

The Backbone Collective

Shadow report to UN CEDAW Committee Information for 70th session

July 2018 Eighth periodic report of New Zealand

June 2018

Introduction

This report has been prepared by The Backbone Collective on behalf of our 1300 women members who are all victims/survivors of violence and abuse. Our report is focused solely on violence against women and what we believe is the single greatest failure of the system response to violence against woman in New Zealand – the outright discrimination against women - gender based abuse by the New Zealand Family Court. We want to alert CEDAW to the extraordinary levels of discrimination and abuse that New Zealand women are suffering via the Family Court process when they are victims of violence and abuse.

We are a fully voluntary organisation and have no funds to travel to Geneva to speak to our report in person. However, that doesn't lessen the severity of the issues we are raising here. In our opinion the failure of the Family Court is currently the single biggest issue of the inequality of women in New Zealand.

Recommendation

That CEDAW arrange for the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to visit New Zealand urgently to investigate the way the New Zealand Family Court is treating victims of violence and abuse.

About the Backbone Collective

The Backbone Collective, a registered not-for profit trust, was established in March 2017. To date all our work has been done entirely voluntarily and we have received no funding other than small donations from supporters. As co-founders we have extensive histories working in the violence against women sector – in policy, frontline services, research and project management work.

Backbone's primary purpose is to enable women to safely and anonymously tell the Government, others in authority, and the public about how the 'system' responded to them when they experienced violence and abuse, and how they need it to respond for them to be safe and rebuild their lives.

Backbone believes the system needs to be accountable for how it responds to its users. To encourage accountability, Backbone:

- Conducts secure, online surveys to collect anonymous feedback from women who have experienced violence and abuse and presents their collective voices.
- Acts as a community watchdog of the Government, the legal system and all agencies working within the response system by shining a light on specific issues.

- Tracks and reports on whether any action has been taken to address the problems we have identified.

The New Zealand Family Court

The justice system in New Zealand is based on the Westminster System which holds judiciary independent from the Parliament. Judges are not accountable to the government or its agencies. Legislation decided by Parliament determines the basis for activity in the Family Court. The judiciary must implement or apply the law in a way that upholds the parties' rights to natural justice.

The Westminster system is supposed to have built-in checks and balances to protect the system from judicial bias, corruption, and inefficiency. However, the Family Court, which came into effect in 1980, is a closed court. This allows it to operate without the usual (and legislated) checks and balances to ensure it acts fairly, safely, and lawfully. There is no independent authority tasked with monitoring and overseeing the Family Court and reviewing or regulating its outcomes. There is no authority responsible for overseeing the safety and rights of children who are subject to Family Court proceedings.

There are a range of entities that should and could collectively be undertaking aspects of quality management of practice within the Family Court, particularly in cases where there has been violence and abuse, but Backbone has shown that these are not working.¹

As most of the workings of the Family Court happen behind closed doors and this makes it impossible for members of the public to scrutinise, unsafe for court users to speak out about and difficult for media to report on cases – the media attended only 14 Family Court hearings in 2016 - a miniscule percentage (.002%) of all the Family Court hearings in 2016. A similarly small percentage of Family Court cases are published online by the Ministry of Justice and these are hand picked by a judicial panel.

Failures in the Family Court have been flagged for many years

Many people have known about dangerous practices in the Family Court for a long time and no one has done anything to address these failings. For many years there has been criticism via reports and reviews of the way the Family Court responds to cases where there is violence and abuse.² Over the years there have been various reviews of the legislation, but most agree that the problems in the Family Court are related to the implementation of the legislation rather than the legislation itself.

Women have repeatedly pleaded with those in authority to investigate what is happening in the Family Court and yet these people have not intervened or elevated their concerns to a higher or more appropriate authority when they have been unable to get involved themselves. Backbone believes that someone should have seen these multiple and ongoing complaints as signs of a systemic failure and investigated long ago – they have been told and done nothing. It seems that no one has been ultimately accountable or wanted to be.

¹<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/59b71d81197aea15ae01133b/1505172890050/Complaints+and+appeals+watchdog+report+12+Sept+2017+FINAL.pdf>

²<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5a94cc1a9140b78a0a3a5061/1519701025135/Submission+to+Justice+Select+Committee+January+2018.pdf> (pg 9-11)

Years of reviews, reforms and complaints from court users have not altered the culture of the Family Court's treatment of cases of violence and abuse which are at the heart of the failures identified by Backbone (see below).

Backbone's evidence of widespread failures in the Family Court system

To date Backbone has conducted three surveys³ and produced five substantial reports detailing what women have been telling us about the failures of the New Zealand Family Court:

1. All Eyes on the Family Court: A watchdog report from the Backbone Collective⁴
2. Out of the Frying Pan and into the Fire: Women's experiences of the New Zealand Family Court⁵
3. Don't Tell Me Your Problems: The Family Court complaints and appeals landscape⁶
4. Seen and Not Heard: Children in the Family Court. Part One Force⁷
5. Seen and Not Heard: Children in the Family Court. Part Two Lawyer for Child?⁸

These five reports individually and collectively confirm and expand on what earlier studies have found. Restrictions on the length of this report, prevent us from reporting in detail on our findings so we urge committee members to refer to these reports in full to understand more completely the shocking extent of the widespread and systemic failures in the New Zealand Family Court.

All the women who took part in Backbone surveys (first survey 612, second survey 291) had experienced violence and abuse and most women reported serious negative outcomes from being involved with the New Zealand Family Court. Women told Backbone the Family Court in New Zealand is neither safe nor enables them to rebuild their lives. The evidence summarised in this section has all been previously publicly reported by Backbone.

The right of victims/survivors of violence and abuse to natural justice is not being upheld by the Family Court and they are experiencing bias, are not getting access to a fair hearing and are being made less safe because of their interactions with the Family Court. Many women first approached the Family Court after separating from an abuser seeking protection and safety, but most said they subsequently wished they had never done so. Women told us the Family Court put them and their children in more danger after leaving an abusive and violent partner. The Family Court has in effect become their new abuser - many women said the Family Court's abuse was worse than the abuser's.

Women feel, controlled, frightened, terrorised, put down, silenced and punished for speaking out about the abuse. They have reported verbal abuse, bullying, intimidation, fear, stand over tactics, power, control, and coercion being used by individuals working within the Family Court system (including judges and lawyers). Women described the Family Court as somewhere where their

³ <https://www.backbone.org.nz/surveys/>

⁴ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/58e696a21e5b6c7877e891d2/1491506855944/Backbone+Watchdog+Report+-+Family+Court.pdf>

⁵ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5949a425a5790a3989f7e74e/1497998414103/Family+Court+Survey+report+final+080617.pdf>

⁶ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/59b71d81197aea15ae01133b/1505172890050/Complaints+and+appeals+watchdog+report+12+Sept+2017+FINAL.pdf>

⁷ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5a3171c59140b743f5abbe36/1513189837189/Seen+and+not+Heard+Children+in+the+Family+Court+%281%29.pdf>

⁸ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5ae99c5588251bf787133d44/1525259361189/Seen+and+not+Heard+-+Lawyer+for+Child+3+May+2018.pdf>

experiences of violence and abuse were not believed, were minimised, and not responded to. Māori women reported racism and some women talked about experiencing discrimination.

Women report suffering negative and serious health issues from Family Court proceedings - from physical issues through to mental disorders. Many women experienced multiple different impacts. This has impacted on their ability to earn an income, mix with others, participate in daily activities, and have hope for the future.

Sixty-eight percent of women had applications, decisions, orders and directions placed upon them prohibiting them from rebuilding their lives - by moving somewhere safe, talking about their abuse, getting support to deal with the trauma, getting therapeutic help for their children, being involved in their children's daily lives (school, sporting activities, social engagements, seeing friends and family), living in an affordable home, making medical decisions for their child and taking up jobs and furthering their education.

The Family Court is making orders in the absence of best practice in violence and abuse cases. For example, a risk assessment to determine the risk of dangerousness and lethality of the abuser had been undertaken in only 10% of all cases and in only 2.2% of cases where there were children involved. Failure to routinely undertake risk and safety assessments in cases of violence and abuse shows how far the Family Court is out of step with international best practice and the New Zealand Government's position on this.⁹

Women told us that Protection Orders are not keeping them or their children safe. Protection Orders are not being granted at all or are being put on notice (the abuser gets served with her application and affidavit before a hearing is scheduled to determine the application). In addition, many women have told Backbone that when a Protection Order is granted, the children are not protected under it as the parenting orders are taken to supersede the Protection Order.

The Family Court treated the abuser as 'safe' in 83% of cases, even when the woman's experience of his treatment to her or the children showed that he was not safe. Women feel re-victimised because they are forced to have ongoing contact with the person that abused them and are directly abused by the court as well. Many women reported being forced/coerced by the Family Court into participating in joint activities with the abuser without any regard to their safety or support needs - 58% of women told Backbone that attending Family Court-related appointments, fixtures, or hearings have been threatened, intimidated, or physically assaulted by their abuser. This happened even if they had a Protection Order in place which prohibits the abusive person from having contact with them for safety reasons. These activities made them feel less safe and traumatised.

Many mothers say that those working in the Family Court accused them of being responsible for their child/ren not wanting to have contact with the abuser rather than seeing that the violence and abuse the children have been exposed to is the cause. When the mothers try and protect their children from ongoing harm, trauma and abuse they are punished, denigrated (put down) and accused of being 'parental alienators' - trying to alienate their children from their father. Parental alienation as a theory

⁹ New Zealand Government Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (2017) New Zealand Government. Available at <https://www.justice.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Publications/family-violence-ramf.pdf>

has been debunked internationally¹⁰ however, Backbone found it is routinely applied (used in nearly half of all cases) by psychologists, Lawyer for Child and social workers and judges in the Family Court.

For many women the Family Court has become the abuser's new weapon of abuse and control. Many women report that their ex-partner (particularly if he is wealthy with unlimited financial resources, or connections) file relentless applications with the Family Court relating to Care of Children as a way of punishing her and the children and keeping them under his control. Unfortunately, this strategy is not seen as vexatious litigation and the Family Court allows this behaviour to continue. Women told Backbone they are trapped in a cycle of numerous Family Court cases spanning many years – 19% of women said they had been involved in the Family Court for over 7 years – some for as long as 22 years.

Women are financially ruined through the cost of legal representation. Indications are that many of those working in the Family Court actively create further conflict or 'feed' existing conflict with their actions and judgements. Many women are unable to get legal aid and are financially ruined by the proceedings. Women have sold property or belongings, have borrowed from new partners or extended family and many have to pay off legal fees in instalments. Some women are forced to attend court hearings unrepresented as they can't borrow any more money to pay for a lawyer and, yet they are forced to defend applications made by their abuser. This is having serious impact on their and their children's livelihood.

The results of the Backbone's survey on children's experiences in the Family Court¹¹ are also cause for grave concern but due to word limits cannot be included in this submission.

Appeals and complaints

The traditional avenue for citizens to have a voice if they are not happy with the outcome of a court case, is to complain or appeal. Backbone's September 2017 report on the appeals and complaints processes available for women and children who have experienced violence and abuse,¹² showed that these processes do not provide adequate independent quality management of the Family Court. Women and children face insurmountable barriers to appealing and the available complaints processes are ineffective.

Appeals

We found that the legal appeals process is not available to all women and has significant barriers:

- It is costly. Unless women have access to financial resources to appeal they need to rely on legal aid and Legal Aid will only fund appeal cases where they are confident of success.
- There is a short timeframe to file an appeal (20 working days)
- Family Court matters can only be appealed if a final order has been made and many cases remain under interim orders for years.

¹⁰ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/2017/08/13/42453/family-court-using-discredited-us-theory>

¹¹ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5a3171c59140b743f5abbe36/1513189837189/See+n+and+not+Heard+Children+in+the+Family+Court+%281%29.pdf>

¹² <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/59b71d81197aea15ae01133b/1505172890050/Complaints+and+appeals+watchdog+report+12+Sept+2017+FINAL.pdf>

- Appeals must be appealing a question of law not fact – if a decision has been made in the Family Court based on untrue information or allegations, that information cannot be reviewed in an appeal.

Women have told Backbone that even if they received a favourable outcome from an appeal in the High Court they experienced discrimination at their next appearance in the Family Court for being viewed as vexatious because they had appealed to the High Court.

Complaints

Many women do not complain as they don't understand what their rights to complain, the complaints bodies and processes available to them, or because they fear repercussions from both the abuser and the Family Court. In most cases women's complaints are sent to the presiding Judge to consider and women have told Backbone they were punished for complaining even if their complaints have been upheld and described serious repercussions that have resulted in biased and unsafe decisions being made in the court.

Backbone has tried to get the Government to take urgent action

New Zealand's commitments under international law obligates our government and judiciary to provide effective remedies to the victims of domestic violence. We understand the standard of due diligence is one of reasonableness, it 'requires a state to act with the existing means at its disposal to address both individual acts of violence against women and the structural causes so as to prevent future violence.'¹³

To ensure the government and judiciary were made aware of the 'structural failures' Backbone was seeing in the Family Court, we publicly released all our reports and sent them directly to the Principal Family Court Judge, the New Zealand Law Society, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice and Courts and many others in positions of authority.

Following the release of our first report in April 2017, the Principal Family Court Judge issued a media statement (see Appendix one), largely dismissing Backbone's initial findings and assuring the public that all is well in the New Zealand Family Court. At no stage has the Principal Family Court judge or anyone else in authority in the judiciary, directly responded to Backbone.

Furthermore, under the guidance of Dr. Bonita Meyersfeld, author of Domestic Violence and International Law,¹⁴ we have systematically and formally advised our political leaders that we believe there may be a systemic problem in the New Zealand Family Court and we believe the occurrences we are hearing about may be contrary to New Zealand's obligations under the various international conventions and laws covering the rights of women and children. On each occasion we have strongly requested that government considers establishing a Royal Commission of Inquiry to conduct an in-depth investigation into the New Zealand Family Court and invited to meet with them to talk in person about the issues that women have told us about. See Appendix two for a log of these communications.

¹³ In-depth study on all forms of violence against women, Report of the Secretary General, U.N. Doc. A/61/122/Add.1 (2006), at para. 257 cited by, Fenrich, J., Contesse, J. 2009. 'It's not OK': New Zealand's efforts to eliminate violence against women. Leitner Center for International Law and Justice. Available at <http://www.leitnercenter.org/files/doc-17866.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.amazon.com/Domestic-Violence-International-Bonita-Meyersfeld/dp/1841139114>

In addition to the communications above, Backbone has made other attempts to alert Government to the problems in the Family Court including:

- Backbone made a submission (both written and oral) on the Family and Whanau Violence Bill.¹⁵ Our overall argument was that the Bill would not address the culture of the Family Court which is resulting in discrimination and abuse of women who have been victims of violence.
- A submission to the Justice Select Committee outlining our findings and making it clear that a Royal Commission was the only level of inquiry that could possibly investigate independently and fully under our Westminster system.

Minister of Justice and Courts, Hon. Andrew Little is expected to announce a review of the Family Court in the coming weeks. However, this review is only focused on the 2014 Family Court reforms and will have nowhere near the independence and scope to fully investigate the issues Backbone has uncovered in the Family Court.

Our communications with Government has provided them with ample evidence that there is a serious problem with the New Zealand Family Court. Our reports provide hundreds of women's experiences of the Family Court and show that these problems are not just the experience of one or two individuals but rather provide evidence of serious systemic abuse occurring in the Family Court. It is abhorrent that with each day that passes while we wait for our government to take action, more women and children in New Zealand are abused through the system that is supposed to make them safer.

We are astonished that despite the overwhelming evidence we have provided, Government has not taken the one means at its disposal to investigate – a Royal Commission of Inquiry. The only other avenue open to Backbone would be to take the Government to court for failing to act. However, such action would be cost prohibitive and we believe it would be inappropriate to ask one arm of the New Zealand judiciary to rule on the failure of another arm of the same judicial system.

Backbone therefore believes we have exhausted all domestic avenues open to us and next step is for us to get the UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to come to New Zealand to investigate.

Thank you for your consideration. We are happy to respond to any further questions the committee may have.

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¹⁵ https://www.parliament.nz/resource/en-NZ/51SCJE_EVI_BILL_72556_A558087/1e4b8fa599b449e5dd39b703cae256aa49be51dd



PRINCIPAL FAMILY COURT JUDGE FOR NEW ZEALAND

TE KAIWHAKAWĀ MATUA O TE KŌTI WHĀNAU

Judge Laurence J Ryan

Wednesday 19 April, 2017

Statement from the Principal Family Court Judge

For Immediate Release

Debate about the Family Court

In recent weeks criticism of the Family Court has been aired publicly based on anecdotal experiences of a sample of people who have sought the intervention of the court to help resolve disputes in their personal relationships. Some of the accounts contain serious allegations about the safety of the Family Court.

About 60,000 applications are lodged with the Family Court every year. The Backbone Collective, which has gathered and publicised the complaints, has chosen to highlight its concerns by selecting 10 court users to formulate a long series of questions based on their experiences. It now demands that every question be answered.

Many of the questions addressed to this office relate to matters either already being actively considered by Parliament around family violence, or which have been dealt with by Parliament relatively recently. New Zealand is a robust and open democracy, and a common feature for ensuring the integrity and impartiality of the justice system in countries which share these values is an independent judiciary. Although the judiciary in New Zealand is an arm of government, it is independent of the executive of government (Cabinet) and Parliament. There is a clear separation of powers. Therefore, policy and law making, and public engagement in that process, is for the people's elected representatives. It is the judiciary's role to interpret and apply independently the laws they pass, with guidance from legal precedent and the higher courts.

Responses to family violence, the care and protection of children and the court's role are rightly a matter of high public interest. Although by convention judges do not engage directly in public or political debate, nor do they wish to stymie or discourage such debate. However, for the community, policymakers and lawmakers to discuss these issues meaningfully it is

important that debate starts with accurate information. Unfortunately a number of the questions the collective now wants answered are premised on erroneous or flawed interpretations of, and assumptions about, the current legal framework in which the Family Court operates. Broadly, these include claims that:

- The Family Court is closed, secret and hidden.

In fact the Family Court has been increasingly open to news media since law changes in 2004 and 2008, and many of its proceedings can be reported publicly. Family Court appeals data is published annually and more and more Family Court decisions are available online at www.districtcourts.govt.nz, a website set up especially to enhance transparency. Since the site's establishment nine months ago, more than 200 cases have been published online.

- The Family Court is unaccountable and not independently monitored.

All decisions of the court are open to appeal. This is the safety valve inherent in the New Zealand justice system. It exposes judicial decisions to further scrutiny and accountability. As well, judicial conduct is held accountable through the Office of the Judicial Conduct Commissioner, an independent complaints body that reports to Parliament and adheres to international best practice.

- The Family Court minimises allegations of family violence during consideration of parenting access matters.

Under the Care of Children Act 2004, judges must take into account protection from violence when considering the welfare and best interests of a child. There are mechanisms available to the court so parental contact orders do not force parents to meet when there has been violence between them. Where there is a final protection order and there is a parenting application, the legislation spells out what matters the judge must further consider. The principles covering parental contact are defined in legislation by Parliament, not by the father's parental rights.

As the Principal Family Court Judge, it particularly concerns me that Family Court judges are being painted unfairly as uncaring and unprofessional and as putting people in harm's way. This risks undermining public confidence in the courts and the impartial administration of justice, especially among people who may desperately need the court's help during a distressing period of their lives.

I am proud of the increasingly holistic approach Family Court judges are taking to the complex matters they must consider, based on ongoing education, professional development, and peer review. This is helping families find workable arrangements that aim to protect the most vulnerable and help people to restore their lives.

Judges take an oath to do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of New Zealand, without fear or favour, affection or ill will. Family Court judges are deeply committed to honouring this oath. It is understandable that not all people who are enduring broken, painful or damaged relationships and who come to court seeking resolution or justice will go away satisfied. But a combative debate that pits the judiciary against those who rely on the court's help, guidance and intervention is not conducive to improving outcomes, especially for children.

For all these reasons, it is not appropriate for the judiciary to respond in the way the collective seeks. Nor do I intend to make any further public comment on the collective's campaign and allegations made therein.

...ends

Media contact: Marie McNicholas 027 88 22 225

Appendix two: Log of Backbone's communications with the Government

11 April 2017	Backbone sent Minister of Justice and Courts, Hon Amy Adams our first report
12 May 2017	Ms Adams replies in effect dismissing Backbone's findings.
12 June 2017	Backbone wrote to the Prime Minister, formally advising him that based on the information Backbone has we believe there may be a systemic problem in the New Zealand Family Court.
16 June 2017	Prime Minister replies saying Hon Amy Adams, Minister for Courts, is the appropriate person to reply to our letter.
21 July 2017	When nothing was received from the Minister for Justice and Courts, Backbone wrote direct to Hon Amy Adams urging her to consider the matters raised in this and previous communications and in our two reports we had sent her at that point about the Family Court.
21 August 2017	Hon Amy Adams replied, saying 'As Minister of Justice, I am unable to comment on judicial decision making. It is a fundamental principle of our constitutional system that the judiciary operates as an independent branch of government.'
13 November 2017	Backbone wrote to the incoming Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, saying 'Based on the information we have gathered from New Zealand women over the last eight months we wish to formally advise you that Backbone believes it has sufficient evidence to indicate there is a major systemic problem in the New Zealand Family Court' and 'We see that a Royal Commission of Inquiry is needed not only to address the harm currently being done to women and children but also to ensure that future victims have appropriate access to justice and safety to mitigate the scourge of violence against women and children in New Zealand.'
20 November 2017	The Prime Minister replied saying our letter had been forwarded to the office of Minister for Courts, Hon Andrew Little, for further consideration.
20 November 2017	Backbone sent a Briefing to the Incoming Government ¹⁶ to the Prime Minister and 14 Government Ministers. Priority 1 in that briefing was 'set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Family Court.
20 November 2017	Backbone wrote to the members of Parliament's Justice Select Committee, urging them to hold a comprehensive hearing to consider the evidence whether a Royal Commission of Inquiry is needed to investigate the Family Court's practices, culture, interpretation of the law and orders/decisions/directions in all cases where violence and abuse has been alleged.
21 December 2017	As nothing had been received from the Minister for Justice and Courts Backbone wrote to Hon Andrew Little, saying: 'We would like to meet with you as soon as possible in the New Year to explain in person what we have

¹⁶<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57d898ef8419c2ef50f63405/t/5a3c08eae2c483c2490cbfca/1513883894520/Briefing+to+incoming+government+2017.pdf>

	learned from the hundreds of phone conversations, email and Facebook communications with women and from the two large surveys we have conducted in recent months, why we see a Royal Commission of Inquiry is urgently needed and why we believe it is the only way an inquiry could happen in the circumstances.'
15 February 2018	Backbone wrote again to the Prime Minister noting that we had not received a reply from her or any of her Ministers to the communications sent in the previous three months.
5 March 2018	Minister of Justice and Courts, Hon Andrew Little wrote thanking us for our work and saying he would reply to our communications about problems in the Family Court separately.
5 March 2018	Backbone met with Under-Secretary to the Minister of Justice (Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence), Ms Jan Logie and as part of that meeting asked Ms Logie whether the Government would consider asking the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to visit New Zealand to investigate the matters that Backbone is raising. She said she was open to that idea and would look into whether that could be arranged.
8 March 2018	Ms Logie sent a follow up letter saying, amongst other things; 'I can assure you that in this role I will work to ensure processes are put in place so the voices of victims are heard'.
3 April 2018	As we had heard nothing further from Under-Secretary Logie regarding our request regarding the Special Rapporteur, we wrote to her again.
17 April 2018	Minister Andrew Little wrote to Backbone advising that he intends to establish an independent review of the 2014 family justice system reforms, but that it is not intended that review would consider criticisms of the Family Court more generally.
26 April 2018	Backbone had a meeting with Minister Andrew Little in which we briefed him about the serious failures we believe are happening in the Family Court. He confirmed that at this stage Government would not be establishing a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Family Court, but instead be conducting a review of the 2014 reforms as per his letter (above).
30 April 2018	Backbone wrote to Minister Andrew Little, formally advising him that, 'Based on the alarming information we have gathered we know that systemic failures are not related to the 2014 reforms and hence a 'review' would have neither the scope or the mandate to go nearly deep enough into the issues we are hearing about in the Family Court'.
8 June 2018	Following a phone call to Under-secretary Logie's office, her Private Secretary advised that Ms Logie is meeting Minister Andrew Little and the possibility of the Government asking the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to visit New Zealand to investigate the matters that Backbone is raising is on the agenda for discussion.