for up to 6 weeks after the birth of the baby, and 92% of women choose a midwife to be their LMC. Primary maternity services provided by LMC midwives are integrated within the wider primary care and maternity services of their region or locality. The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and well-being.

---



26 April 2017

Parliamentary Select Committee

## **Domestic Violence-Victims Protection Bill 2016 (Member's Bill – Jan Logie)**

The opportunity to prepare a submission on this bill was welcomed by the New Zealand College of Midwives (the College). We are pleased to join a growing number of organisations, including the Human Rights Commission, Women's Refuge, and Trade Union groups, in supporting this member's bill.

The College considers domestic violence totally unacceptable, and we join other voices concerned with the significant social and public health impact of abuse and violence. Although midwives work with partners and whānau, alongside childbearing women, the primary focus for midwifery is the partnership with the woman, and the care provided during pregnancy, labour, birth and the post-natal period up to six weeks.

- 1.1 Midwives understand the negative effects of abuse against pregnant women and children, and routinely ask all pregnant women about family violence as part of a comprehensive health assessment.
- 1.2 Continuity of care in pregnancy, birth and after birth enables relational care which plays an important role for both safety of disclosure and provision of support.
- 1.3 Pregnancy has been identified in some research as a high-risk period, and this can be the beginning of abuse, or result in an intensification of abuse. Risks to the mother and the baby are serious, and domestic violence can be one of the most serious threats to a pregnant woman's health, and that of her baby.
- 1.4 Therefore, we welcome all moves that work towards the elimination of all forms of abuse, discrimination, and violence against women, and domestic abuse, and welcome changes that support women who find themselves in situations of abuse.
- 1.5 The College supports enhanced workplace protection, and consider that the Domestic Violence — Victims' Protection Bill, will provide a critically important means of adding necessary flexibility to working arrangements in the event of an incidence of violence, which we know will predominantly affect women.
- 1.6 Supporting women survivors of violence to remain in paid employment signifies significant progress towards valuing women's safety, and the importance of paid employment to the wellbeing of women and their children.
- 1.7 Time away from the workplace for activities such as meeting with refuge staff, and connecting with other support people or services, can create a safety net for women who may be at risk of surveillance from their abusers.

- 1.8 Midwives have direct experience of the dangers pregnant women can face when they are being stalked by perpetrators of abuse. Fear of losing employment can mean that women continue with their usual routines which make it possible for abusers to find them. It can also be problematic for pregnant women to attend clinic appointments with their midwives. Midwives are able to arrange meetings at different locations and times to the usual to protect women's safety. The paid days of leave from work would support this flexibility.
- 1.9 Legal protection for provision of ten days of paid leave to those who have experienced abuse and violence will reduce concerns related to potential loss of employment, and decrease the threat of economic instability.
- 1.10 Research by Women's Refuge found that abusive relationships significantly affected employment for women.<sup>1</sup> In a survey of 445 women, 60% were in full-time employment prior to an abusive relationship, but only 27.5% stayed in employment during the relationship. After the relationship 34% of women were employed.
- 1.11 Supporting workplaces to make their own cultural shift to support employees who are experiencing violence, will not only reduce the impact of economic hardship and potential job loss, it will also signify that employers value their employees and support their wellbeing. Retaining experienced staff also has economic benefits for the employer.

The College supports the proposed amendments as summarised below:

- The addition of a definition of 'domestic violence' and explanation of the definition of 'victim of domestic violence' to the Domestic Violence Act 1995.
- Provision for flexible working arrangements for victims of domestic violence in the Employment Relations Act 2000.
- Amendment of the definition of 'hazard' in the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to include the effects of domestic violence and to require workplaces to have policies in place.
- Allowing victims of domestic violence to request domestic violence leave, under the Holidays Act 2003.
- The prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of being a victim of domestic violence in the Human Rights Act 1993 and Employment Relations Act 2000.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours sincerely



Carol Bartle  
**Policy Analyst**

---

<sup>1</sup> Women's Refuge <https://womensrefuge.org.nz/womens-refuge-research-reveals-the-impact-of-family-violence-on-employment/>