



Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers
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AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (ANZASW)

Submission on the Human Rights Amendment Bill

To the: Justice and Electoral Committee

Submissions due 19 December 2013



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2. AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) is the professional body for a national collective of more than 3,500 social workers who have day-to-day involvement with the most vulnerable people in our society. Our work is guided by a Code of Ethics that is aligned with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

Social work is founded on principles of human rights and social justice. We are guided by the Treaty of Waitangi and respect the equality, worth and dignity of all people. In accordance with the March 2012 IFSW Global Agenda¹ “we commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root cause of oppression and inequality. We commit ourselves wholeheartedly and urgently to work together, with people who use services and with others who share our objectives and aspirations, to create a more socially-just and fair world”. We believe the overarching principles of social work are respect for the inherent worth and dignity of human beings, doing no harm, respect for diversity and upholding human rights and social justice.

Our mission is to enable people to develop their full potential; our skill-set is problem solving and facilitation of positive change in individuals, organisations, whānau and communities. We recognise the environment contains opportunities for people to be both agents of change and victims of factors beyond their control. As a profession, we strive to alleviate poverty, foster social inclusion and liberate those who are vulnerable or oppressed. Social work is evidence-based and draws on theories of human development, behaviour and social systems.

Social workers respond to crises and emergencies along with the personal or social problems that arise from experience of barriers, inequities and injustices within our society. Our interventions involve problem solving, development of coping strategies, one-on-one counselling and therapy, family and group work, agency administration, community organisation and helping people to access services, resources and support systems within their community. We work across government and non-government settings including community organisations, iwi agencies, private practice, youth justice, child protection, mental health, addictions and disability. We are involved in research, training, education, professional development, competency assessment, data gathering, risk assessment, structural analysis, interagency protocols and the improvement of social policy.

¹ International Federation of Social Workers, International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Council on Social Welfare (2012). ‘The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Commitment to Action’. Available at isw.sagepub.com (accessed 13 June 2012)

3. ANZASW SUPPORT

ANZASW supports the Human Rights Amendment Bills aim to amend the Human Rights Act 1993 to enable the establishment of the position of a full-time Disability Rights Commissioner within the Human Rights Commission. We also fully support the new functions of the Commission:

- To promote racial equality and cultural diversity
- To promote equal employment opportunities (including pay equity)
- To promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities
- To promote the development of new international instruments on human rights
- To promote and monitor compliance by New Zealand with, and the reporting by New Zealand on, the implementation of international instruments on human rights ratified by New Zealand.

ANZASW's support is based upon the idea that this Bill upholds and promotes human rights, social justice and human dignity and will allow for the Commission to respond more effectively and efficiently to emerging human rights' issues. This is important to the field of social work as this Bill intends to have a direct, positive effect on clients and to improve the wellbeing of all people living in New Zealand. We believe that if the Human Rights Amendment Bill is implemented correctly there will be major advances in social and economic equality in New Zealand and the monitoring and insurance of human rights of all, in particular those with disabilities.

The theme of ANZASW's national Social Workers Day 2013 was 'promoting social and economic equality' with the hope we can start to make positive steps towards a future environment that is socially and economically equal for all those living within it. The positive impact that this would have on not only the people but the social work profession is immeasurable, and this would eliminate some of the risk factors for vulnerable children and adults. The Human Rights Amendment Bill works alongside this theme and overall goal of social and economic equality and intends to make gradual changes to make this a reality in New Zealand society.

The Human Rights Amendment Bill works towards improvements in human rights and equality that not only benefit the wellbeing of all those living in New Zealand societies but also corresponds with and buoys ANZASW's aim to create a socially and economically equal environment. ANZASW supports any Bill or initiative that seeks to improve the opportunities, equality and human rights for New Zealanders, which is what the Human Rights Amendment Bill is doing.