



Auckland
**Women's
Centre**

Auckland
Women's Centre

Gossip

Contact us

4 Warnock St
Grey Lynn
Ph 376 3227

info@womens.org.nz

PO Box 78271
Grey Lynn
www.awc.org.nz

Centre hours

Monday to Friday
9am - 4pm

Library hours

Monday to Friday
9am - 4pm
Saturday 11am -
1.30pm

New Year - fabulous new women

We are pleased to welcome Rochelle Carr to our staff to coordinate our SKIP Single Mums Positive Parenting Project. Rochelle's involvement with Playcentre has given her a strong focus on parents' and children's strengths and needs, and reflective community work. She has trained with Shine and is a single mum herself, with a 13 year old daughter, Maia. Last year Rochelle was a volunteer with the project, supporting the wonderful Chanel Dodd-Edwards. We all miss Chanel, who left to take up a full-time position.



Rochelle Carr

If you would like to be involved in the SKIP project please join our [Facebook](#) page: SKIP Single Mums AWC Network, or contact Rochelle on 376 3227 x 203, or email skip@womens.org.nz or text 021 0293 7195.



Donna Jaser

Sadly we have lost our previous Funding Administrator, Sarita Divis, who joined the exodus for Australia in search of full-time work, another loss for New Zealand. In her place we welcome Donna Jaser who also works as a fundraiser for various artists and arts organisations. Hailing from Christchurch, Donna also has small business experience. With her husband she created the successful YAZA! Café in Nelson. She has two daughters – Ariana and Sasha.

At our AGM last December, we elected two new members to our Governance Collective, Natalie Thorburn and Kate Palmer du Preez. Both women are involved in Feminist Action and are part of the revival of interest in feminism amongst young women. Natalie is particularly concerned about violence against women, partly because of her work for Child, Youth and Family with teenage girls, most of whom have experienced sexual abuse. She is currently studying social work at Massey University, and plans to go



Natalie Thorburn



Kate Palmer du Preez

on to do her doctorate in the field of sexual violence and court procedures. Katie is an emerging social researcher working in the gambling and addictions field and studying part-time for a PhD in the young women's health area (focusing on lesbian health and wellbeing). She values talking with people and engaging them in the research process and is passionate about issues of equity and representation.

After six years of dedicated service our Chairperson, Emily Trent has resigned. Our sincere thanks to Emily for her calm and intelligent leadership. We are thrilled

that the other members of last year's Governance Collective are continuing to serve this year. For more information about the amazing Aorewa McLeod, Caroline Fergusson, Christy Parker, Cissy Rock, Jude Lainchbury and Nicola Whyte please look at our [website](#).

Shortly we will be seeking an experienced social worker with expertise working with Maori and/or Pasifika women for a half-time position designed to strengthen our Information, Referral and Advice Service and our SKIP project.

Rape Justice - a step closer?

From "Real Rape": to Real Justice: Prosecuting Rape in New Zealand (hereafter "the report") by Elizabeth McDonald and Yvette Tinsley. Reviewed by Geraldine Whiteford, solicitor

Largely stimulated by the courage and public tenacity of Louise Nicholas, recent governments have begun (somewhat slowly) to address the woefully poor conviction rate of those charged with sexual offences (only 10% of cases are reported to the police; of those cases only 13% result in a conviction) and the traumatic experience of victims in the criminal justice system. For example, the Law Commission will launch a consultation on possible reforms on these matters via an online process on their website in mid-February. You can read their discussion of the issues on their [website](#). We urge you to take part in this consultation so that it is not dominated by defence lawyers.

The report is an excellent attempt by committed legal academics to propose measures that will increase the "effectiveness and accuracy of criminal trials for sexual offences and alleviate the detrimental effects on victims and other witnesses." The authors' hope is that making the system more accurate and efficient will increase reporting rates, reduce the pressures on women to drop out of the criminal system and produce fairer outcomes. The report proposes 42 recommendations which address a wide range of issues.

Investigation of sexual offences and the decision to prosecute

Key recommendations address the following concerns:

- In 2009, the Police implemented the *Adult Sexual Assault Investigation (ASAI)* guidelines to improve the investigation of sexual offences. The report proposes more intensive monitoring and review of sexual offending cases to ensure that these guidelines are being properly implemented. The report also calls for an increased number of specialist and trained Police units for investigating sexual offending.
- The report proposes that the resolution outcome of all sexual offence cases be reviewed by a specialist Detective Sergeant. Where the Police decide not to prosecute, the complainant should have the right to inquire whether a review took place. If no review took place, the complainant may request that this decision be reviewed by a specialist prosecutor.
- The report proposes the establishment of a Sexual Violence Advisory Group to identify appropriate areas of training required for specialists within the criminal justice process and have input into initiatives to address "rape myths" within the broader community.

Supporting and giving information to complainants

Complainants often feel they are given little input into the trial process. To address these concerns the report recommends, amongst other matters:

- That all victims be given an independent sexual violence advisor from the first contact with an agency, to provide support and advice.
- That complainants be advised as soon as possible of their right to have a support person when giving evidence and of the availability of alternative ways of giving evidence such as by video link or behind a screen.
- That the prosecutor should meet with the complainant with an independent sexual violence advisor present, to discuss her views on bail applications, altering charges, change of venue, the admission of sexual history evidence and counselling or medical records, and alternative ways of giving evidence.

Who decides if the accused is guilty?

Importantly the report discusses the effect of "cognitive illusions" (for example, the acceptance of rape myths) leading to bias on collective decision-making. While these apply to both juries and judges, the authors suggest that in sexual cases there is a greater likelihood that cognitive illusions causing biased judgments can be attended to where a judge, rather than the jury, is the decision-maker. Because of this and despite the entrenched role of juries in our criminal justice system, the authors recommend that consideration be given to trying cases of sexual offending by a judge alone, who will be specially trained.

Specialised knowledge

The report also recommends that those prosecuting, defending, presiding over and administering sexual cases should be specialists with relevant training and experience.

Evidence issues

This report fully addresses difficult evidence issues. Because of their complexity, they cannot be adequately discussed in this article. However, the report canvasses the following issues:

- The long delays in serious criminal cases coming to trial mean that witnesses may have difficulties with recall and accuracy. These can be crucial in sexual offence cases where there are seldom any independent witnesses. Hence,

the report appropriately recommends that sexual violence cases are given priority and are fast-tracked where possible and, if fast-tracking is not possible, pre-trial recording of the complainant's cross examination and re-examination be considered.

- Currently the Evidence Act 2006 prohibits any question being put to the complainant about her sexual experience with any person other than the defendant, except with the permission of the judge. Furthermore no evidence can be given of the complainant's sexual reputation. However, in a very small proportion of cases, complainants may have made false sexual complaints concerning people other than the defendant or, presumably, including the defendant. The authors suggest that where there is reliable evidence of previous false complaints, these should be admissible with regard to her credibility. It seems hard to dispute this. The authors therefore propose that the crucial section 44 be amended to provide:

That when determining the admissibility of evidence of the sexual experience of the complainant with any person (including the defendant) the judge must consider whether it is in the interests of justice to admit the evidence taking into account a range of factors including the distress, humiliation and embarrassment that the complainant may experience and the risk that the evidence may arouse discriminatory belief or bias, prejudice, sympathy or hostility.

- The report also proposes that judges be given the right to disallow questions that are asked in a way that is unduly intimidating or overbearing, taking into account a set of statutory factors. This will undoubtedly lead to some vigorous arguments from defence counsel.
- Addressing the issue of the defendant's previous convictions for sexual offences, the authors support the admission of such evidence only if the defendant has offered evidence about the complainant's sexual conduct or experience. This means the defendant will face adverse consequences for attacking the complainant's sexual past or reputation. Personally, I am not convinced that this recommendation protects complainants adequately.

General

The authors also review the pressing need for specialist community treatment programmes for offenders who sexually assault adults and propose that where a defendant pleads guilty to such an offence, he has the option of referral to a specialist "treatment" court.

In similar vein, the report also recommends restorative justice processes, provided certain strict conditions are met, including both the complainant and defendant consenting. In support of this, the authors note that many victims, particularly where they know the offender well, would prefer that the offender be held accountable in ways other than going through the court.

Issue of consent

The report fails to address this topic in detail as the authors' principal focus was on process matters, rather than changes to the substantive law. This is a pity, as many groups working in this area have proposed thought-provoking changes to the law on consent. For example, at present the prosecution has to prove is that the defendant did not have a reasonable belief in consent. While it is difficult to prove a negative, this model also removes any responsibility on the defendant to show what steps he took to ascertain if the woman was consenting. For this reason, many jurisdictions have made belief in consent a separate defence, rather than an element of the offence. Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP further suggests that if the defendant wishes to use the "reasonable belief" defence, he needs to show he asked the complainant if she was consenting.

Conclusion

Overall, I consider the depth of recommendations and accompanying analysis a superb contribution to this complex debate. The authors note that there has been limited research undertaken that uses a tikanga Maori approach and acknowledge their inability to provide this. What remains to be seen is the current Government's commitment to this debate and to implementing any of these recommendations.

Stop Tui's sexist TV adverts

Tui beer have a series of adverts where women in sexualised, skimpy clothes run the beer factory and men steal the beer. There are far too many problems for women with these adverts to list them all here! For example, one ad contains naked silhouettes of women in the shower with a man present - representing un-consented invasions by men into women's private spaces. Yet when this ad was taken to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) it was not upheld to cause serious offence, hostility contempt, abuse or ridicule to [women](#). Furthermore, recently a review panel of the Code for Advertising Liquor asked the ASA to delete from the code ... "*shall not depict unduly masculine themes or portray unrealistic behaviour*" – and the ASA agreed! (Women's Health Action Trust). Feminist Action has decided we can not rely on the ASA and need to take action against these adverts ourselves. We welcome your involvement! For more info check out our [facebook page](#) or contact Leonie akcentre@womensz.org.nz

Available at the Women's Centre...

Information, Advice and Referral Service

Please phone, email, or drop in for friendly, non-judgemental assistance.

Women's Library: recent additions

Thanks to the kindness of several women, we have had heaps of good books donated to the library over the last few months. We have also purchased a few goodies. Come in and have a look at the new and recommended shelf and choose something great to read. A year's sub is \$5 for beneficiaries and between \$10 and \$20 for everyone else.

Please note: We have reduced the Library Saturday opening hours to the first Saturday of the month.

As well as being open during the week (9am - 4pm), the library is also open on the first Saturday of the month from 11am to 1.30pm, staffed by a team of wonderful volunteers.

Therapeutic massage - one hour long sessions

Available for beneficiaries and other women on low incomes on Mondays between 9.30am and 2.30pm. Cost is \$25 for beneficiaries and \$40 for non-beneficiaries. Please book well in advance as demand is high.

Counselling

Low cost one-to-one counselling is available at the Centre. All counsellors are professionally trained and supervised. They use a sliding scale of \$40 to \$80 for fees and cater for a diverse range of issues. Please ring the Centre for appointment availability.

Courses and groups

This term we have some fantastic [new courses](#) to excite and delight. Get your groove on with [Water Element BellyDancing](#). Rosanna Marks takes us through a fusion of yoga and bellydance in a sensual flowing workout. Let the words flow from your herstory in our 6 week course on [Memoir Writing](#). This course is about writing creatively, drawing inspiration from your past and working towards a goal, whether it be your memoirs, poetry, novel or short story. Kate Millington is back with [Mosaic Mash Up: The First Cut](#), a 2 day basic Mosaics workshop. Later on this year Kate will also run an Advanced Mosaics workshop for those interested in creating more [technically challenging](#) work. Finances are going to be challenging for everyone in the year of the dragon so we've secured [Lisa Dudson](#) to run a one off workshop for women on [Budgeting](#). Lisa has a pragmatic and creative way of achieving financial success, appearing regularly on TV and print media. Also this term we bring back some of our favourites: [Ageing Well](#): The art of creating a magical life at midlife and beyond and [Building a New Life After Separation](#), We look forward to seeing you here!

Women's Talk

An evening of talk for women, by women



International
Women's Day

7 March 2012 7pm

Auckland Women's Centre
4 Warnock Street Grey Lynn

Members: free (you can join on the night)*

Non members \$5.00

Wine/soft drink available cash only

There is a widespread belief that women have achieved equality. However statistics show that there are still many equality gaps . . .

Join us and hear Tania Pouwhare speak about the work of the Women's Resource Centre <http://www.wrc.org.uk/>. Tania will discuss her learning's from working there - and the differences she has noticed in NZ. As Head of Policy at the WRC (2002-2011), Tania lobbied and campaigned for a sustainable women's voluntary and community sector. Prior to moving to the UK, Tania was a Policy Analyst at Women's Refuge, and has recently returned to NZ to work on community and cultural strategy at Auckland Council.



Women's Talk is a series of exchange for women by women - creating the space to reflect, discuss and converse. If you have ideas for speakers/topics contact us at the Auckland Women's Centre.

* to become a member of the Women's Centre phone 376 3227 x 201 or visit [membership](#)

Auckland Women's Centre