

**Justice and Electoral Committee
Parliament Buildings
Wellington**

Submission to the Family Court Proceedings Reform Bill

Your name

Your organisation

Contact details including a phone number

I want/do not want to speak to my submission

This Bill is obviously entirely about cost cutting and it is already vulnerable and abused women and children who will bear these costs. This Bill will increase the risk of homicide and severe physical, sexual and emotional harm for victims of domestic violence, including children.

Many people in New Zealand are very concerned about the high rates of child homicide; this Bill will only exacerbate the risk.

- This Bill will not keep children and women safe from violence and abuse. For example, key provisions in the existing Care of Children Act (COCA), Sections 58 – 62, are being replaced with less robust clauses which do not prioritise the safety of women and children.
- There are no provisions in this Bill to screen and identify domestic violence or risks to children such as neglect and poor parenting
- The current judicial context prioritises shared care of children. The new process, especially its focus on alternative dispute resolution, will further compromise women's ability to keep children safe from abuse and neglect.
- There is no provision for quality control or training to ensure that the mediation/dispute resolution services will be provided by people who understand the risks and dynamics of violent and abusive relationships.
- The new costs introduced to applicant parties will be a deterrent to going to dispute resolution and/or court. Anyone without funds is likely to abandon or not start the process. This will mean more families, in particular women and children, will continue living in unsafe circumstances. These imposed costs will prevent many women accessing justice and being able to leave abusive relationships.
- The lack of professional legal support will put many women at risk.
- Domestic and sexual violence does not affect everyone equally. Maori women and children in particular are subjected to higher levels of both violence and poverty. Using Maori concepts this Bill should resource Maori entitlement to live free from violence.

In general this Bill is counter to international evidence and prejudicial to women and children.