

Immediate Release

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Sexual violence policy gap exposed ahead of election

Parties assessed on their policies for specialist services, sustainable funding and justice reform

Sexual violence has been largely absent from the election campaign, despite around one in six young people in Aotearoa experiencing sexual harm, according to the national network representing specialist sexual violence services.

Te Ōhaakii ā Hine – National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together (TOAH-NNEST) has released its ‘Sexual Violence Prevention Scorecard’.

It assesses seven political parties against its three core priorities: Fully resourced Kaupapa Māori services, sustainable funding across the full spectrum of specialist services, and justice reform.

"We know that some parties have been able to act because they've been in power, others haven't had the chance. What we've reviewed is simple, what did the parties actually commit to on paper?" says Maggy Tai Rākena, spokesperson for Tauīwi caucus at TOAH-NNEST.

The Green Party received the strongest grades overall, scoring B+ for both Kaupapa Māori services and sustainable funding, and B for justice reform. Te Pāti Māori also scored B+ for Kaupapa Māori services.

Labour and The Opportunity Party (TOP) received a B across all three priorities. National scored C for Kaupapa Māori services and sustainable funding, and B for justice reform.

ACT received the lowest grades, including an F for Kaupapa Māori services and a D for sustainable funding. NZ First scored D for Kaupapa Māori services and C for sustainable funding.

The scorecard comes as the House rises, with parties turning their attention to the 2026 election campaign.

TOAH-NNEST represents 47 specialist Kaupapa Māori and Tauīwi organisations and specialists working to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

The national network says its review of party policy releases shows there has been no comprehensive commitment to sexual violence policy from any party. That represents a significant policy gap, it says, given the scale of sexual harm in New Zealand.

Around one in six young people aged 13 to 19 in Aotearoa have experienced sexual harm. The figure rises to 23 per cent of rangatahi Māori, 29 per cent of Rainbow young people and 31 per cent of disabled young people. The 2018–19 New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey found 94 per cent of sexual assaults were not reported to police.

Russell Smith of Ngā Kaitiaki Mauri Taumata of TOAH-NNEST says the figures, alongside escalating demand for services, show why Kaupapa Māori and iwi-led responses must be properly resourced across Aotearoa.

“From our biggest cities to rural and remote communities, our whānau need access to services that work for them. Sustainable resourcing of Kaupapa Māori and iwi-led services is non-negotiable.”

The scorecard found greater common ground between parties on justice reform than on the resourcing of specialist services. Every party scored C or better on justice reform, with National, Labour, the Greens and TOP all receiving a B.

TOAH-NNEST is calling for changes which can end child sexual abuse – child safety online, specialisation in the Family Court, and treatment courts, alongside a positive-consent standard, and implementation of recommendations from the Sexual Violence Court Pilot.

An evaluation of the pilot found improvements in timeliness and case management.

The network is also calling for long-term, sustainable funding for specialist services, covering the full pathway from crisis response and court support through to prevention and long-term healing.

Jo Bader, another member of the Tauīwi Caucus, said the justice reforms showed there was scope for political agreement.

“When we look across the parties’ policies on justice reform, it is clear they can find common ground. We need to see that same commitment when it comes to funding specialist sexual violence services.”

“One-year contracts create uncertainty for providers, while long ACC waitlists are leaving services to fill gaps they were never resourced to meet,” she says.

TOAH-NNEST will provide its election briefing to all parties on an equal basis, with the intention of developing a fuller Briefing for Incoming Ministers once a government is confirmed after November 7.

The national network says the immediate priority is to ensure sexual violence is part of the policy conversation before voters go to the polls.

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About TOAH-NNEST

Founded in 2005, Te Ōhaakii ā Hine – National Network Ending Sexual Violence Together (TOAH-NNEST) is a national network of 47 Kaupapa Māori and Tauīwi specialist organisations and individuals working to eliminate mahi tūkino. The network operates through a Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership between Ngā Kaitiaki Mauri (tangata whenua) and the Tauīwi Caucus.