

National Strategy for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Consultation comments to the:

Joint Venture on Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence

Submission from

Te Ope Whakaora – The Salvation Army New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa Territory

30th June 2021

Summary

1. The Salvation Army strongly supports the initiative to create a National Strategy for the elimination of family violence and sexual violence. We welcome the Te Hau Tangata draft strategy as a strong template for a national strategy and our submission proposes that the National Strategy be based on Te Hau Tangata (THT)¹.
2. The emphasis on preventing violence and working to shift attitudes is something The Salvation Army strongly supports. Our involvement with people who are subject to violence and those who are perpetrators of violence shows that success in reducing violence is most likely when the root causes are addressed, such as poverty, housing, systemic discrimination, among many other factors.
3. The national strategy needs a clear understanding of the kind of violence being addressed that is linked to a strong vision for the future guided by robust principles that link to measurable outcomes to be achieved by realistic action plans.

Background

4. **The mission of The Salvation Army Te Ope Whakaora is to care for people, transform lives and reform society through God's power.** The Salvation Army is a Christian church and social services organisation that has worked in New Zealand for over one hundred and thirty years. It provides a wide range of practical social, community and faith-based services around the country.
 - a. The combined services of The Salvation Army provide support to around 120,000 people per year. These services included in 2020 providing around 79,000 food parcels to more than 43,000 people, providing some 2,400 people with short-or long-term housing, over 7,100 families and individuals supported with social work or counselling, around 18,000 addictions counselling sessions, almost 5,000 families and individuals helped with budgeting, other practical assistance to around 6,000 families and individuals, chaplains visited more than 2,300 prisoners, and 5,200 victims, defendants and families were supported at court.
 - b. The Salvation Army works every day with many people affected by family violence and sexual violence, including both victims and perpetrators. This is primarily through the work of our Community Ministry centres, Corps (local churches), supportive and transitional accommodation, addiction services, and prison and

reintegration services. We also work collaboratively with agencies such as Women's Refuge to ensure victim safety and referral to the right services.

5. These comments have been prepared by the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit (SPPU) of The Salvation Army. The SPPU works towards the eradication of poverty by encouraging policies and practices that strengthen the social framework of New Zealand. In preparing these comments we have sought feedback from those in our organisation who are working with people affected by violence or who are perpetrators of violence. We have also sought comment from the co-chairs of Te Runanganui Māori that governs Māori ministry in our organisation. This submission has been approved by Commissioner Mark Campbell, Territorial Commander of The Salvation Army's New Zealand Fiji Tonga, and Samoa Territory.
6. The annual State of the Nation reports prepared by the SPPU have been reporting on statistics and trends in family violence for more than a decade. The 2021 report released in February included data on violence against children and family violence. Each year just over one percent of all children (in 2020 12,861 children) are victims of substantiated abuse and neglect. This proportion has not changed significantly over the past five years². Data from Oranga Tamariki on reports of concern for abuse and neglect showed nearly 81,000 reports of concern about possible abuse or neglect in 2020, with 15,682 substantiated cases of abuse and neglect. Around half of those cases (8,084) were for emotional abuse (such abuse can often be linked to other forms of family violence) and a fifth (3,412) were neglect. There were more than one thousand cases of sexual abuse and more than 3,000 of physical abuse. These numbers have not changed significantly over the past five years. Our country does not seem to be making further progress to reduce violence and harm towards children.
7. The situation with sexual violence and family violence also shows few signs of progress in reducing violence in these areas. The State of the Nation report looks at trends in assault and sexual assault recorded in Ministry of Justice statistics. Just over 6,100 victimisations for sexual assault were reported in the year to June 2020, a level similar to the previous three years but more than 12% higher than five years ago³. Of most concern is the rise in the proportion of aggravated sexual assault instances, that has risen by 15% compared to five years ago.
8. Reporting on trends in family violence is complicated by the changes made to family violence offences as part of family law changes in 2018. New offences created as part of the changes - assault on a family member and strangulation/suffocation - mean that offences that would have been charged under other categories of assault previously are now charged under the new categories. As a result, the trend in the number of offences in recent years since the 2018 law changes is unclear, but overall number of offences has increased since 2014 and is back to same level as 2011. During the alert level 4 period in 2020, Police data reported a 26% increase in family violence occurrences compared to the same time period in 2019⁴.
9. The overall conclusion to draw from this data is that our country has not been able to reduce sexual violence or family violence in recent years and there is a concerning trend to more serious forms of violence within the overall numbers reported.

10. The Salvation Army’s own data from surveys of clients who are offered social support showed that more than 40.5% of people who were asked about social supports options answered ‘Yes’ to the question whether they have ever experienced domestic violence in the year to 31 March 2021, a similar level to 2020 (42.1%). Clients who identified as Māori made up 35.2% of all Community Ministries clients but 44.8% of those who had experienced domestic violence, which suggests Māori clients were more likely to have experienced violence.
11. **Te Hau Tangata** (THT) strategy we believe is a good template for the national strategy and we encourage the Government to shape the National Strategy accordingly. In preparing this submission we have considered THT alongside the *He aha ta mātau - what we have understood* discussion resource. The ‘*what we have understood*’ consultation questions do not include any specific reference to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, yet the Te Tiriti relationship for the Crown applies across all areas of strategy and is not confined to a Te Ao Māori strategy. This could be incorporated into the vision statement as well as being acknowledged through identified outcome areas and planned actions to achieve those outcomes.

Responses to Consultation Questions

12. Vision - Where to we want to be? *Our Vision is for the end of family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa New Zealand – so that people are safe, well, and thriving. This can only occur when there is a significant increase in prevention, and when Tangata Whenua and communities have the power to lead solutions that meet their needs and aspirations.*

13. This vision statement needs to be better aligned with the THT vision statement Vision 2040 “Communities are safe and free from all forms of violence” (THT p.5). THT notes that 2040 marks 200 years since the signing of the Te Tiriti o Waitangi and is a symbolic goal towards honourable partnership: “It requires courage to involve those most impacted by violence to be part of the solution” (THT p.5).
14. Definition of violence: There is no definition of violence provided in the consultation questions. THT uses a broad definition of violence as “an experience of being harmfully affected”. This definition includes recognition of historical and intergenerational trauma through the impacts of colonisation on Māori as a determining factor in violence experienced. It also includes recognition of structural and systemic violence towards whānau, all forms of abuse against Māori whanau including colonisation, institutional racism and interpersonal violence (THT p.16). Such a broad definition of violence is challenging but recognises that violence is a continuum or sphere/realm of experience that makes drawing specific boundaries or tight definitions difficult. The National Strategy will need to be able to meaningfully incorporate this broader experience of violence towards whānau if it is going to be an effective means for structural change in our country.

15. Our Principles – how will we work together to achieve the vision?

- a. Oranga whanau:** *The safety and wellbeing of people, families, whānau, communities is at the centre of all we do*
- b. Healthy relationships:** *Relationships are based on mutual respect and the mana of everyone involved*
- c. Mauri ora:** *Partnerships and the empowerment of tangata whenua, communities, whānau, and families*
- d. Equitable and inclusive approaches:** *To ensure that people are free from discrimination, receive culturally informed support, and their inherent dignity and mana is upheld*

- 16.** The Te Hau Tangata strategy includes six principles with an overarching statement that “whanau, families and communities play a central role” (THT, p12) that aligns with the Oranga whanau principle. The remaining three principles: healthy relationships, mauri ora and equitable and inclusive approaches, do not easily align with the six principles included in THT: Manaaki, Mana, Whakatika, Whānaungatanga, Rangatiratanga and Tautoko.
- 17.** The Salvation Army strongly supports placing whanau, family and communities as the top priority for the strategy, as this is crucial to making the whole strategy one that is whanau-led and community-led. Family violence and sexual violence are not just about individuals ‘sorting themselves out’ – it is about the quality of relationships they are part of and how to improve them in a way that eliminates violence.
- 18.** A stronger definition of equity needs to be part of the National Strategy. The definition of equity included in THT (p.10) asserts that people’s rights to safety, dignity and self-determination might mean different things for different people and rejects the idea that the norms of one group of people should be the standard for all others to achieve. An equity lens recognises systemic structural inequity that requires a systemic response.
- 19.** The Salvation Army understands equity in the context of family violence and sexual violence as recognising that achieving equitable outcomes across everyone in this country will require different types of response and different levels of resourcing and services.

20. Focus Areas – where should we focus to make our Vision a reality?

- a. Focus Area 1: Recognise te ao Māori.**
Te ao Māori enables the development of approaches and practices that support enhanced wellbeing and self-determination for whānau.
- b. Focus Area 2: Bring government responses together**
People and whānau are supported by integrated community services enabled by government agencies working closely together to reduce barriers and increase safety.
- c. Focus Area 3: Recognise tangata whenua leadership and community-led approaches**
The diverse needs of people and whānau are met by flexible services enabled by high trust relationships between tangata whenua, communities and government and shared decision making on resource allocation. The administrative burden for providers is also reduced.

d. Focus Area 4: Strengthen workforces to prevent and respond to family violence and sexual violence

People and communities are supported by workforces that are diverse, skilled, resourced and have clearly defined roles in responding to and preventing family violence and sexual violence. Services are shaped to meet specific needs including the history, culture and situation of people and whānau.

e. Focus Area 5: Increase the focus on prevention

There is greater investment in preventing family violence and sexual violence. All responses heal, strengthen and protect from violence.

f. Focus Area 6: Develop ways for government to create changes

Government's rules, through legislation and policy, support tangata whenua and community needs. Government actions, through strategies and initiatives, support real change. Government funding and commissioning approaches are flexible and enable shared decision-making.

g. Focus Area 7: Enable continuous learning and improvement

Learning about what works and what needs to change through the open sharing of data and research insights from diverse perspectives across government, tangata whenua and communities including victim- survivors, to build understanding of family violence and sexual violence.

21. It is notable that the Focus Areas are similar to the High Level Outcomes as identified by the THT (p.13). The strength of THT is that it links the 6 principles to 6 high level outcome areas that are in turn aligned with 6 areas for Taking Action (p14) that include a series of proposed actions that would contribute to achieving the identified outcomes. It makes sense to take a similar approach to the seven focus areas proposed for a National Strategy. In the bullet points below, we map the Focus Areas to those THT High Level Outcomes:

- a. Focus Area 1: Recognise te ao Māori – this needs to be identified as giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi across all Crown and community relationships. This also needs to clarify the obligation on non-kaupapa Māori entities to ensure they can sufficiently incorporate the cultural needs of whanau in their services
- b. Focus Area 2: Bring government responses together – this aligns with Reconnection - Collective Action under THT
- c. Focus Area 3: Recognise tangata whenua leadership & community-led approaches aligns with the Resolution action area
- d. Focus Area 4: Strengthen workforces aligns with Responsive - informed practice actions
- e. Focus Area 5: increase focus on prevention aligns with Resourcing - Primary Prevention action.
- f. Focus Area 6: Develop ways for government to create changes aligns with the Recovery – Wellbeing Approach recognising the role of government in shaping wider socio-economic policy, commissioning and investing in services and taking a holistic view of overall wellbeing.

- g.** Focus Area 7: Enable continuous learning and improvement aligns with the repair - Commitment area that includes leadership, work of agencies to address institutional violence, and monitoring and feedback for system improvement.
- 22.** Prevention of violence: The prevention message in current policy is confused. While the talk is about prevention, the money is funding mostly responses to violence. Addressing the root causes of violence and seeking to prevent these factors translating into actual violence is crucial for a National Strategy. The THT strategy uses a very insightful continuum model for prevention work (THT p.8) that would serve as an effective guide for planning and resourcing prevention work.
- 23.** Prevention in this understanding requires an effective ‘whole of government’ thinking and approach that recognises the social pressures created by inadequate housing, low incomes, inequality, unequal provision of health and social services are drivers and contributors to higher levels of violence. Reducing these pressures will over time contribute to reduced levels of violence.
- 24.** Other forms of prevention work need to be started as early as possible with people learning about anger management, mental health, and healthy relationships in a wide range of contexts. For example, schools currently are constrained on what they can do, with sexual relationships education restricted to specific ages and year groups. Safe disclosures in schools also needs training and support for schools and families about how to talk with children on these issues. The National Strategy will need to include planning and resourcing early prevention work such as this.
- 25.** Responding to the diversity of people’s experience is crucial to a successful strategy. Current family violence and sexual violence work remains very ‘mainstream’ and not diverse enough to reflect the range of cultures and communities in our country. The cross-cultural responses that do exist tend to be people just getting on and ‘doing their own thing’ about the issues, meaning work is frequently fragmented.
- 26.** Wrap-around services are more effective in responding early and in an effective way to the complexity of many situations of family and sexual violence. Such services need to be free to access – the people The Salvation Army is working with do not have the financial resources to pay for support or counselling.
- 27.** Services need to be available and able to respond ‘after-hours’ – more than a 24-hour phone line, with actual services.
- 28.** The Salvation Army services work with people who are perpetrators as well as those who are victims of violence. Staff need to be trained about how to work with perpetrators, who are often victims themselves. Issues of sexual violence and pornography are tabu subjects that people do not have the skills/words to talk about in the way that is needed.
- 29.** Community-led services need to be organised and resourced to network in such a way as to enable holistic support that does not lead to people having to re-tell their story to multiple agencies. Such services need to be resourced and funded in such a way that enables people to be supported through the journey to deal with the violence and its effects. Funding arrangements need to be realistic about the time needed for this work and not place pressure on agencies for ‘working too long’ with those affected by violence.

30. Community counselling and other social work services find themselves dealing with family violence and sexual violence referrals that really need a more specialised approach (e.g. dealing with sexual abuse by gangs needs a specialised approach). Much sexual violence takes a long time until it comes out, that people feel able to talk about it or find a safe place to share it.

¹ *Te Hau Tangata. The sacred breath of humanity. The National Strategy for Eliminating Violence*, <http://violencefree.govt.nz/assets/National-strategy/1ed211b2fd/Te-Hau-Tangata.pdf>

² *State of the Nation 2021 Disturbed Present, Better Future? Whakararu o ināiane e pai ake kia anga whakamua*, The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit, February 2021, p10.

³ *State of the Nation*, ibid., Table 21, p.59

⁴ *State of the Nation*, ibid., Table 21, p.60-61