



NCIWR Submission on the Emergency Management Bill February 2026

Introduction

We would like to thank the Governance and Administration Committee for the opportunity to provide input on this issue.

The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) is a non-governmental organisation with 41 member agencies, that has delivered services to women, children, and whānau affected by family violence in Aotearoa for over 50 years. We represent victim-survivors of family violence, specifically wāhine and tamariki, the primary groups subjected to and impacted by family violence.

Rather than addressing a specific part of this proposed legislation, our submission implores those within the emergency management sector to:

- i. Recognise the intersection of family violence and significant emergency events,
- ii. Connect and consult with specialist family violence services during recovery efforts,
- iii. Consider and prioritise access to services or exit strategies for victims of family violence caught up in significant emergency events.

Intersection of family violence and emergency events

Prevalence rates of intimate partner violence, from a representative sample of the Aotearoa population, indicate that 55.6% of ever-partnered women have experienced at least one type of violence.¹

Research from Aotearoa and overseas has shown that there is a significant risk of gender-based violence, including IPV, increasing following disaster events.² For example, after the

¹ Fanslow, JL, McIntosh, T. (2023). Key findings and policy and practice implications from He Koiora Matapopore | The 2019 New Zealand Family Violence Study. University of Auckland: Auckland New Zealand.

² Sety, M., James, K., & Breckenridge, J. (2014). Understanding the risk of domestic violence during and post natural disasters: Literature review. *Issues of gender and sexual orientation in humanitarian emergencies: Risks and risk reduction*, 99-111.



2004 Whakatane flood, family violence services reported that their workload tripled, and Police callouts doubled.³ NZ Police also reported a 53 percent increase in family violence callouts over the weekend of the September 2010 Canterbury earthquake.⁴ This pattern, of increased risk, harm, and need for service support was also observed during the 2020 national lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵

Given the documented association between significant emergency events, the exacerbation of gender-based violence within affected communities, and the subsequent increased demand on specialist family violence service – there needs to be recognition and response to this built into emergency response policy.

We strongly recommend that within the new Emergency Management Bill – the sections regarding emergency management strategy, system planning, and response and recovery – information is added in order to keep women and children safe after natural disaster events.

We recommend that this includes specific instruction to those within the emergency management sector to, prior to significant emergency events:

- Be alert to the increase of family violence after disasters,
- Include specialist family violence services in emergency response and recovery planning bodies.

And during response and recovery efforts:

- Seek out specialist family violence services within affected areas and liaise with them about referral processes while recovery efforts are ongoing,
- Have provisions to additional resource specialist family violence services within affected areas to deal with the likely increase in service demand,
- Prioritise the needs of women (and their children) in their access to services and, if relevant, their exit strategies.

³ Houghton, R., 2009. 'Everything became a struggle, absolute struggle': post-flood increases in domestic violence in New Zealand. In E. Enarson and P. Chakrabarti (Eds.), *Women, gender and disaster: global issues and initiatives* (pp99-111). New Dehli: Sage.

⁴ Houghton, R., 2009. Domestic violence reporting and disasters in New Zealand. *Regional Development Dialogue*, 30(1), pp79-90.

⁵ Te Hiringa Mahara | Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. (2023, March). *COVID-19 Impact Insights Paper #4: COVID-19 and safety in the home*.