



Auckland Women's Centre

Ko Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau

SUMMER
ISSUE

QUARTERLY

2019

IN THIS ISSUE:

01 Abortion Law Reform: Demand
the Best Option for Women

02 Young People Want
Restrictions on Porn

03 Relationship Property
Law Changes Coming

Abortion Law Reform: Demand the Best Option for Women

Women in Aotearoa currently have the chance to press meaningfully for the legal right to decide whether or not we want to become parents.


We have been waiting decades for this, and 2019 offers the best hope for real law change that we have seen in a long time – but change cannot be guaranteed without our visible support. And the best option on the table is unlikely to be passed – unless we lobby hard.

Giving hope is the fact we have a Prime Minister who stated during the 2017 election campaign that abortion should not be in the Crimes Act and she would change the law to take it out.

Then, last year, Justice Minister Andrew Little asked the Law Commission to provide advice on how to remove abortion from criminal law and make it a health matter.

In October, the commission released a paper setting out three possible models for treating abortion as a health issue. These were:

- Model A would not require a statutory test before an abortion could be performed. The decision as to whether to have an abortion would be made by a woman in consultation with her health practitioner;
- Model B would involve a statutory test. The health practitioner proposing to carry out the abortion would need to be satisfied that it was appropriate in the circumstances, having regard to the woman's physical and mental health and wellbeing;
- Model C would not require a statutory test until 22 weeks of pregnancy. After that time, the health



Abortion: A Reproductive Right
Tues 26 March, 7-9pm
Freemans Bay Community Hall

Moderator - Noelle McCarthy

Two powerful speakers confirmed:
Terry Bellamak - National President of ALRANZ
Lizzie Marvally - Writer, Activist and Musician

Donation between zero and \$20

Further Details TBC

practitioner would have to be satisfied that an abortion was appropriate in the circumstances, having regard to the woman's physical and mental health and wellbeing.

continued over page



Photo credit: Andrew Gorrie/STUFF

Abortion Law Reform: Demand the Best Option for Women *continued*

Andrew Little favours Model C and says there will have to be consequences for non-compliance, if the threshold test is to have any meaning. Exactly what these consequences might be is not clear at this time, but Little indicated that consequences could mean that people are prosecuted under criminal law.

However, [Abortion Law Reform Aotearoa NZ \(ALRANZ\)](#) supports Option A, and notes that pregnancies carried to 22 weeks are wanted pregnancies: "abortions that happen late in a pregnancy are overwhelmingly wanted pregnancies undermined by some crisis. The last thing a family in crisis needs is an unnecessary legal process. It is difficult to see what the benefit to society might be in forcing families facing tragedy to undergo a pointless legal process in order to access health care."

Little will take a paper to Cabinet this year, which will form the basis of any new legislation. MPs will then vote on a conscience basis as to whether law changes should proceed.

Newshub conducted a straw poll late last year and found that, although many MPs had not yet decided whether to support removing abortion from the Crimes Act, the vast majority of those who had decided were in favour of change. Fifty-four MPs believed abortion should be removed from the Crimes Act, while six opposed that; 21 did not reply and 40 were undecided or would not say.

A poll commissioned by ALRANZ in 2017 found that a majority of New Zealanders supported abortion being legalised.

Also encouraging is that Ireland in May 2018 voted by a landslide to legalise abortion and, last October, Queensland decided to remove it from the criminal code.

On the other hand, there will undoubtedly be heavy



Photo credit: 1 News

lobbying of MPs by opponents of abortion, who will seek to maintain the same restrictive law that has existed in New Zealand since 1977. This denies women the right to control our own bodies and make our own decisions.

In 2019 it is time to adopt the very un-revolutionary notion that women should be able to control our own bodies and our fertility and decide for ourselves when we wish to become parents – and also be able to access all appropriate healthcare as quickly as possible if we are pregnant and our pregnancy is in crisis, even after 22 weeks.

It is very important for people who support making abortion a health matter to make our views known to the Prime Minister, Minister of Justice, leaders of all the political parties, our local MPs and as many other politicians as possible.

Please email, Facebook, tweet and meet in person with politicians to make your views known to them.

Another chance to change the law will not come for a very long time so it is important that those who seek to deny women the right to choose do not succeed in blocking change.

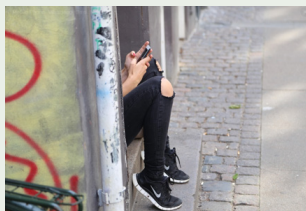
Come to our public forum - Abortion: A Reproductive Right, Tues 26 March, 7-9pm, Freemans Bay Community Hall. ■

Young People Want Restrictions on Porn

By 14, young people are likely to have been exposed to pornography – and many of them are concerned that porn is promoting damaging views about women and about sex.

The Office of Film and Literature Classification surveyed more than 2000 New Zealanders aged 14 to 17 for the research project NZ Youth and Porn: Research findings of a survey on how and why young New Zealanders view online pornography.

The research findings were released in December and showed that two-thirds of 14 to 17 year-olds had been exposed to porn, with one in four viewing it before the age of 12. Seventy-two per cent of teens who had viewed porn recently said they had seen things that made them uncomfortable. Forty-two per cent of regular viewers said they would like to spend less time looking at porn, but found it hard to stop.



Seventy-one per cent of young New Zealanders believed that children's and teens' access to online porn should be restricted. Most young people were not seeking out porn when they first saw it, but came across it anyway.

The survey found that young people were learning about sex from porn and it was influencing their sexual behaviour. They said this was causing problems as pornography was creating false expectations about sex and relationships by depicting unhealthy attitudes, stereotypes and behaviours.



This was flowing through into young men's expectations about sex and their demands of young women.

Chief Censor David Shanks said technological and social shifts had changed everything the community knew or thought it knew about porn and young people.

"This research presents both a challenge and an opportunity. A challenge, because it puts beyond doubt that porn is now a fact of life for young New Zealanders. They have told us in their own words about how conflicted they can feel about this. They sometimes see violent, aggressive, misogynistic and coercive behaviour. An opportunity, because many young New Zealanders have told us they think about what they see, are aware that much of it is not for them – and they are up for having some limits."

The Office of Film and Literature Classification said the research provided an opportunity to take a collaborative approach, including regulation, education and tools and information for New Zealanders.

Strong support among young New Zealanders for some kind of online restrictions on porn suggested that a well-designed regulatory response might be welcomed by many teens.

Many young people did not have the information, support and tools to process and understand pornography, to deal with the sometimes negative consequences of exposure, or to avoid such material.

There was now an opportunity to promote existing resources and to create the additional material needed.

Education could also provide an opportunity for a vital counter-narrative to damaging porn. ■

Memoir Writing

Maria de Jong

Jump start your memoirs and experience how energising and intriguing it is to explore your personal herstory!

Develop strategies for sidestepping blocks, trusting your voice and unleashing your creative power.



Monday 4 Mar - 8 Apr, 2019 7.00pm - 9.00pm
Sliding scale \$60 - \$120
If you would like to enrol but can't manage the full cost of the course please contact us.

Mindfulness through Meditation

Emma Farry



Calm your anxiety, rediscover self-love and find deep self-respect through guided meditation and encouragement.

Let's give our needs the importance and attention they deserve, spending time understanding our challenges and increasing compassion for ourselves and our world.

Tuesday 5 Mar - 9 Apr, 2019 7.00pm - 9.00pm
Sliding scale \$85 - \$145 (includes a workbook)
If you would like to enrol but can't manage the full cost of the course please contact us.

FREE Seniors Self Defence for Women over 65

Julie Poirier



A fun, supportive class tailored for women over 65.

Learn and practice simple mental, verbal and physical techniques.

Saturday 30 March, 2019 10.00am - 2.30pm
Bookings are essential FREE
Please enrol before Fri 22 March

Relationship Property Law Changes Coming

Changes to the way property is divided when couples separate are in the pipeline. A recent Law Commission report suggests that children's best interests should be a primary consideration under property division laws, and a house owned by one partner prior to a relationship should remain that person's separate property.

Under the current law, property is generally divided 50:50 – although there are many exceptions and, in practice, large numbers of women receive less than their legal entitlements due to pressure from male ex-partners for them to accept less.

Previous changes to property division laws were supposed to ensure that partners whose main contributions were caring for children and running households would not be disadvantaged when relationships ended. However, that has never proved to be the reality; primary care-givers (mostly women) usually come out of relationships with fewer financial resources than they should. This can be due to primary income-earners hiding assets in trusts; men making life hell for women seeking their legal entitlements; and/or conservative court decisions.

The commission is recommending a completely new law. Under the reforms, the family home would no longer always be shared equally. Instead, if one partner owned the home before the relationship, only the increase in value during the relationship would be shared.

If the couple bought a home during the relationship, it would be shared equally on separation.

Concerns have been raised that this move away from a default 50:50 split may disadvantage women in heterosexual break-ups; however, other provisions may reduce that risk. For example, the commission suggests that ex-partners should be eligible for Family Income Sharing Arrangements (FISA), in cases where:

- they have children; or
- they have been together for 10 years or more; or
- one partner has built or sacrificed a career because of the relationship.

FISA would see the partners required to share their combined incomes for up to five years after separation, to ensure that the economic benefits and disadvantages of relationships were shared more equally.

Research shows that when it comes to heterosexual relationships, women's incomes usually decline on separation, while men's incomes rise.

Current property division law provides for the primary carer to seek additional resources on separation to compensate for career sacrifices, but in practice this happens very rarely and the amounts awarded are proportionately small.

In addition, in order to give greater priority to children's interests following separation, the commission proposes that the primary caregiver of children should have a default right to stay in the family home immediately after separation.

The commission also suggests that courts be given greater powers to bust trusts and ensure that one partner – almost always the woman when it comes to heterosexual break-ups – is not disadvantaged by assets being locked away to prevent equal sharing.

Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft has spoken out strongly to condemn the "clean break" principle currently used by the courts to divide up property as quickly as possible so each parent can move on. He has rightly pointed out that it fails to take account of the importance of stability for children.

Becroft is calling for children's interests to be the paramount consideration when property is divided, including considering whether it is in their interests for them to continue living in the family home. He is right, and it is to be hoped the Government will listen to him when it acts to change the law. ■

Auckland Women's Centre



Ko Te Wāhi Wāhine o Tāmaki Makaurau

Contact & Services

Contact us

09 376 3227 x 0

info@womenz.org.nz

www.awc.org.nz

Centre Hours

Monday to Friday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Library Hours

Monday to Friday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Services

+ Women's Support:
free support, info,
advice and referral
+ Community Education
+ Community Events
+ Counselling
+ LGBTQ support
+ Low Cost Massage

+ Self Defence Classes
+ Opportunities to talk
and support feminism
+ Diversity Forums
+ Support Groups
+ Support for High School
Feminism