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Working in new ways to address family violence and sexual violence



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Presented to the House of
Representatives under section 20 of
the Public Audit Act 2001.

June 2021

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Auditor-General's overview

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

New Zealand has high and enduring rates of family violence and sexual violence. These affect hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders every year and contribute to poor economic, cultural, and social outcomes for some of New Zealand's most vulnerable and marginalised communities.¹ Māori women, Pacific women, young women, women on a low income, LGBTQI+ people, women in gang-involved families, people with disabilities, and the elderly are at a higher risk of experiencing these forms of violence than other people.

Successive governments have invested significant public resources in trying to address these problems. In 2015, it was estimated that the Government spent more than \$1.4 billion annually addressing the consequences of family violence. However, to date those efforts have not resulted in a sustained improvement in outcomes.

In September 2018, the Government announced the formation of the Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence (the joint venture). At the time of our audit, the joint venture involved the Accident Compensation Corporation, the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The joint venture is accountable for significantly reducing family violence and sexual violence. The agencies' chief executives are collectively responsible for improving the way government agencies work together to achieve this.

The joint venture approach involves new ministerial arrangements, new public service governance arrangements, and new ways for agencies to work – both together, and with Māori and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the family violence and sexual violence sector.

My staff carried out a performance audit to take an early look at this new way of working. This meant that any recommendations for improvement could be made early. Provisions in the Public Service Act 2020 also mean that joint ventures and other cross-agency arrangements are likely to become an increasingly common feature of how the public service works. I considered that there could also be lessons for similar arrangements in the future.

What we found

People working in and with the joint venture have considerable goodwill and a high degree of commitment to improving outcomes for those affected by family violence and sexual violence. There are examples of the joint venture approach working well to support agencies to collaborate and co-ordinate on shared

¹ Cabinet paper (April 2018), *Breaking the inter-generational cycle of family violence and sexual violence*, available at www.justice.govt.nz.

problems. This includes producing whole-of-government Budget packages and responding to the greater risk of violence posed by Covid-19 lockdowns.

However, many people my staff interviewed said that the joint venture is not yet operating as effectively as it needs to. I agree. To date, the joint venture approach has resulted in only limited change to the way government agencies are working together.

To achieve transformational change, everyone involved, from Ministers to agency staff, needs to have a clear, shared understanding of what they are seeking to achieve, their respective roles and accountabilities, and what this means in practice. Those involved in the joint venture need to devote time and effort to achieving and maintaining the clarity of purpose, support, and cohesive effort needed to achieve this change.

Of particular concern to me is the joint venture's approach to working with Māori. In my view, the joint venture's partnership with Māori can be successful only when government agencies and the responsible Ministers are realistic and clear about what a partnership means. The joint venture needs also to agree with Māori on how that will work in practice.

Similarly, the joint venture needs to invest significant time and effort in building relationships with NGOs and other stakeholder groups in the family violence and sexual violence sector that will support the transformation that the joint venture is there to achieve.

The agencies involved also need to understand that resourcing the joint venture's work is core to their role. This includes committing their most knowledgeable staff to the work of the joint venture and considering their own work programmes in relation to the joint venture's priorities. Agencies and the responsible Ministers need to be clear about the joint venture's priorities in relation to the individual agencies' other activities and competing priorities and accountabilities.

I have seen early signs that work is under way to address the issues identified in this report. In particular, I have been told that the Minister for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence and the joint venture are investing significant time and effort in developing the joint venture's relationship with Māori. The joint venture's Board is also working to clarify the role of the joint venture and to communicate this role to all the agencies involved.

What I recommend

The joint venture has been a challenge for all those involved, but it is the right challenge. I have made five recommendations to support the joint venture in achieving transformational change.

In my view, the joint venture cannot be approached as just another programme of work. The recent funding towards the joint venture announced in Budget 2021 is helpful, but money alone is not enough. To deliver the change that the joint venture was set up to achieve, all of those involved must have a shared purpose and clarity about their respective roles and accountabilities.

Sustained and urgent action is now required to realise the potential of the joint venture to improve the lives of New Zealanders affected by family violence and sexual violence. The joint venture is an important initiative to address this goal. I therefore intend to carry out further work to review its ongoing development and achievements.

I thank the joint venture's Board, the Director, and staff in the joint venture's business unit, the agencies, and NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector for their co-operation during our audit.

Nāku noa, nā



John Ryan
Controller and Auditor-General
1 June 2021

Our recommendations

We recommend that:

1. the Board of the joint venture continue work to ensure that all parties to the joint venture, from Ministers to staff in individual agencies, understand their roles and the roles of others in the joint venture;
2. the Board of the joint venture continue work to clarify, affirm, and communicate the role, authority, and function of the Director and the joint venture's business unit;
3. the joint venture, led by the Board and the Director, continue its work with Ministers and Māori to agree what partnership looks like in the context of the joint venture;
4. the joint venture, led by the Board and the Director, work with stakeholders from the family violence and sexual violence sector to consider and agree how they will work together; and
5. the Board of the joint venture ensure that the joint venture has sufficient and appropriate resources to deliver the transformational change it was set up to achieve. This will include ensuring:
 - that the joint venture business unit is able to access people with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience to support and lead collective work; and
 - that staff within each joint venture agency have the capacity to prioritise joint venture work.

Introduction

- 1.1 In this Part, we set out:
- why we did the audit;
 - what we looked at;
 - our understanding of the joint venture approach; and
 - how we carried out our audit.
- 1.2 New Zealand has high and enduring rates of family violence and sexual violence.² These affect hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders every year. Successive governments have invested significant resources in trying to address these issues. However, those efforts have not resulted in a sustained improvement in outcomes.
- 1.3 The type of actions needed to address family violence and sexual violence do not fit neatly into the boundaries of government agencies. The Government has recognised that it needs to address this if efforts to improve outcomes are to be effective. In April 2018, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (the Social Wellbeing Committee) was advised that:
- It will take transformational change across the system to support healthier, safer communities. This will require leadership, a collective commitment across multiple agencies to prioritise family violence and sexual violence efforts, the provision of new services that break the intergenerational cycle of violence, and stronger partnerships between government, NGOs and communities to deliver services that meet the needs of families.³*
- 1.4 In September 2018, the Government announced that it would set up the Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence (the joint venture) to find more effective ways of reducing family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.5 At the time of our audit, the joint venture consisted of 10 government agencies (the agencies). One of its aims is that reducing family violence and sexual violence becomes and remains a priority for the agencies.
- 1.6 The joint venture was made up of the agencies whose chief executives formed the Social Wellbeing Board in 2018, and three additional agencies. The Social Wellbeing Board is a cross-government group of chief executives. The work it oversees goes beyond the remit of a single agency. The Public Service Commissioner serves as the Board's independent chair.

2 Although there is no agreed definition of family violence, the Family Violence Act 2018 defines family violence as violence inflicted against a person by any other person with whom that person is, or has been, in a family relationship. Under this definition, family violence includes, for example, intimate partner violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual violence, elder abuse, parental abuse, and sibling abuse. It also includes psychological abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial or economic abuse, harm to pets or animals, dowry-related violence, and property damage.

3 Cabinet paper (April 2018), *Breaking the inter-generational cycle of family violence and sexual violence*, available at www.justice.govt.nz.

- 1.7 During our audit, the agencies included Accident Compensation Corporation, the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.⁴
- 1.8 The joint venture is responsible for changing the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence. The joint venture approach is intended to clarify the lines of accountability for reducing family violence and sexual violence, which were previously unclear.

Why we did the audit

- 1.9 New Zealand's high rates of family violence and sexual violence have widespread and enduring economic, cultural, and social costs.
- 1.10 These forms of violence disproportionately affect those facing compounding forms of disadvantage and discrimination. Māori women, Pacific women, young women, women on a low income, LGBTQI+ people, women in gang-involved families, people with disabilities, and the elderly are at a higher risk of experiencing these forms of violence than other people.
- 1.11 The consequences of violence are wide-ranging and often intergenerational. Children exposed to family violence and/or sexual violence can experience lifelong impacts on their development, ability to learn, and behaviour. Almost 80% of youth offenders grow up in homes with family violence. Children and young people exposed to violence attempt suicide at three times the average rate.
- 1.12 Responding to family violence and sexual violence involves significant public resources – of both people and money. For example:
- In 2017/18, more than 10,000 people started a sentence managed by the Department of Corrections where the lead offence was family violence. Most people in prison have witnessed or been victims of family and/or sexual violence.
 - The New Zealand Police investigated more than 121,762 incidents of family violence in 2017 – about one every four minutes. This number increased to 133,022 in 2018.
 - Family violence accounts for nearly half of all referrals Oranga Tamariki receives, and one in seven children report that they have been exposed to family violence.

4 Changes were made to the membership of the joint venture in early 2021. We understand that the Ministry for Women and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples are now associate members of the joint venture. We also understand that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is now also considered an associate member. Associate members receive the papers produced for the Board of the joint venture and can attend meetings of the Board.

- A 2015 analysis showed that the Government was spending \$1.4 billion annually on family violence and sexual violence. The Government has committed significant spending to strengthen family violence and sexual violence services since that time.
- 1.13 Family violence and sexual violence are complex problems. The issues of violence are complex in themselves, and the strategies and interventions needed for those affected – and the fact that multiple agencies and individuals need to be involved in this – are also complex. The joint venture was set up to fundamentally change the way government agencies work together and with others to prevent, detect, and respond to family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.14 Provisions in the Public Service Act 2020 change the way that government agencies are able to work together. These changes mean that joint ventures and other cross-agency work arrangements could become an increasingly common feature of how the public service works.
- 1.15 We carried out a performance audit to look at the joint venture early in its development because of the:
- importance of reducing family violence and sexual violence;
 - significant amount of public resources involved;
 - joint venture’s focus on transforming how government agencies work to address family violence and sexual violence; and
 - likelihood that arrangements of this kind will become more common.
- 1.16 We want to provide an independent perspective on the progress of the joint venture that can support its development.

What we looked at

- 1.17 We set out to establish how effectively the joint venture has been set up to support efforts to significantly reduce family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.18 Our work focused on three main points:
- the context in which the joint venture was set up;
 - whether the way the joint venture is organised supports the agencies to work effectively together and with Māori, communities, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the family violence and sexual violence sector; and
 - the extent to which the joint venture is creating a shared vision, joint delivery outcomes, and an ethos of shared responsibility and accountability.

- 1.19 When looking at how the joint venture is organised, we considered:
- whether the joint venture has effective leadership, governance, and capability in the right places, including ministerial oversight, governance arrangements, the role and functioning of the Deputy Chief Executive group, the role of the joint venture's business unit, and the involvement of Māori and the wider social services sector;
 - the effectiveness of the joint venture in sharing and using knowledge and practice, and monitoring and measuring performance; and
 - how well the joint venture has delivered the Social Wellbeing Committee's expectations to date.
- 1.20 We did not look at policy decisions about setting up the joint venture.
- 1.21 We have not looked at the work programmes and interventions of the individual agencies as part of this audit. We might carry out work on these aspects of the joint venture in the future.

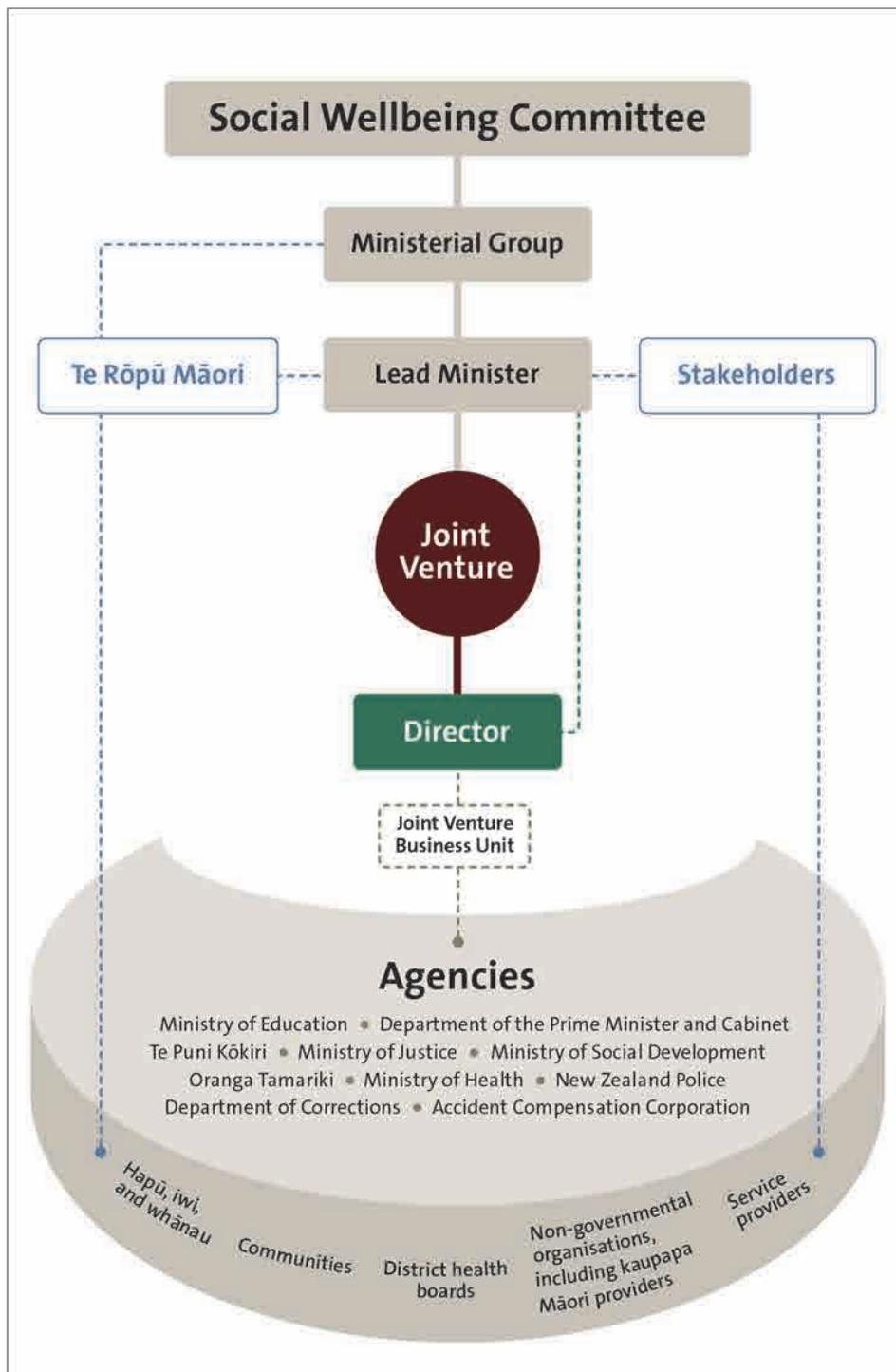
Understanding the joint venture approach

- 1.22 The joint venture approach is about transforming the way government agencies work to address family violence and sexual violence.
- 1.23 The advice to the Social Wellbeing Committee (see paragraph 1.3) was that several factors indicated need for this fundamental change. A significant factor is that no single agency has been responsible for reducing family violence and sexual violence. No agency has been responsible for overall stewardship of the Government's system for preventing, detecting, and responding to family violence and sexual violence, strategy, and family- or whānau-centred responses. Accountability for working with families experiencing violence is fragmented. Different agencies work with children, victims, and perpetrators.
- 1.24 Other significant factors in the advice included:
- No agency has had the primary mandate, and therefore the interest, to make a case for the significant level of investment needed for integrated primary prevention and early intervention efforts.
 - The issues had not been the collective priority of the relevant agencies. Each agency faces strong competing demands on its time and resources.
 - Policy changes in one area can hinder improvements made in another, as well as the wider system response. For example, changes to one agency's funding criteria can affect the security of providers that rely on multiple funding streams.

- Government agencies have not always listened to the expertise of the sector, the communities, Māori, and others. Also, service providers are often not compensated for their efforts when they are asked for input. Engagement with the sector is not co-ordinated and sequenced to achieve collective objectives. Instead, individual agencies lead engagement on their separate responsibilities.
- 1.25 The joint venture has been designed to address these issues. Figure 1 sets out the joint venture’s structure and relationships.
- 1.26 The chief executives of the 10 agencies form the joint venture’s Board. They are collectively responsible for the performance of the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence. Each chief executive is also individually accountable for their agency’s contribution to the joint venture’s work.
- 1.27 The joint venture involves new ministerial arrangements. The Social Wellbeing Committee oversees the joint venture, and a Lead Minister is responsible for day-to-day oversight.
- 1.28 The Lead Minister is also part of a Ministerial Group that was formed to, where possible, resolve issues affecting the joint venture and to develop and co-ordinate advice to the Social Wellbeing Committee. The Ministerial Group is a sub-group of the Social Wellbeing Committee and at the time of our audit included the Minister of Justice, the Minister for Social Development, the Minister for Children, the Minister for Seniors, and the Minister for Māori Development.
- 1.29 A Director supports the joint venture’s Board in its role. The Director reports to the Board and has a day-to-day relationship with, and reports directly to, the Lead Minister. In addition, a joint venture business unit (the business unit) has been set up to support the Board and Director in carrying out their roles and functions.
- 1.30 The joint venture is tasked with working in partnership with Māori. To do this, the joint venture approach includes an independent Māori body (Te Rōpū Māori). The advice to the Social Wellbeing Committee stated that Te Rōpū Māori would:
- ... give effect to a partnership between Māori and the Crown (and especially for wahine Māori) to transform the whole-of-government response to family violence, sexual violence and violence within whānau. The interim Te Rōpū will work in partnership with the Crown, Ministers and the dedicated agent to deliver these shared goals, underpinned by the Treaty of Waitangi and the Crown’s obligations to uphold mana motuhake.⁵*

⁵ Cabinet paper (August 2018), *Leadership of Government’s collective efforts to reduce family violence and sexual violence*, available at www.justice.govt.nz.

Figure 1
The joint venture's structure and relationships at the time of our audit



Source: Adapted from Cabinet paper (August 2018), *Leadership of Government's collective efforts to reduce family violence and sexual violence*.

- 1.31 In addition, the joint venture is expected to work with NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of people working in those NGOs. To achieve this, the joint venture approach includes a commitment to working with stakeholder groups.
- 1.32 The joint venture was set up before the Public Service Act 2020 was passed. Because of this, it is not a joint venture as defined in that Act. The joint venture is also not a joint venture in the commercial sense, where the parties involved combine their collective resources in a new and independent entity that takes on responsibility for the work.
- 1.33 The joint venture is a new working arrangement that relies on the commitment of the agencies to navigate the tension between their individual and collective interests.⁶

How we carried out our audit

- 1.34 To carry out our audit, we:
- reviewed and analysed relevant documents from the joint venture;
 - conducted more than 45 interviews with staff from the joint venture, including all Board members, the Director, all members of the Deputy Chief Executive group, staff from the business unit, and senior leaders and staff from the agencies; and
 - spoke with representatives from the interim Te Rōpū, and NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector who have been involved in the joint venture's work.

⁶ Cabinet paper (August 2018), *Leadership of Government's collective efforts to reduce family violence and sexual violence*, available at www.justice.govt.nz.

2

Establishing new ways of working

- 2.1 In this Part, we discuss:
- how the joint venture was set up;
 - the effectiveness of the joint venture’s approach; and
 - the importance of clarifying the joint venture’s purpose and building a sense of collective ownership for all those involved.
- 2.2 The joint venture is an ambitious endeavour to establish an effective whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence. This involves transforming the way that government agencies work together.
- 2.3 These structural innovations are an important factor in achieving fundamental change. However, they are not enough by themselves. The Government has recognised that cultural and behavioural changes are also needed to support the development of new and innovative ways of working and thinking.
- 2.4 In our view, a critical part of developing new cultures and behaviours is ensuring that all the agencies involved in the joint venture have a clear and shared understanding of their respective roles, objectives, responsibilities, and accountabilities.
- 2.5 We expected to see those involved devoting time and effort to the question of what being part of a joint venture means for the agencies and for their respective roles in reducing family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.6 In particular, we expected that all involved – from the membership of the Board to the agency staff – would focus on:
- how agencies need to work with each other, Māori, communities, and NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector (we discuss the joint venture’s work with Māori and the sector in Part 3);
 - how the collective accountability introduced through the joint venture fits with the individual accountabilities and deliverables of the agencies – for instance, being clear on which areas need to be led by individual agencies, and which areas need collective leadership; and
 - the support that Ministers need to work in the new ways envisioned by the joint venture.

Summary of findings

- 2.7 The joint venture approach has resulted in more collaboration and co-ordination between the agencies. However, to achieve fundamental change the joint venture needs to move beyond co-operation between agencies and co-ordination of their individual activities and towards integration and cross-agency action.

- 2.8 Additionally, all involved in the joint venture need to have a shared understanding of what their respective roles and accountabilities will be and what this means in practice.
- 2.9 In our view, agencies do not yet have a common sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the joint venture's work. The joint venture needs to devote time and effort to achieving the commitment and cohesive effort it needs from each of the agencies.
- 2.10 The Director and the business unit are important parts of the joint venture. They are critical to developing and supporting new ways of working between the agencies. A particular and ongoing issue is a lack of clarity about the role and authority of the Director and of the business unit. This needs to be clarified.
- 2.11 The joint venture has been driven by a highly ambitious set of deliverables. The pressure to deliver work has meant agencies have defaulted to working in ways that are familiar to them. It takes concerted time and effort to work differently.
- 2.12 In our view, the outcomes of reducing family violence and sexual violence are worth investing the time to allow agencies to develop the culture and types of behaviours that will support working in new ways.

Setting up the joint venture took time

- 2.13 The joint venture was publicly announced and began operating on 28 September 2018. It was led by an interim Director until a permanent Director took over in April 2019.
- 2.14 Many of those we spoke with noted the difficulty the joint venture faced during its first two years. They noted that setting up working relationships between the different parts of the joint venture was challenging because of regular changes of staff in the business unit.
- 2.15 Initially, the business unit was staffed by members of a multi-agency team that had helped develop the joint venture proposal and other staff on short-term contracts. Recruitment of permanent staff for the joint venture's business unit did not start until the second half of 2019 and was not completed until mid-2020.
- 2.16 Long-term funding for the joint venture was secured through Budget 2019. From 28 September 2018 to 30 June 2019, the joint venture was funded by money remaining from Budget 2018 to develop the proposal for the joint venture. The Effective Justice Fund supplied further funding.

- 2.17 A cross-agency Deputy Chief Executive group was set up in early 2019. It took time for the Deputy Chief Executive group to develop its role. Many of the deputy chief executives we spoke with said that, at the beginning, it was not clear what was expected of them as a group or what their decision-making role would be.
- 2.18 The Deputy Chief Executive group has since become an important leadership group within the joint venture, supporting the Director by considering, prioritising, and advancing aspects of the joint venture's work. The Deputy Chief Executive group provides the joint venture with day-to-day support from senior executives at the agencies. The group is the main way the joint venture accesses support and resourcing from the agencies for its work.
- 2.19 During the joint venture's first year, agency staff and the joint venture's business unit worked to set up new working relationships and deliver an ambitious programme of work. This included working with the interim Te Rōpū (a group appointed by the Lead Minister in November 2018) on a national strategy and first action plan. We discuss this further in Part 3.
- 2.20 The joint venture's work included preparing:
- a whole-of-government package for Budget 2019 to commit new funding to deliver on the strategy;
 - options for the ongoing form and funding of the enduring Te Rōpū Māori;
 - advice on appropriations that could be restructured to provide greater collective oversight and leadership, including possibly using multi-category appropriations; and
 - longer-term arrangements for engaging wider stakeholders.

The joint venture has been effective in some aspects of its work

- 2.21 Despite the challenges the joint venture faced during its first two years, it delivered some significant work in that time. For example, the joint venture produced whole-of-government packages for Budget 2019 and Budget 2020.
- 2.22 The whole-of-government budget packages involved officials from the agencies working together and using their knowledge and experience to prioritise multiple proposed initiatives.
- 2.23 Those involved in this process told us they developed a deeper understanding of the challenges that other agencies and NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector face. They were able to discuss what parts of the system needed the most support and, on that basis, what bids from agencies needed to be prioritised.

- 2.24 This cross-agency approach delivered budget packages that had support from across the agencies involved. These led to large investments in the family violence and sexual violence sector.
- 2.25 Many of the people we spoke with highlighted the budget processes as an example of the potential of the joint venture. We were told that the processes supported agencies to work together on developing specific bids. This was not happening before the joint venture. People also mentioned that joint ministerial oversight was a crucial factor that allowed initiatives to be effectively prioritised.
- 2.26 Similarly, the joint venture enabled closer co-ordination of agency-led family violence and sexual violence work as part of the Government's response to Covid-19. It was anticipated that the pandemic – and in particular, the nationwide lockdown – would increase pressure on vulnerable families and lead to an increase in violence.
- 2.27 The response to Covid-19 also placed pressure on all the agencies involved and necessarily diverted resources away from the joint venture's programme of work and to the emergency response. Agency staff, led by the business unit, acted to ensure that the Government's Covid-19 response included a focus on family violence and sexual violence prevention and response.
- 2.28 Many of those we spoke to agreed that the joint venture greatly assisted agencies to take a co-ordinated and timely response to Covid-19. Agency staff said that being part of the joint venture gave them greater awareness of what other agencies were doing and that this enabled their agency to better focus its efforts.
- 2.29 The response to Covid-19 also resulted in an improved cross-sector understanding of the prevalence of violence during the nationwide lockdown. Relevant joint venture agencies and some service providers from the family violence and sexual violence sector shared data to build a combined view of the rates of violence.
- 2.30 This work is ongoing. It has resulted in a data and insights initiative led by the business unit that is well supported by the agencies.
- 2.31 The budget processes and Covid-19 response work are examples of the value that greater co-operation and co-ordination of individual agency efforts can bring. However, to achieve fundamental change the joint venture needs to move beyond co-operation and co-ordination of agencies' individual activities and towards integration and collective action.

Work is needed to clarify the purpose of the joint venture and build collective ownership

- 2.32 An effective cross-agency approach needs all involved to devote time and effort to developing relationships. The agencies will also need to collectively consider what being a part of the joint venture means. It involves all parties building and refining a clear and shared understanding of their respective roles and accountabilities in delivering change and what this means in practice.
- 2.33 We found that the joint venture is not yet working in ways that create a shared understanding of roles and accountabilities. In our view, the Board needs to urgently prioritise this aspect of the joint venture.

Ministerial arrangements need support to be effective

- 2.34 Most of those we spoke with acknowledged that the joint venture's ministerial arrangements have not been fully effective. There was acknowledgment that staff involved with the joint venture – and, in particular, the Board – could have done more to familiarise Ministers with the joint venture's approach.
- 2.35 Effective ministerial oversight is an important factor in the joint venture being able to make a transformational change. The Social Wellbeing Committee was told that agencies working together in new ways would likely be disruptive and, at times, uncomfortable. It was expected that Ministers would play an important role in identifying and resolving points of tension that might arise between the agencies.
- 2.36 Ministers of the Social Wellbeing Committee are collectively accountable for the joint venture and its work. These Ministers are also individually responsible for their portfolios and agencies, including their agencies' contributions to the joint venture.
- 2.37 The joint venture introduced some new ministerial arrangements. A Lead Minister is responsible for the day-to-day oversight of the joint venture and its work. The joint venture reports to the Lead Minister.
- 2.38 The Director holds the day-to-day relationship with, and reports directly to, the Lead Minister on behalf of the Board. The Lead Minister also appointed members of the interim Te Rōpū in consultation with the Minister for Māori Development. (We discuss the interim Te Rōpū further in Part 3.)
- 2.39 The Lead Minister is supported by the Ministerial Group (see paragraph 1.28 and Figure 1). It was proposed that the Ministerial Group would help to resolve issues within the joint venture where possible. It would also support the development

and co-ordinate advice to the Social Wellbeing Committee. Decisions about institutional arrangements and the governance needed for the joint venture were delegated to the Ministerial Group.

- 2.40 The joint venture is as new for the Ministers as it is for the agencies. The Ministers also need clarity on the joint venture approach, how it affects their portfolios, and what is expected of them, if they are to effectively support its development. This is particularly the case for the Lead Minister and the Ministerial Group.
- 2.41 We got a clear impression that, when the joint venture was set up, the Lead Minister and the Ministerial Group were not clear about their respective roles, how they would work together to consider the cross-agency advice put to them, and their respective roles in decision-making. This made it more difficult for the joint venture to make progress on parts of its programme of work.
- 2.42 The Board and the Director have worked to provide more support to Ministers since the end of 2019. This has included providing clarity on the respective roles of the Lead Minister and the Ministerial Group and more effective approaches to collective work on cross-agency advice.
- 2.43 There have been significant changes to ministerial arrangements following the 2020 general election. A new Lead Minister has been appointed and most of the Ministers involved are new to the joint venture. The Board and the Director will need to support Ministers to understand the importance of the approach if the joint venture's ministerial arrangements are to remain effective.

The roles of the Director and the business unit need to be clarified

- 2.44 In our view, the lack of understanding about the roles of the Director and the business unit has impeded the joint venture's work.
- 2.45 The Director acts on behalf of the Board to lead the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence. The Director is supported in this role by the business unit, which assists the joint venture in delivering its programme of work.
- 2.46 The Director and the business unit are critical parts of the joint venture. They are independent of the agencies that make up the joint venture and are not involved with the many other issues that those agencies have to deal with. Their role is to maintain a focus on family violence and sexual violence, and encourage progress towards the types of changes needed to transform the whole-of-government response.

- 2.47 The Director and the business unit also support the development of the joint venture approach. They lead and support the joint venture's Board and the agencies in considering how they work together.
- 2.48 The ability of the Director to lead change to the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence depends on all involved recognising that the Director has authority to lead. However, not everyone involved in the joint venture's work is clear about the role of the Director.
- 2.49 Those we spoke with recognised that the Director, supported by the business unit, provides a valuable co-ordinating function for the agencies' work. However, there was less clarity about the role of the Director in leading work and in making decisions about the joint venture's work. There is a similar lack of clarity about the role and authority of the business unit in decision-making.
- 2.50 It has led many to question decisions the Director and the business unit staff make. At times, this has resulted in extended debate about, and reworking of, collective work. This situation has slowed the joint venture in advancing some aspects of its programme of work.

The joint venture needs to focus on developing new ways of working

- 2.51 We consider that there is a significant risk that the joint venture could replicate the separate approaches that typified the way agencies worked together before the joint venture was set up.
- 2.52 We saw examples of the joint venture supporting agencies to have discussions and take action in a way that was not previously happening. For example, because of their involvement in the joint venture, some agencies have done new work together on preventing youth sexual violence.
- 2.53 We were told that this cross-agency work was not happening before the joint venture and probably would not have happened without it. Agencies were too busy with their own work programmes to make connections to the work of other agencies and combine their efforts.
- 2.54 However, the impression we received more broadly was that the joint venture has been working in "catch-up mode" since it was set up. This has meant that there is significant pressure on the business unit and agencies to deliver work quickly.
- 2.55 This pressure has defined how the agencies and the business unit have worked with each other. The focus has been on delivering separate pieces of work that need input from other joint venture agencies rather than on developing a new approach to cross-agency working.

- 2.56 For example, we saw an inconsistent approach from the business unit to keeping agency staff and sector stakeholders informed on how work was developing and how their contributions were incorporated into that work.
- 2.57 We were told that when this is done well, agency staff felt more positive about the work being produced and more certain of their role in developing that work. However, it has been challenging for the business unit to devote the resources needed to keep 10 agencies consistently up to date with all the work that is under way. (We discuss the resourcing of the joint venture further in Part 4.)
- 2.58 Separate work streams are at risk of becoming disconnected from each other and from the larger picture of what the joint venture is trying to achieve. How the different work streams have been prioritised and how they fit together needs to be clearer to all involved.
- 2.59 We raised these issues with the Director and senior staff of the business unit. They acknowledged that these are valid concerns. They also confirmed that they are aware of the problems and that they are committed to addressing them.
- 2.60 These are positive signs. The Director and the business unit are at the centre of the joint venture's approach, and they need to act if the joint venture is to work in ways that support implementing new and integrated cross-agency actions.
- 2.61 However, the Director and business unit cannot develop this new way of working by themselves. Some agency staff told us that agencies have been relying on the business unit to do the "heavy lifting" in the joint venture and were not actively considering what they have to do to make the joint venture a success.
- 2.62 All the agencies, supported and directed by the Board, need to commit to changing the ways they work together.

The joint venture needs to develop shared ownership, responsibility, and accountability

- 2.63 We found that the agencies had an inconsistent sense of ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the joint venture's work. Many reflected on their difficulty in balancing the joint venture's work with their agency's clearly defined responsibilities, objectives, and priorities.
- 2.64 Agencies need more clarity on how they should balance their individual accountabilities with the collective accountabilities introduced through the joint venture.

- 2.65 A crucial challenge is that there has not been a strategy or first action plan to help guide the work of the joint venture. A strategy would clearly set out what the joint venture is working towards and the most critical strategic objectives in achieving this.
- 2.66 This would help each agency to see the part that it plays alongside the other agencies in achieving the collective objectives. We understand that completing the national strategy is a priority for the joint venture. (We discuss the national strategy further in Part 3.)
- 2.67 However, more fundamentally, staff from the agencies were not all working in ways that reflect that they are part of the joint venture. In our view, some agency staff see the joint venture as something “other” to their work – that is, as a separate entity connected to aspects of their work but not something that they are a part of.
- 2.68 The agencies’ varying senses of ownership of the joint venture also informs how they work with each other and with the business unit. Agency staff have tended to approach joint venture meetings as representatives of their respective agencies, rather than as members of a joint venture. Discussions can focus on the positions that agencies bring to meetings, rather than what they can do collectively to design a system that is focused on preventing violence.
- 2.69 People from NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector told us about a disconnection between the joint venture and the agencies who are part of it. They said that some agencies appeared to have little awareness of the joint venture’s work. Agency staff who were not directly connected to that work have little appreciation of the joint venture’s work and how it could affect their own work. (We discuss the joint venture’s work with NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector in Part 3.)
- 2.70 We encourage the agencies to consider what actions they can take to communicate the work of the joint venture and clarify its role within each of the agencies.

The Board needs to act to support transformational change

- 2.71 It is clear to us that, in some aspects of the joint venture’s work, there is a higher quality and level of collaboration and co-ordination than the agencies have previously experienced. In our view, the Board should take action now if the joint venture is to build on this progress.
- 2.72 The Board needs to ensure that all involved in the joint venture, including Ministers and staff within agencies, have a clear and shared understanding of their respective roles and accountabilities and what this means in practice.

- 2.73 There is a risk that the ongoing lack of clarity about the purpose of the joint venture and the roles of those involved will further delay the changes needed to support government agencies to work in new ways. As the Social Wellbeing Committee was advised, these new ways of working are necessary to support work that significantly and sustainably reduces family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.74 All those involved in the joint venture – from the Ministers to staff within individual agencies – need to understand their role and the roles of others in the joint venture. This includes how the accountabilities of individual agencies align to the collective accountability for the joint venture’s work, how the agencies’ priorities and work programmes align with those of the joint venture, and what agencies need to do within their organisations to prioritise collective work.
- 2.75 The Director needs the mandate and support from the Board to make decisions and direct the agencies’ actions. This clarity is necessary for the Director to be able to effectively support and drive the joint venture’s work towards changes that can deliver improved outcomes for those affected by family violence and sexual violence.
- 2.76 We understand that the joint venture has recently carried out work to address these concerns. We were told that a new way of working has been developed that aims to better connect the national level strategy and direction setting of the joint venture with the delivery of services at the regional level. It more clearly defines and communicates the role of the joint venture, the agencies involved in it, and the Director.
- 2.77 We encourage the joint venture to continue building on these positive steps.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Board of the joint venture continue work to ensure that all parties to the joint venture, from Ministers to staff in individual agencies, understand their roles and the roles of others in the joint venture.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Board of the joint venture continue work to clarify, affirm, and communicate the role, authority, and function of the Director and the joint venture’s business unit.

3

Partnering for change

- 3.1 In this Part, we discuss the joint venture's approach to:
- partnering with Māori; and
 - working with stakeholders from the family violence and sexual violence sector.
- 3.2 In paragraph 2.2, we described the joint venture as an ambitious endeavour to establish an effective whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence. This ambition includes significant change to the way that government agencies work with Māori.
- 3.3 The Crown has committed to working in partnership with Māori on the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence through the joint venture. The interim Te Rōpū was set up to give effect to that partnership.
- 3.4 The joint venture is also committed to partnering with NGOs, communities, and stakeholder groups. Stakeholders include advisory groups and academic researchers.
- 3.5 The aim of working in partnership (with Māori and stakeholder groups) is to help government agencies to learn from the experiences of victims, perpetrators, and their families. Working in partnership is central to the change that the Government is seeking through the joint venture.
- 3.6 Partnership cannot be assumed. It results from a deliberate process where the parties agree the purpose of their partnership, what their respective roles are, and what all parties need to do for the partnership to operate effectively.
- 3.7 We expected to see the joint venture devoting time and focus to building this understanding with the interim Te Rōpū, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the family violence and sexual violence sector to help guide their engagement with each other.

Summary of findings

- 3.8 Developing a national strategy with the interim Te Rōpū provided the joint venture with an opportunity to develop how it would work in partnership with Māori.
- 3.9 However, their work together on the strategy was based on different expectations about the nature of their partnership and their respective roles within it. These different expectations led to the subsequent breakdown in the relationship between the joint venture and the interim Te Rōpū.
- 3.10 Since then, the joint venture has set up strong working relationships with some iwi representatives and Māori service providers. These relationships have been beneficial. They have provided the joint venture with insights and experience that have helped to advance some of its work.

- 3.11 However, to fundamentally change how the Government works with Māori to reduce family violence and sexual violence, the joint venture needs to prioritise working with Māori and Ministers to agree what working in partnership means in the context of the joint venture.
- 3.12 The joint venture has also developed working relationships with some NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector. In our view, the joint venture needs to continue to build connections with the sector. It also needs to prioritise working with NGOs and stakeholder groups on what a partnership approach means in practice.

The joint venture needs to re-set its relationship with Māori

Partnership with Māori is central to the joint venture approach

- 3.13 Māori are disproportionately affected by family violence, sexual violence, and violence within whānau. The Social Wellbeing Committee agreed that one of the joint venture's core functions would be to work in partnership with Māori to address this disproportionate harm.
- 3.14 This commitment to partnering with Māori is also based on an acceptance that non-Māori approaches to responding to violence have not worked well for Māori. The Social Wellbeing Committee was advised that finding effective approaches to addressing violence within Māori whānau requires an understanding of the social, historical, political, and cultural experience of Māori wāhine, tāne, and tamariki.
- 3.15 Government agencies need to support Māori in finding solutions that reflect the aspirations of kaupapa Māori NGOs, whānau, hapū, iwi, and urban Māori authorities.⁷
- 3.16 The interim Te Rōpū was set up to help give effect to the partnership between Māori and the Crown. Setting up the interim Te Rōpū was recognised in advice to the Social Wellbeing Committee as a manifestation of the relationship between Māori and the Crown through te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty). The interim Te Rōpū's terms of reference stated that the partnership would be underpinned by the Treaty and the Crown's obligations to uphold mana motuhake.⁸
- 3.17 Appointed by the Lead Minister, the interim Te Rōpū was an independent body with a remit that extended beyond working with the joint venture. Its terms of reference set its purpose as being to work in partnership with the Crown on an integrated response to family violence and sexual violence.

⁷ Cabinet paper (April 2018), *Breaking the inter-generational cycle of family violence and sexual violence*, available at www.justice.govt.nz.

⁸ The Māori dictionary (www.maoridictionary.co.nz) defines mana motuhake as "separate identity, autonomy, self-government, self-determination, independence, sovereignty, authority – mana through self-determination and control over one's own destiny".

- 3.18 This included working with the joint venture to:
- develop a national strategy and action plan;
 - advise on outcomes and performance measures for the strategy and action plan, monitor progress, and report to Parliament and the public;
 - advise on the nature, form, and functions for an enduring Te Rōpū Māori; and
 - ensure that Māori approaches and whānau-centred thinking and solutions are adopted and applied throughout the work programme.
- 3.19 The interim Te Rōpū also had a larger role of advising the Government on the effectiveness of the whole-of-government response to family violence, sexual violence, and violence within whānau, and on the performance of the joint venture. It was also expected to engage with, and report back to, iwi, hapū, and whānau.
- 3.20 We sought to determine how the joint venture is working with Māori to establish and support their partnership. This included assessing:
- whether the joint venture and the interim Te Rōpū had a shared understanding of their partnership and their respective roles in that partnership, and how this understanding informed their approach to working together;
 - how the work of the joint venture is informed by the knowledge, experience, and needs of Māori; and
 - how the joint venture was working with Māori to build an enduring partnership.

The joint venture and the interim Te Rōpū did not have a shared understanding of their partnership

- 3.21 Effective partnerships rely on all the parties involved sharing an understanding of the purpose of their partnership. This helps the parties to agree their respective roles and how they will seek to work with each other. The interim Te Rōpū and the joint venture did not develop that shared understanding.
- 3.22 The relationship between the interim Te Rōpū and the joint venture did not start with a discussion about how they would work in partnership. The focus of their engagement was on delivering a national strategy – that is, on what was needed to get this done and who would lead that work.
- 3.23 The Social Wellbeing Committee was told that delivering the strategy would be a critical early action for the joint venture. The strategy is needed to set a clear direction for the collective commitment across government, and with Māori and communities, to reduce family violence and sexual violence.

- 3.24 We were told that the interim Te Rōpū had a strong sense of its role in helping to lead the process of change with the Crown. This included working with the joint venture and providing its independent view to Ministers of the joint venture's work. It also included helping to lead the process of delivering a national strategy that reflected the needs of Māori communities.
- 3.25 For some in the joint venture, the role of the interim Te Rōpū was less clear. We were told that there was a strong sense of "us and them" from the beginning. We also heard that some in the joint venture saw the interim Te Rōpū more as a source of advice than as a partner in the joint venture's work.
- 3.26 The initial plan for delivering the strategy had the business unit leading the work and the interim Te Rōpū providing comment and guidance. Because of the interim Te Rōpū's dissatisfaction with early work, this was changed to the interim Te Rōpū leading the process.
- 3.27 Empowering the interim Te Rōpū to lead this work could have reflected a strong commitment to partnership between the interim Te Rōpū and the joint venture. However, the joint venture did not consistently engage with the interim Te Rōpū during the process of drafting the strategy. We understand that, generally, the interim Te Rōpū was left to develop the strategy on its own, with some support from the business unit.
- 3.28 Crucially, there does not appear to have been adequate discussion to identify what expectations the interim Te Rōpū and the joint venture had of the strategy. One Board member acknowledged that, in hindsight, leaving the interim Te Rōpū to draft the strategy in isolation risked there being a gap between what Te Rōpū delivered and what the joint venture wanted.
- 3.29 Regardless of who led the drafting process, delivering a strategy in partnership needed the parties to stay engaged throughout – to start and finish the process together.
- 3.30 We were told that the draft strategy that resulted from this process did not meet the expectations of the joint venture or Ministers. Some people were concerned that the draft strategy had too strong a focus on te ao Māori (the Māori world view) and supported changes that the joint venture felt were outside its ability to follow through.
- 3.31 Subsequently, the business unit took back responsibility for drafting the strategy. We were told that the interim Te Rōpū felt isolated and cut off from the strategy work and its role as the Crown's partner in the process.

- 3.32 The strategy that the business unit drafted was more in line with the expectations of Ministers but, we were told, was not one that the interim Te Rōpū felt able to endorse. Interim Te Rōpū members had responsibilities to their iwi and Māori organisations to create a strategy that met their expectations.
- 3.33 We were told that the interim Te Rōpū committed to the opportunity to work in genuine partnership with the Crown. However, the process of preparing the strategy did not, in their view, reflect a commitment to partnership or to transforming how government agencies work with Māori.

The joint venture needs to build an enduring partnership with Māori

- 3.34 The interim Te Rōpū was always intended to be a temporary group. Members of the group were originally appointed until 30 June 2019. These appointments were extended on three occasions to enable further work and engagement on the strategy and other aspects of the joint venture's work. The final extension expired on 30 June 2020.
- 3.35 The interim Te Rōpū has not yet been succeeded by an enduring Te Rōpū Māori. The interim Te Rōpū and the joint venture had been tasked with providing advice on the form of this enduring Māori body. We understand that this was still in progress when the interim Te Rōpū members' terms expired.
- 3.36 The business unit has sought to ensure that the work it leads for the joint venture continues to be informed by Māori views and experiences. It has done this by using the existing relationships that some of the agencies have with iwi and Māori service providers in the family violence and sexual violence sector.
- 3.37 We spoke with some iwi representatives who have worked with the business unit since mid-2020. They were positive about their interactions with the business unit and with the potential of the joint venture to change the way that government agencies and communities work together to reduce family violence and sexual violence.
- 3.38 They also said that they are still in the early phases of their relationship and that achieving significant change will take time and focus.
- 3.39 The steps the joint venture has taken to establish connections with iwi and Māori service providers are a positive sign. However, the joint venture is yet to develop the kind of broad-based partnership with Māori that was intended to be an important part of its approach.

- 3.40 The joint venture needs to revisit its approach to working with Māori if it is to follow through on its commitment to working in partnership with Māori on family violence and sexual violence. If partnership is to be achieved, it must begin with agreement on what partnership means – both for Māori and the joint venture.
- 3.41 We understand that delivering a strategy is a priority. Engagement with communities on a draft strategy is under way. This provides the joint venture with an opportunity to discuss with Māori communities what an enduring partnership means for them, how this can be reflected in the strategy, and how best to embody this partnership.
- 3.42 It is important that Ministers are also a part of this process. The partnership envisaged by the Social Wellbeing Committee extends beyond the agencies in the joint venture to include a direct relationship with Ministers. This is needed to empower and enable Māori to advise the Government on the effectiveness of the whole-of-government response to family violence and sexual violence, and the performance of the joint venture.
- 3.43 To deliver on the commitments made to Cabinet, the joint venture needs to reach clear agreement with Ministers and Māori on the nature and purpose of their engagement, their respective roles, and the support that Māori need to engage effectively with the Crown and the joint venture's approach.
- 3.44 We understand that Ministers are developing a new approach to working with Māori. This includes Ministers working directly with Māori leaders, including with members of the interim Te Rōpū, on how Māori will work with Ministers and the joint venture.
- 3.45 We were also told that the approach taken to engagement with Māori on the national strategy will be determined and led by Māori. The joint venture plans to release the strategy document developed by the interim Te Rōpū (called Te Hau Tangata) as a part of the material supporting engagement on the strategy.
- 3.46 We encourage the joint venture to continue working with Māori to determine what partnership looks like in the context of the joint venture.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the joint venture, led by the Board and the Director, continue its work with Ministers and Māori to agree what partnership looks like in the context of the joint venture.

The joint venture needs to develop a partnership approach to working with stakeholders

- 3.47 Forming new partnerships with communities, NGOs, and stakeholder groups is also an important part of the joint venture approach. Stakeholder groups were intended to play an important role in preparing the national strategy, prioritising actions, informing effective approaches, and holding the Government to account.
- 3.48 Stakeholder groups are also central to enabling the joint venture's work to be informed by the experiences of those harmed by violence, those who use violence, and diverse communities. The Social Wellbeing Committee has tasked the joint venture with working with the family violence and sexual violence sector on arrangements for representing stakeholders on an ongoing basis in the joint venture's work.
- 3.49 The joint venture faces some challenges in forming a partnership (or partnerships) with stakeholder groups. Stakeholder representatives we spoke with said that government agencies tend to assume that there is unity in the sector. In reality, the sector is made up of many voices and drivers that inform the actions and priorities of the organisations within it.
- 3.50 Another challenge is the limited capacity that stakeholders have to engage with government agencies. Although they are willing to contribute to government agencies' work, including that of the joint venture, NGOs and other stakeholders in the sector are not set up or funded to do this type of work.

The joint venture's work with stakeholders needs to reflect a partnership approach

- 3.51 The joint venture, through the business unit, has formed connections with NGOs and other stakeholder groups in the family violence and sexual violence sector. Many of these connections were made during the response to Covid-19 through an NGO-initiated Pandemic Working Group.
- 3.52 These connections enable the views of these NGOs and other stakeholder groups to inform aspects of the joint venture's work. However, the joint venture needs to develop its approach to working with the sector to reflect a commitment to partnership.
- 3.53 As stated earlier, effective partnerships rely on the parties sharing an understanding of the purpose of their partnership. We found that NGOs and other stakeholders are not clear about the joint venture's purpose and place within the Government's system for preventing, detecting, and responding to family violence and sexual violence.

- 3.54 NGOs and other stakeholders see the joint venture, and the joint venture's business unit in particular, as an addition to the system – another government body they need to connect to – rather than as a means to build on existing connections with the sector to improve the system. NGOs and other stakeholders do not always know how, when, or on what to engage with the joint venture.
- 3.55 The agencies each have a role in ensuring that the NGOs and other stakeholder groups they work with are clear about the purpose and role of the joint venture. As we discussed in paragraphs 2.63-2.70, some agency staff still view the joint venture as an “other” rather than as something they are a part of.
- 3.56 NGOs and other stakeholder groups we spoke with noted this disconnection between the joint venture and the agencies. They lack confidence that what they discuss with the joint venture's business unit and the agencies is, where appropriate, being shared and communicated throughout the joint venture.

Stakeholders need clarity on the purpose of the joint venture

- 3.57 NGOs and other stakeholders are willing to engage with the joint venture's business unit on many aspects of its work. Many told us that they appreciate the opportunity to work with the agencies to improve the ability of the sector to deliver better support to their communities and service users.
- 3.58 However, so far, the engagement between the joint venture, NGOs, and other stakeholders has been focused on particular pieces of work led by the business unit. NGOs and other stakeholders we spoke with said that the engagement was sometimes transactional in nature.
- 3.59 The diversity of the sector has also proved a challenge for the business unit. As a representative of one organisation noted, NGOs in the family violence and sexual violence sector have their own “siloes approach” to the issues of family violence and sexual violence. When they are brought together by the joint venture's business unit, each NGO tends to speak from its own silo. The business unit has had to navigate through the diverse views that are presented to it.
- 3.60 We were told that the current lack of clarity about the purpose and role of the joint venture and the transactional approach to engagement means that some organisations are reluctant to engage further.
- 3.61 An NGO told us that it preferred to advance its interests by using its existing connections with individual agencies. There is a risk that, if these issues are not addressed, other sector organisations will bypass the joint venture.

- 3.62 We raised these concerns with the Director and senior leaders in the business unit. They accepted that the concerns are valid. They said that they had been reflecting on the way they have been approaching their work with the sector and are looking to improve it.
- 3.63 We understand that the early engagement on the national strategy is helping the joint venture to build connections with a range of stakeholder groups in the family violence and sexual violence sector. The joint venture is hopeful that these connections will provide a basis for ongoing engagement with stakeholders.
- 3.64 We consider that the joint venture agencies also have a role in ensuring that NGOs and other stakeholders' engagement with the joint venture is consistent, that it is mutually productive, and that it reflects a commitment to partnership. The agencies need to ensure that their work with communities, NGOs, and other stakeholder groups helps to build an understanding of the joint venture's approach and what it means for the sector and communities.
- 3.65 If the joint venture is to work in partnership with NGOs and other stakeholder groups, it needs to recognise the scale of the challenges it faces, and it will need to plan for how it can overcome these challenges. It will take time and dedicated focus to get this right.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the joint venture, led by the Board and the Director, work with stakeholders from the family violence and sexual violence sector to consider and agree how they will work together.

Resourcing the joint venture

- 4.1 In this Part, we discuss how the joint venture uses its collective experience and resources to meet its intent.
- 4.2 The joint venture was created to transform the way that government agencies work together. One of the structural issues that has previously prevented effective cross-agency work is the way that expertise and experience is spread across many agencies, each of which has its own focus.
- 4.3 Another reason for creating the joint venture was to ensure that reducing family violence and sexual violence becomes, and remains, a priority for all the agencies despite the competing demands on time and resources.
- 4.4 We expected to see the joint venture actively considering what is needed for the cross-agency approach to succeed. This includes understanding:
- the support the Director and the business unit need to co-ordinate and lead work for the joint venture, including the number of people the business unit needs and what knowledge, skills, and experience those people need to have; and
 - the resources each agency needs to devote to the joint venture to fully engage in and prioritise the joint venture's work.

Summary of findings

- 4.5 The business unit often leads work on behalf of the joint venture that needs leadership or input from agency staff who have particular knowledge, experience, and skills. The joint venture needs to develop a resourcing model that enables these people to be made available to contribute to and prioritise that work.
- 4.6 The joint venture's current approach to resourcing work is ad hoc and project-based. To an extent, it also relies on outside contractors who have not always had the specific skills, experience, or knowledge that the work needs.
- 4.7 The joint venture needs to take action so that its work draws on the combined skills, experience, and knowledge that exists in the joint venture agencies.

The joint venture's approach to resourcing needs to meet its intent

- 4.8 At a fundamental level, the joint venture is based on the need for the agencies to collectively prioritise and co-ordinate their work on family violence and sexual violence. Agencies have tended to prioritise their particular accountabilities over cross-agency work. Resourcing cross-agency work on family violence and sexual violence has not been a consistent priority.

- 4.9 We wanted to determine how the joint venture is resourcing its work and the extent to which this reflects a commitment to prioritising that work. We considered how the joint venture uses skills, knowledge, and experience from the agencies. This included looking at:
- how the joint venture supports and resources the joint venture’s business unit to lead and carry out work;
 - the extent to which agencies identify which of their staff need to be aware of, and contribute to, the joint venture’s work; and
 - the extent to which staff are able to prioritise that work.

The joint venture needs to consistently use its collective skills, knowledge, and experience

- 4.10 The joint venture’s business unit sits at the centre of the joint venture. It helps to increase the connections between the agencies and leads collective work on behalf of those agencies.
- 4.11 To effectively carry out its role, the business unit needs to be appropriately resourced. This means having a resourcing model that allows access to the number of people it needs to carry out its work. Those people also need to have the right set of skills, experience, and knowledge.
- 4.12 As we noted in paragraph 2.16, long-term funding for the joint venture was secured through Budget 2019. This was significantly less funding than the joint venture sought and resulted in establishing a much smaller business unit than was initially planned for.
- 4.13 The joint venture still had to carry out its programme of work, as described in paragraph 2.20. To do this, the Director has sought support and resources from the agencies to carry out collective work. This has involved identifying the attributes – including skills, knowledge, and/or experience – needed for a given project and then seeking people with those attributes from the agencies.
- 4.14 The results of this have been inconsistent. Some agencies have made staff with the necessary attributes available to the joint venture. Other agencies have opted to provide funding to cover the costs of securing contractors to carry out the work.
- 4.15 Some people we spoke with said that this approach is less likely to result in access to the institutional knowledge and/or operational experience needed to lead work for the joint venture. Using contractors has meant that work led by the joint venture’s business unit does not consistently draw on the collective skills, knowledge, and experience that exists in the agencies.

- 4.16 The agencies are also more likely to repeatedly question, review, and critique work produced by contractors, which means that the work takes longer to complete. Agency staff we spoke with identified this as a particular problem that causes frustration for all involved.
- 4.17 The project-based approach to resourcing has also come with a significant administrative burden for the Director and the business unit. Resourcing each project requires meeting with each agency to negotiate and secure the resources needed.
- 4.18 If funding for contractors is provided, the Director and the business unit spend extra time managing the procurement of contract staff. This work varies from month to month. However, we were told that it has generally accounted for about a quarter of the Director's time.
- 4.19 We discussed the resourcing of the joint venture's work with Board members, the Director, deputy chief executives, and others. Many of those we spoke with said that this approach to resourcing is not working.
- 4.20 It was widely recognised that relying on contract staff is placing a particular burden on the Director. It is also affecting the development of the joint venture by limiting the connections between the agencies.
- 4.21 There was less agreement on how to address this issue. The primary reason given for agencies opting not to make their staff available to the joint venture's business unit was that those staff were then not available for other work. Some agencies also said that they could not make the staff available because those staff were leading other aspects of family violence and sexual violence work within their own agency.

Each agency needs to make resources available for joint venture work

- 4.22 The joint venture has been created to help the agencies to transform the way they work collectively. It has not been created to take over the roles and responsibilities of the agencies.
- 4.23 Although the business unit can and does lead some collective work for the joint venture, there will always be work that relates to the roles of particular agencies and is more appropriately led by those agencies. There will also always be instances where the agencies need to check, review, and comment on work led by the joint venture's business unit.

- 4.24 For these reasons, it is important that all the agencies consider how they internally resource the joint venture's work. This includes assigning sufficient staff to engage with the business unit and other agencies on collective work. It also means ensuring that those agency staff who are assigned to the joint venture's work are able to prioritise that work.
- 4.25 As we discussed in Part 2, it is important for agency staff to ensure there is capacity to communicate with each other so that the agencies are consistently informed on the progress of the joint venture's work.
- 4.26 We saw a range of approaches from the agencies to assigning resources internally to support the joint venture's work. Some agencies, or parts of agencies, actively considered how they could best support the joint venture. Others have been more reactive, devoting resources as work comes up.
- 4.27 However, many of those we spoke with raised concerns about a general lack of consideration by their own agency and others about what was needed to effectively support the joint venture.
- 4.28 This situation reflects and reinforces the perception that the joint venture is separate from the agencies that comprise it. In our view, the agencies need to consider that resourcing the joint venture's work is a core part of their role. This is more than just providing funding.
- 4.29 We recognise that agencies need to balance requests for staff to contribute to the joint venture's work against competing demands.
- 4.30 What we found, and what concerns some involved in the joint venture, is that the joint venture's work to transform government agencies' approach to family violence and sexual violence is still not being prioritised.
- 4.31 We understand that, at times, this will mean that the agencies will not be able to make staff available for collective work led by the business unit and will need to fund alternative arrangements. However, this appears to have become a default approach to resourcing the joint venture's work.
- 4.32 In our view, the Board needs to address the current approach to resourcing the joint venture's work. We understand that the joint venture's new operating model is helping to clarify both the role of the agencies involved and the resources those agencies should commit to the effective operation of the joint venture.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Board of the joint venture ensure that the joint venture has sufficient and appropriate resources to deliver the transformational change it was set up to achieve. This will include ensuring:

- that the joint venture business unit is able to access people with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and experience to support and lead collective work; and
 - that staff within each joint venture agency have the capacity to prioritise joint venture work.
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