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*W*omen and their fur-babies:  
leaving family violence together



**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

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*F* or my mum



*Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.*

– Albert Einstein (1972, cited in Ascione & Arkow, 1999)





# Abstract

The use of animal abuse as a coercive control technique within intimate partner violence is found in nearly half of all violent relationships. Concern for their animals' well-being, fear for their own safety and difficulty finding temporary animal accommodation leads to women remaining in these relationships. Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge is the only women's refuge in New Zealand that makes formal provision for animals at their safe houses, enabling women and animals to leave violence together. This research explores the relationship women have with their animals within the context of intimate partner violence, positions animals as victims of family violence themselves, and asks why the service Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge offers is important in enabling women and their animals to leave family violence together. Three women who had animals and were residing at Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge, two Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge social workers and four Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals staff volunteered to participate in conversational interviews that were focused on women's relationships with their animals and experiences of animal abuse and intimate partner violence. The provision of accommodation for animals leaving violence was investigated. The interviews were voice-recorded, transcribed and analysed using feminist standpoint epistemology and Riessman's (1993) method of narrative inquiry. The analysis represents the strength of women's relationships with their animals and the importance of them being able to leave their violent relationships together. Animals were positioned as victims of family violence within this research, resulting from the animals' experiences of physical abuse, purposeful neglect and emotional suffering. Women were found to generally position their animals to be part of the family and an important source of comfort, unconditional love and companionship, especially during difficult times. Having these animals at the safe house with them meant that the women were able to settle in to the safe house better and focus on moving forward with their lives, rather than worrying about their animal's safety or grieve the loss of, or temporary separation from, their relationship with their animal. This research has highlighted the need for systematic changes to the way



we understand family violence and how we view animals within our society, and the need for the development and implementation of programs, like Tiaki have, that enable women, children and animals to leave violence together.

**Keywords:** intimate partner violence, animal abuse, domestic violence, family violence, feminism, Womens Refuge, Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge, Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)

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## Introduction

*The disadvantaged status of women, children and animals makes it possible for all three groups to be victimized by more powerful violent males in a male-dominated society that has failed to take male violence seriously.*

– Flynn, 2000b, p.93

Standpoint epistemologies emphasise that knowledge is temporally, culturally and historically located. This necessitates that the researcher's situated knowledge and their standpoint be made clear throughout the research process (Harding, 1995). While there is no consensus on the values that should be embodied within feminist research, Riger (1992) suggests that many researchers would agree on the need for more “interactive, contextualised methods” in the quest for social justice (p.736). To this end, Gergen (1988) advocates that feminist research should avoid decontextualising the researcher or participant from their background, and recognise and reveal the nature of one's values within the research context. The epistemological and methodological foundations of this research, feminist standpoint



theory and narrative analysis, embody this interactive and contextualised process by emphasising the role that the context of participants and researcher have on every stage of the research (Harding, 2004; Riessman, 1993).

*I am a daughter.* The daughter of working class, Pākehā parents who went down the rabbit hole of a bohemian life in search of something different, something more. I was born into a contradictory mix of white privilege and values that questioned this unearned power and other social inequities. Surrounded by the sounds, images and revolutionary feel of the 1960s counterculture, I was bought up to value diversity, to question the status quo and seek a life with meaning, connection and love, rather than to aspire to have material possessions and wealth. As time has passed, our whānau has expanded. My partner is from England, and my brother-in-law and nephew are from the Northland tribe Ngāpuhi. These new influences on our familial relationships has opened new opportunities for conversations about the effects of colonisation, of the influences of diverse cultural backgrounds and what it means to be bicultural in Aotearoa New Zealand.

*I am a woman.* I have survived sexual abuse as a girl and psychological abuse as a woman. My sister and I have lived through our mother's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV), and therefore our own herstories of violence. I remember us getting on a bus in the middle of the night, trying to escape mum's boyfriend. I remember hiding in the bushes silently with mum and my sister hoping he didn't find us. I remember waking up and there being blood on the bathroom wall. I remember the police coming over and doing nothing to help my mum...IPV was not illegal then. These were my experiences of what it is to be a woman, to be in a subordinate position in the gendered social hierarchy. As a volunteer at the Wellington Women's Refuge and employee at Wellington Sexual Abuse HELP, I am painfully aware I share these experiences with far too many women.

*I am an activist.* My familial background and experiences as a woman in my social location have seen me drawn to wanting to make a difference for those marginalised and oppressed within our current social structures. As a young child, I saw the injustice of taking an animal's life and I have sought to distance myself from those systems that oppress animals, such as the consumption of animal flesh. As an adult, I have continued to challenge myself and build a life that reflects my social justice values. Beyond my own lifestyle, I actively engage in activities to make societal level change. I have immersed myself in radical and

progressive social movements as an organiser for over a decade, seeking to dismantle the power structures that maintain the subjugation of humans, animals and the environment.

*I am a researcher.* As a researcher, I bring the intersections of my background with me into my work (Riger, 1992). Taking an eco-feminist<sup>1</sup> perspective in this study reflects my politics. The very topic I chose goes straight to the heart of what I hold dear, the safety of animals and women, and community organising, resistance and solutions to oppression. Some disclosure of my own experience of violence, and my voluntary work within the refuge movement helped me to build rapport with Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge social workers and the wāhine who participated in this research (Jones, 1997; Riger, 1992). Within the research process, my aspiration to see animals lives valued as equal with humans, saw me emphasise the stories of animal abuse and position them as victims of family violence, rather than merely tools used to inflict violence on women and children.

## **Intimate Partner Violence and Animal Abuse**

Violence against women is a widespread social, health and human rights issue affecting millions of women worldwide (Boozaier, 2008). The World Health Organisation considers IPV to be the most pervasive, yet under-recognised, human rights violation in the world (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). IPV refers to the “physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, and other controlling tactics such as economic or spiritual deprivation against an intimate partner (including married, co-habiting or dating, current or estranged intimate partner) by the other partner” (Onyskiw, 2007, p.10). IPV is a gendered phenomenon, disproportionately affecting women (Tiplady, Walsh & Phillips, 2012). It is a major source of physical and mental health concerns for women. Murder, injury, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, gynaecological issues, miscarriage, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, increased alcohol and drug use and suicide have all been associated with domestic violence (Campbell, 2002; Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). In New Zealand, a third of ever-partnered women will experience physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016). When psychological and emotional abuse was included, 55 percent of ever-partnered women

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<sup>1</sup> Eco-feminism is a diverse body of thought (Jones, 2010) but generally describes “movements and philosophies that combine feminism with ecology” (Bo, 2016). The philosophy suggests that men’s domination of land, has led to a dominator culture, showing itself in food export, over-pasturing, the tragedy of the common people, exploitation of people, and an abusive land, in which animals and land are valued only as economic resources. Eco-feminists consider there is a strong parallel between the women’s oppression in society and the nature’s degradation (Bo, 2016, p.505).

experience IPV in their lifetime (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016). In 2015, six women in New Zealand were killed by their (ex)partners (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016).

Second-wave feminists of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century understood IPV as resulting from patriarchy (George & Stith, 2014), which is defined as “social arrangements that privilege males, where men as a group dominate women as a group, both structurally and ideologically” (Hunnicut, 2009, p.557). The social acceptance of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority reinforce these structural inequalities, and perpetuate the belief that men are entitled to power over women, and to discipline them when they fail to assume a subordinate position (Grose & Grabe, 2014). Historically, IPV has been understood as a series of isolated incidents, generally of a physically violent nature (Stark, 2012). Stark (2012) suggests that the Coercive Control model might be a better way of understanding IPV. He defines coercive control as “an ongoing pattern of domination by which male abusive partners primarily interweave repeated physical and sexual violence with intimidation, sexual degradation, isolation and control” (p.7). The micromanagement of behaviour and the imposition of rules become internalised for women, resulting in them performing to these rules even when their abuser is not around (Stark, 2012). The outcome of this coercive control is entrapment, whereby women are trapped by the harm this patterned abuse inflicts upon their “dignity, liberty, autonomy and personhood as well as to physical and psychological integrity” (Stark, 2012, p.7). Coercive control is a process that perpetuates male privilege by the maintenance of gender normativity (Stark, 2012). At a broader societal level, Stark (2012) suggests that political power is created when men as a group use their control tactics to reinforce gender inequalities.

Family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviour used by an identifiable individual that can encompass multiple victims, including children and animals (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). Threats or actual abuse of companion animals<sup>2</sup> is a mechanism used to coercively control women and maintain power in a relationship (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000a;

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<sup>2</sup> While it is the animals we share our homes with that are conventionally called “pets”, I will be using the term “companion animals” throughout this thesis to talk about these animals. The term companion animals is preferred by those in the animal rights movement, such as myself, because it is more focused on animals as companions and suggests a more equal relationship between humans and animals, where animals are valued as individuals and their lives and welfare are valued. The term pets can be viewed as oppressive, with suggestions of ownership and the positioning of animals as playthings and property (Adams, 1994; Potts, Armstrong & Brown, 2013; Swarbrick, 2013).

Tiplady, Walsh & Phillips, 2012). Companion animals are often considered members of the family (Tiplady, et al., 2012) and women can and do have meaningful and important relationships with them (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2000c). In an abusive relationship, women often find their animals to be an important source of comfort, friendship and unconditional love (Flynn, 2000c) and this is especially so when women have been isolated from other friends and family (Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004). It is precisely because of this close relationship that men use threats and abuse of animals to hurt women. Researchers of animal abuse and IPV have documented several forms of abuse used against companion animals, including enforced neglect, kicking, throwing, punching, burning, killing and sexual abuse (Adams, 1995; Roguski, 2012; Tidlady, et al., 2012). When beloved companion animals are threatened, hurt or killed, women and children are hurt by the harm that has, or could, come to their animals and are terrified about what could happen to them (Flynn, 2000a). This story, originally published in the *Los Angeles Times*, illustrates the emotional and physical impact that companion animal abuse can have on women, children and animals. “*(Michael) Lowe casually pumped a shot into the dog. The sheepdog ran under the family’s truck, cowering in pain as Lowe went back into the house and returned with a .30-.30 Winchester rifle. He called to the animal and made her sit in front of him as he fired five more shots, killed the family pet (in the presence of his wife and child). Three months later, he did the same to his wife. Then he killed himself*” (Russell, 1990). When a woman’s animal companion is harmed by an abuser, he is not only harming the woman and animal emotionally and physically, he is also harming the relationship that they share and the sense of self that the woman gains through that relationship (Adams, 1995; Strand, 2003). When the woman is unable to protect an animal she cares about, she may feel a sense of helplessness and guilt. If the animal dies, she may not be able to grieve the loss of her companion openly (Strand, 2003). This represents ongoing psychological abuse of the woman (Adams, 1995).

Concern for their animals’ safety, and limited options for temporary animal accommodation, leads to women staying in violent relationships longer than they otherwise would have putting women, children and animals at further risk of abuse (Roguski, 2012). For some women, this delay in leaving is a week, for others it can be several years (Allen, Gallagher, & Jones, 2006; Roguski, 2012). In an Irish study of 23 women residing in women’s refuges, one participant commented, “*I delayed leaving by months, until I found a safe home for my dog*”. Another reported, “*I delayed leaving for about five years. If a facility had been in place for my pets, I really would feel I could have left years earlier*” (Allen, et al., 2006, p.174). In

recognising this pattern of abuse that compromises women's safety, there has been an international movement that has recognised the human/animal relationship and has seen the growth of services put in place a range of accommodation and fostering programs to assist women and animals leaving abusive relationships (Kogan, McMonnell, Schoenfeld-Tacher, & Jansen-Lock, 2004; Krienert, Walsh, Matthews, & McConkey, 2012; Wuerch, Knutson, Wach, McKendrick, Giesbrecht, Beingessner, & Miller-Schroeder, 2016). In New Zealand, Roguski (2012) identified that there were very limited temporary accommodation options for women with animals leaving abusive relationships. At the time of Roguski's research, SPCAs had limited free kennel facilities, private services were often found to be cost prohibitive and no women's refuges had the capacity to take animals into their safe houses. Following that research, Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge (Tiaki<sup>3</sup>) became the first refuge to formally address the link between IPV and animal abuse through the provision of animal accommodation facilities at both of their safe houses.

Feminist analyses, focusing on gender, power and coercive control is helpful to understand why animals are abused as a function of IPV (Faver & Strand, 2007). In 1995, feminist philosopher Carol J. Adams developed a theory to explain why companion animal abuse is used as a tactic of IPV. She suggested that men use threats, or actual harm, to companion animals as a means of inflicting psychological trauma on their (ex)partners and to instil fear. With this fear comes the ability for men to control their (ex)partners. For example, when a woman's cat is killed in response to her going away without her partner's permission, she may become scared for her own safety and that of her remaining cat, resulting in her not going away again. Based on her analysis of women's experiences of abuse, Adams (1995) identified nine control strategies through which men use animal abuse to control their (ex)partners. After analysing these strategies, Strand (2003) then divided these into three categories based on the function they serve: enhancing the abuser's dominance, promotion of victim helplessness, and maintenance of exclusivity in the violent relationship. The importance of gendered power and coercive control to understanding animal abuse and its role in IPV is also central to the National Link Coalition's adaptation of the Duluth Power and Control Wheel of Domestic Violence<sup>4</sup> (Arkow, 2013; see figure one). The coalition's

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<sup>3</sup> Tiaki is how the workers at Te Whare Tiaki Wahine Refuge refer to the refuge in everyday conversation.

<sup>4</sup> The Minnesota Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, USA, developed the Duluth Power and Control Wheel to help women understand their experiences of IPV (Rankine et al, 2015). The wheel (see figure



development of an animal power and control wheel aligns with the concept of the Duluth Power and Control Wheel and can explain how tactics of power and control using the abuse of companion animals can coerce women into behaving in a manner deemed more acceptable to their abuser.

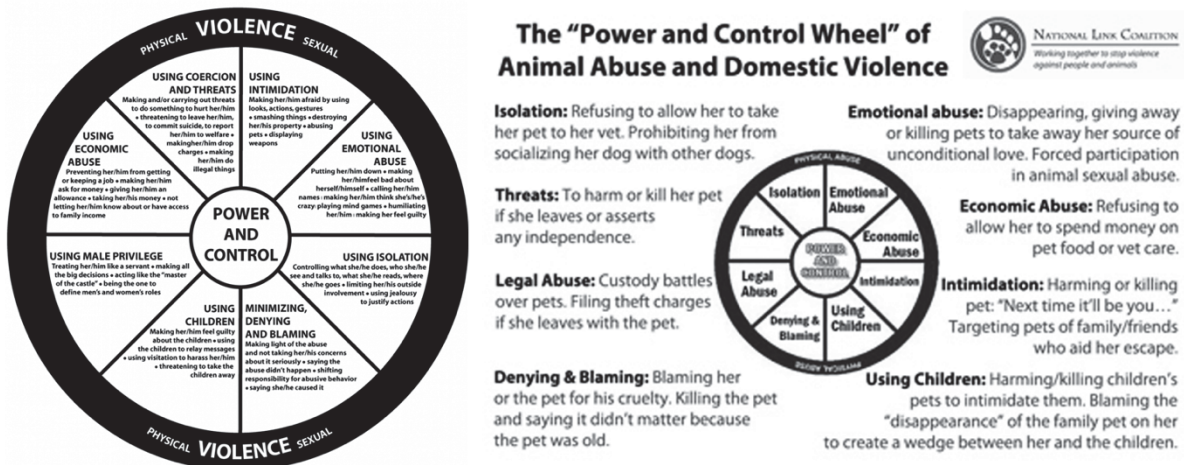


Figure one: Duluth Power and Control Wheel (Left) Power and Control Wheel of Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence (Right)  
(Source: Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2011; Arkow, 2013)

Definitions of animal abuse differ across time, place, and culture. As Becker and French (2004) point out, a range of factors affect the definition of animal abuse. For example, there are activities such as hunting, fishing and farming that result in animals being hurt and killed. These are socially sanctioned activities, accepted by the majority of the population in most countries and thus are not usually considered abuse, despite the bodily and emotional harm caused to animals. However, these activities are not accepted by everyone, some people such as vegans<sup>5</sup>, like myself, are opposed to this speciesist perspective, “the taken-for-granted belief that humans are superior to and have the right to dominate all other creatures, and that ‘humanity’ alone bears the hallmarks of intelligence and sentience” (Potts, 2010, p.292). This position makes the definition of animal abuse generally accepted in the literature problematic.

one) places power and control at the centre, with segments coming off the centre representing different types of abuse, intimidation and coercion used by male abusers to keep their female partners subordinate and afraid. These tactics of power and control are reinforced by physical and sexual violence on the rim of the wheel (Rankie et al., 2015).

<sup>5</sup> The Vegan Society (2017) defines veganism as “a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. In dietary terms it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.”

Ascione (1993) defines animal abuse as “a socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary distress, suffering or pain, and/or death of an animal” (p.228). Within this definition, “socially unacceptable behaviour” enables those in power, humans, to define what is “unacceptable” depending upon their needs and desires. Under this definition, socially acceptable practices such as the use of animals for food, clothing, scientific inquiry and entertainment would be able to continue, despite the documented harm that these practices cause to animal’s health, life and well-being (Singer, 2015; Solot, 1997). To this end, the definition of animal abuse offered by sociologist Robert Agnew (1998) is better suited to the needs of animals. He defines animal abuse as “any act that contributes to the pain or death of an animal or otherwise threatens the welfare of an animal” (p.178).

Like the tension as to what constitutes animal abuse within our social location, a similar tension arises when addressing the subjugation of women. Rates of IPV experienced by women in New Zealand are among the highest in the global north and family violence has become a normalised part of functioning for many families (Wilson, 2016). This is evident in the limited reporting of IPV to authorities. Crime and Safety Survey data suggests that 76% of all family violence incidences are not reported to Police (Are You Ok, 2017). The Family Violence Death Review Committee (2014) calls us to think differently about IPV. Rather than thinking of IPV as a private matter stemming from relationship issues that can be addressed on an individual basis, we need to question the social conditions of our societal system that accepts and normalises unequitable treatment of women through normative gender practices, structural violence against women and the privileging of men’s power.

## **Intersectionality**

The second-wave feminist notion of a universalised idea of women’s experience has been challenged for not taking into account the diversity of experiences of women and how systems of oppression are interconnected, such as how racism, heterosexism, ablebodiedism, and classism interact with sexism to oppress women (George & Stith, 2014). This led to non-white, non-middle class women feeling excluded and marginalised within the feminist movement at the time (George & Stith, 2014). In the New Zealand context, the ongoing impact of colonisation and institutional racism meant Māori wāhine’s experience of IPV differs greatly from Pākehā women (Wilson, 2016). Māori women are more likely to experience IPV in their lifetime than Pākehā women, and are three times more likely than other women living in New Zealand to be victims of homicide (Wilson, 2016). The need for a

Māori understanding of IPV, culturally specific solutions, and the assertion of autonomy, led Māori feminists within the women's refuge movement to agitate for indigenous solutions (Haldane, 2008). It is of critical importance that differences among women and the interplay between structural inequalities are understood (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). In the mid-1980s the Women's Refuge started implementing a program of Parallel Development, whereby Māori refuges were established throughout the country, run by Māori, for Māori. Wider refuge management and resource allocation was equally shared between Māori and Tauīwi<sup>6</sup>.

Intersectionality emerged from challenges to structural racism within the feminist movement that privileged white, middle-class women's experience (Salem, 2016). Intersectionality is the concept that experiences of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression are intrinsically connected and help to reinforce each other (Fraser & Taylor, 2016; Potts, 2010). With intersectionality came an appreciation of the diversity of women's experiences. By the turn of the 21st Century any unitary categorisation of women within feminist theory has been thoroughly destabilised by the concept of intersectionality; multiple oppressive social power relations that operate globally and locally (Brah & Pheonix, 2004; Burman, 2003). Contemporary feminist theories confront the necessity for redefining the relationship between feminism and 'woman' within the interconnections of unstable, transitory and localised movements of resurgent 'others' (Braidotti, 2007). Taking this intersectional view, helps us to see the interconnections between all forms of oppression and privilege, without needing to suggest that one is more important than the others (Fraser & Taylor, 2016).

The consideration of species as a category of oppression is less well attended to, with the logic being that when human problems have been solved, then we can address those affecting animals (Fraser & Taylor, 2016). However, Fraser and Taylor (2016) argue that theories of intersectionality must include human-animal interactions because so many normative assumptions intersect with species. For example, the beliefs that humans have superiority over animals, that men have superiority over women and animals, and that white people over people of colour and animals, reproduces the unequal distribution of power that, if not attended to, serves to further oppress both animals and women (Adams, 1995). As Birke (2002) argues, "politics that ignore other oppressions cannot be liberatory politics for anyone" (p.429).

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<sup>6</sup> Tauīwi is a Māori term for the non-Māori people of New Zealand (NCIWR, 2017d).



## Psychology, animals and intimate partner violence

Within Western society, there is an assumption that we should consider the interests of animals but ultimately animals are considered inferior to humans (Garner, 2003). This anthropocentric position reflects the dominance of speciesist values held by many in society and the power structures within society that re-enforce these values. This system of domination and hierarchy stems from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century French philosopher Renee Descartes who denied that animals had any moral standing as he considered them to be machine like, without feeling or interest (Garner, 2003). Descartes emphasised duality and hierarchy in his philosophy, for example, the separation of mind and body, men and women, and humans and animals, with the former being more highly valued (Abrams, 2016; Bradshaw, 2010; Jones, 2010).

The prominence of anthropocentrism and dualism within psychological research has rendered the lived experience of white, middle class, able-bodied, heterosexual, cis-gendered<sup>7</sup> men the norm for human experience and the “othering” of different ways of doing humanness. This has meant that psychology has historically positioned women as a homogenous group, who are categorised through their deficit and controlled by their biological difference from men (Nicolson, 1992; Ussher, 2004). With respect to animals, very little attention has been afforded to the relationships that we have with animals, or about animals in and of themselves within the discipline of psychology. Generally, psychology treats animals as tools, for therapy (Taylor & Signal, 2008) and laboratory experiments (Potts, 2010). Where animals have been considered in psychological research on abuse, the research has generally focused on how animal abuse might indicate pathology in the abuser, possible indicators of risk to human safety and how animals might act as a barrier to women leaving abusive homes (Potts, 2010). Much of the framing around animal abuse in the family has echoed the idea that animal abuse is only important as a risk factor of future risk to humans. Any focus on the animals themselves as been considered less than serious (Solot, 1997).

Eco-feminists have called for a turn away from anthropocentrism towards ecocentrism, where humans and animals are considered to be part of a multi-species community, rather than separated (Bradshaw, 2010). This position suggests that discrimination and abuse of animals is related to the oppression, prejudice and marginalisation of humans, especially women

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<sup>7</sup>The term cis-gendered is a term used to describe a gender identity that matches an individual's sex. So, if your birth certificate is marked 'Female' and when you grow up you identify as a female woman, this means that you have a cisgender gender identity (Rainbow Youth, n.d.).

(Potts, 2010). As such, eco-feminism calls for research on the link between animal abuse and IPV to take an intersectional approach, with an equal emphasis on the oppression of both women and animals (Adams, 1995; Fraser & Taylor, 2016; Jones, 2010; Potts, 2010). Abuse towards animals within IPV relationships must be considered as a particular form of family violence, because the abuse not only harms the woman, but also the animal who is hurt or killed (Adams, 1995; Flynn, 2011). The idea that animals are also victims of family violence is echoed by Solot (1997) who suggests that violence against any living being is important and should be taken seriously, in and of itself, and not because it might indicate some more important future abuse. By addressing animal and woman abuse together, there is a potential to find new ways to challenge other related forms of oppression and move closer towards social justice for animals and humans (Potts, 2010).

### **What this Thesis Covers**

Within an intersectional, eco-feminist framing, this study aimed to explore the relationship women have with their animals within the context of IPV, why the service Tiaki offers is important in enabling women and their animals to leave family violence together, and positions animals as victims of family violence themselves. To meet these aims, it was necessary to be attentive to the stories of animal abuse and the voices of women survivors of IPV, marginalised by a system of power relations that privilege middle class, white men. In accordance with feminist standpoint theory, the historical, social and political context of the participants, and myself as the researcher, shape the study. Narrative analysis was used to identify storylines within the interviews. These storylines were placed within the context of current research in the area of IPV and animal abuse to identify commonalities and differences with what is already known about this area.

The literature review chapter reports on the current understanding of IPV within New Zealand, paying particular attention to how Māori conceptualise IPV and the ways we can address the issue in a culturally appropriate manner. The New Zealand women's refuge movement and the concept of Parallel Development are discussed, before talking about the place of companion animals within human society. Finally, the international, and national, understanding of the role of animal abuse within IPV and its impacts is reviewed.

The methodology chapter discusses the importance of feminist standpoint theory to this research, and what narrative analysis is and how it was undertaken. The method used to

undertake this research is outlined, including the ethical issues, recruitment and how data collection and analysis were carried out.

The analysis and discussion chapter is broken up into four sections, analysis of the experiences of animal abuse mentioned within the interviews, analysis of the wāhine interviews, analysis of the Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge social worker interviews, and analysis of the SPCA staff interviews. This analysis is discussed in the context of the literature.

The final chapter draws conclusions on animals as victims of family violence, women's relationships with their companion animals within an IPV context and the importance of the animal facilities offered at Tiaki. Ideas for future research and the limitations of this study are also discussed.



*When animals are abused, people are at risk. When people are abused,  
animals are at risk.*  
- Arkow (2013)

Intimate partner violence is a significant social, health and economic issue for New Zealand. Research suggests that over 33% of women will experience physical or sexual violence abuse by a partner during their lifetime (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016). When emotional and psychological abuse is included, this figure increases to 55% (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2016). New Zealand has the highest reported rate of IPV in the developed world (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Despite this, evidence suggests that 76% of all family violence incidence are not reported to authorities (Are You Ok?, 2017).

Women who experience IPV, are more likely than women who have not experienced abuse, to suffer from physical and mental health issues (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). Physically, IPV can cause women injuries including abrasions, bruises, bites, ear and eye injuries, fractures, head injury, sprains, dislocations, deep cuts, burns and broken teeth (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011b). Experiences of IPV have also been linked to increased rates of miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion (Fanslow, Silva, Whitehead, & Robinson, 2008). Psychologically, abuse can reduce a woman's sense of self, autonomy and confidence (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011a) and result in increased rates of addiction and psychological disorders, such as depression and anxiety (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014).

It is estimated that child abuse and IPV combined cost the New Zealand economy between \$4.1 billion and \$7.0 billion dollars in 2014 (Kahui & Snively, 2014). These costs are related to the loss of productivity, health issues and early mortality, program facilitation and time spent by government ministries (Kahui & Snively, 2014). Rayner-Thomas, Dixon, Fanslow and Tse (2016) found that over a third of working women who have experienced IPV were affected by their (ex)partner interfering with their ability to work and as a result they found it difficult to maintain consistent performance and employment. Reduced performance and increased absenteeism was the result of their (ex)partner restricting their ability to attend work through means such as physical injury or restraint, hiding car keys or money for transport, and being too emotionally upset to cope at work. Women also reported needing increased time of work to attend court hearings, meet with lawyers and advocates and for medical reasons (Rayner-Thomas, et al., 2016). Lack of regular employment can contribute to increased stress, ill-health, and poverty (Rayner-Thomas, et al., 2016).

### **Māori and Intimate Partner Violence**

Te Ao Māori emphasises the importance of whānau connectedness and responsibility, balance within relationships and collective wellbeing (Wilson, 2016). In traditional Māori society, wāhine (women) and tāne (men) were equally valued within society, with roles that complemented each other, ensuring that each retained mana (Wilson, 2016). Wāhine were revered for their ability to create new life and any physical or sexual assault on them was regarded as an assault on the wider whānau, and past and future generations (King, Young-Hauser, Ku, Rua, & Nikora, 2012). Given that violence towards wāhine was viewed as a transgression against the wider collective, the response to such violence was a collective one,

necessitating a community intervention (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). Such acts provoked severe punishment, including banishment or death (Mikaere, 1994).

In contemporary New Zealand society however, Māori wāhine are disproportionately affected by IPV, compared with Pākehā women in New Zealand. Fanslow and colleagues (2010) found that more than half of all Māori wāhine will experience physical or sexual assault as part of IPV within their lifetime. Another study with wāhine attending a Māori health clinic found that nearly 80% of participants had been exposed to physical, sexual, and/or psychological violence within their lifetime (Kozil-McLain, Rameak, Giddings, Fyfe, & Gardiner, 2007). This high level of IPV experienced by Māori wāhine is reflected in the use of women's refuge services. Despite making up 15% of the population, Māori wāhine accounted for nearly 50% of the women using the women's refuge in 2005-2006 (Haldane, 2009).

Western conceptualisations of IPV as being the result of coercive control do not offer a holistic means of understanding IPV for Māori wāhine, who experience IPV as more than gender based oppression, but also as racial and class based subjugation. To understand IPV for Māori we need to consider the ongoing impact that colonisation, socioeconomic deprivation and trauma have had on Māori whānau structure and culture (King, Young-Hauser, Ku, Rua, & Nikora, 2012; Wilson, 2016). The process of colonisation saw the purposeful suppression of te reo, tikanga Māori and the fragmentation of whānau (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). English settlers to New Zealand brought with them patriarchal ideologies that saw women positioned as second class citizens, inferior to men and unfit to participate fully in society. These ideologies conflicted with Māori values and beliefs which saw wāhine and tāne having equally valued roles within their whānau and society (Wilson, 2016), and undermined women's position in society. Western gender roles were further emphasised with the imposition of the nuclear family model by missionaries, which saw Māori become isolated from wider whānau support structures and their traditional way of life (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). The breakdown in traditional Māori social structure worked to limit the process of intergenerational knowledge transmission, thus restricting future generations from accessing their culture through Te Ao Māori, te reo and tikanga Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). The breakdown in Māori society continued with the process of urbanisation that saw Māori move from their tribal lands to urban areas in search of employment. Discrimination means that many Māori are unable to gain the expected western educational achievements, and struggle to find well paid, stable employment (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). As a result, Māori

are among the most impoverished in New Zealand and many whānau experience intergenerational poverty (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2010). These consequences of colonisation are regarded as being a contributor to high rates of IPV within Māori society (Kozil-McLain, Rameak, et al., 2007; Marie & Fergusson, 2008).

Culture plays an important part in the way Māori negotiate intimate relationships (King, et al., 2012). Wilson (2016) suggests that it is through the restoration of Māori cultural values and identity that Māori can confront and prevent IPV. The restoration of culture requires the social and political change to address the ongoing impacts of colonisation, such as racism and other forms of discrimination, that contribute to the ongoing structural inequalities Māori face that impact negatively on whānau functioning (Wilson, 2016). Family violence prevention programs and interventions for wāhine who have experienced violence that are based on Te Ao Māori, tikanga Māori emphasise the importance of whakapapa (genealogy) are proving successful for Māori communities (Ministry for Women, 2015). One example of this is the Transition and Wellbeing program run by Te Whakaruruhau, the Māori Women's Refuge in Hamilton. This program helps women by providing housing for families as they re-establish their lives in ways that mean they can live violence free (Robins & Robertson, 2008). The program is built on Māori values, such as, whānaungatanga (relationship building), manaakitanga (hospitality), wairuatanga (spirituality), whakapapa and tikanga (Robins & Robertson, 2008). An evaluation of the program concluded that these elements were helpful in achieving positive outcomes for Māori women (Robins & Robertson, 2008).

### **Women's Refuge Movement and Parallel Development**

The women's refuge movement grew out of second wave feminism. During the 1970s feminists were making public the private struggles of women, including the family violence (Greene, 2009). Violence against women was discussed publically, victims/survivors were sharing their experiences and films and documentaries were being made (Greene, 2009). In response, shelters emerged offering temporary accommodation to women leaving violent relationships. The first refuge was established in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) in 1973 (Hancock, 1979). By 1978, 15 more refuges had opened throughout New Zealand (Haldane, 2009). The refuges operated independently, with varying aims from the provision of services for women leave IPV, such as offering emotional support, temporary shelter, referral to other agencies and advocacy, through to raising the consciousness of the public about IPV (Hancock, 1979). During these early years, the work of the refuges was undertaken entirely by voluntary labour

and without formal structures (Haldane, 2009). Within a few years, conflict began to arise within the refuges due to tension from different ideologies of the women involved. The more radical feminists wanted to challenge and change the patriarchal foundations of society, whereas the moderate feminists were willing to work within the system (Haldane, 2008). Despite these localised conflicts, it was felt that a national plan was needed to prevent IPV (Haldane, 2008). By 1978, there was a goal to establish a network of refuges across the country and the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR) was established (Haldane, 2008).

In 1981, the NCIWR was established to co-ordinate and support the individual refuges (Haldane, 2009), share ideas and information and plan for the future (Greene, 2009). The organisation currently consists of 37 independent local refuges, including 14 for Māori wāhine and tamariki, and one for Pasifika women (NCIWR, 2017c). The country is separated into four regions (Northern, Central, Lower North, and Southern), and the local refuges within these regions work closely, responding to their local needs. A Māori and Tauīwi member from each region makes up the Core Group, which is the governing body of the Women's Refuge (NCIWR, 2017c). The Core Group sets the strategic direction for the organisation based on the views and needs of the refuge members (NCIWR, 2017c). The Women's Refuge work is underpinned by four cornerstones; feminism, lesbian visibility, collectivism, and parallel development.

Parallel Development is a model pioneered by the Women's Refuge to enact the principles Te Titiriti o Waitangi and enable a more equitable distribution of power and resources (Greene, 2010; NCIWR, 2017d). It allows for the separate and independent development of Tangata Whenua and Pākehā, and ensures that there is mutual support and collaboration of both groups (Greene, 2010). Parallel Development is enacted by Refuge in several ways; (1) there being 50% representation of Tangata Whenua and Tauīwi on all collectives and in the Core Group, (2) there are separate meetings for each group in addition to general meetings to enable caucus positions to be developed and take time to explore their own issues (Greene, 2009) (3) there is a commitment to ongoing training on Te Titiriti o Waitangi and decolonisation by Tauīwi (NCIWR, 2017d), and (4) there are separate local refuges for Māori wāhine and their tamariki, which are run in a manner consistent with Kaupapa Māori principles.



Parallel Development emerged in the Women's Refuge during the 1980s following a resurgence in the Māori protest movement. While resistance to colonisation has been ongoing since the arrival of British forces into New Zealand, the civil rights and black liberation movements in the United States of America (USA) and the fight against USA imperialism during the 1960s inspired Māori to organise on a larger scale (Greene, 2009). The new movement called for a boycott of Waitangi Day and focused on land rights, culminating in the occupation of Bastion Point (Greene, 2009). Māori became increasingly vocal about the disadvantaged social circumstances they lived in, leading to increased public and political awareness of the impacts of institutional racism and the on-going effects of colonisation (Greene, 2009). This set the scene for Parallel Development.

Dissatisfaction with second wave feminism had been growing among Māori feminists, who saw it as a white, middle class, heterosexual movement, with aims that excluded their specific needs (Greene, 2009). Māori feminists were developing their own projects for women and engaging with Māori and Pacific organisations, such as the Pacific Panthers and Ngā Tamatoa (Greene, 2009). However, there was some interaction between the Māori and Pākehā. Māori feminists within refuges decided that the best way to provide for their wāhine was to work separately to, but alongside, Pākehā women's refuges, as this allowed Māori autonomy to best meet the needs of their own people (Hann, 2001). Māori women challenged the Women's Refuge to acknowledge Māori as Tangata Whenua and address the on-going impacts of colonisation within society and Refuge (Greene, 2009). After months of discussion at all levels, the Women's Refuge started implementing the Parallel Development model.

## **Companion Animals and New Zealand Society**

Keeping companion animals in New Zealand began with the arrival of the first humans to these shores (Potts, Armstrong, & Brown, 2013). The early relationship between animals and humans was one of many functions, with animals providing companionship, labour and sustenance. Early Polynesian settlers brought kuri (dogs) with them for companionship, as well as their bone, hide and meat and tamed native birds for their entertainment value and their ability to be used as decoys for hunting (Potts, et al., 2013). This complicated relationship, spanning exploitation to love, is evident in the Māori term given to companion animals, mōkai, which was also used to refer to human slaves, captured during inter-tribal wars (Potts, et al., 2013). Despite this dual purpose of companion animals, Te Ao Māori sees

most animals as having higher status than people, because they existed before humans. While they could be killed and consumed, they were also to be respected and treated well, rather than as commodities as many animals were in European countries (Potts, et al., 2013).

With the arrival of British settlers, came European attitudes to animals, including taboos about eating dogs and concern for animal welfare (Potts, et al., 2013). This changed the relationship between humans and companion animals in New Zealand. During late 19<sup>th</sup> century, selective breeding of companion animals started to take place and the New Zealand Kennel Club was established (Potts, et al., 2013). By the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, demand for companion animals increased, yet their role human's lives were also viewed with suspicion. People assumed that a close relationship with a companion animal meant that the person had poor relationships with humans and needed a surrogate for affection and companionship (Potts, et al., 2013). Potts and colleagues (2013) suggest that the nation's recent history of farming produced a dominant belief that animals should fulfil a functional role, for example cats are there to catch rats and dogs are there as security. Since the 1970s however, this view has been changing with companion animals now often considered important members of the family (Walsh, 2009a). So much so that during the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, residents were reported to break into evacuated zones to rescue their animals and some refused to leave their properties until they could find their animals, despite the risk of the bodily harm to themselves (Evans & Perez-y-Perez, 2013).

Today, New Zealand has the second highest rate of companion animal ownership in the world behind the United States of America, with 64% of households having at least one animal (NZCAC, 2016). A survey conducted by the New Zealand Companion Animal Council in 2011 found that nearly half of all New Zealand household have at least one cat, and a third of all households have at least one dog (NZCAC, 2016). Overall, the research found that companion animal ownership was similar across Māori and Pākehā ethnic groups. There was a notable exception; Māori are slightly more likely have a dog than Pākehā, with the ownership rates being 35% and 29% respectively (NZCAC, 2016). The overwhelming reason given for having animals was companionship.

Research suggests that companionship from animals is generally beneficial to people's psychical, social and psychological health and well-being. This has been referred to as the 'pet effect' (Smith, 2012). This is most evident in the strong correlation between companion animals and positive physiological measures, such as lower blood pressure, serum

triglycerides and cholesterol levels (Walsh, 2009a). Socially, companion animals can be a catalyst for social interaction (Wood, Giles-Corti, & Bulsara, 2005) and help with family cohesion (Cox, 1993). Psychologically, people with companion animals have been shown to have lower levels of depression and loneliness and experience less stress associated with major adverse life events (Smith, 2012). Children have been shown to benefit from a close relationship with animals as it aids their emotional development and increases empathy (Smith, 2012).

Despite the nation's fondness for companion animals, New Zealand also has high rates of animal abuse. Every year the RNZSPCA release a 'List of Shame', which catalogues the 50 most egregious examples of cruelty to animals that they investigated within the previous twelve months. In 2016, the SPCA investigated a record 15,219 animal welfare complaints (RNZSPCA, 2016). The 2016 list included the use of blunt force trauma to a puppy who had eleven bone fractures and was euthanised as a result of his injuries, several animals who had been purposefully neglected and left to starve to death, poisoned animals and queens who were abandoned with their kittens. Animal abuse has also been documented as a part of family violence within New Zealand homes. Research found that 32.8% of women with animals using Women's Refuge services had had their animal hurt by a violent partner as a means of controlling her and her children (Roguski, 2012).

## **Intimate Partner Violence and Animal Abuse – the International Literature**

The first case reporting a link between animal abuse and interpersonal violence was that of an adult man who was violent toward both humans and animals. This account was published in 1806 (Pinel, 1806/1962). It was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that empirical research started to explore the connection between human and animal violence. Much of the early work focused on childhood animal abuse and violence towards humans in adult life. It was not until the 1990s that scientific inquiry began investigating the link between IPV and animal abuse. Over the last twenty years, limited research has been undertaken in this area. A summary of the current body of international literature on the subject is presented below.

### **Prevalence of animal abuse as part of intimate partner violence**

In 1997, Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997a) undertook the first empirical research into the link between animal abuse and IPV. They surveyed women with companion animals about animal abuse perpetrated by their partners. Their sample consisted of 101 women in shelters

in Utah, and 60 non-abused women in the community. The survey found animal abuse was much more likely in homes where violence was occurring. Women in the shelter were three times more likely than the non-abused women, to have had threats made against their companion animals (52% compared to 16.7%), and fifteen times more likely to have had animals actually harmed or killed by their partners (54% compared to 3.5%).

The same year, Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997b) also surveyed large domestic violence shelters throughout the United States of America (USA) examining women and children's talk of animal abuse, the shelter workers' perceptions regarding the relationship between IPV and animal maltreatment and whether or not the shelters routinely collected information about the abuse of companion animals. They found in 85% of the shelters women talked about animal abuse in their relationships, and 63% of the shelters had children talk about such abuse. Overall, 83% of the shelters had observed the co-existence of IPV and animal abuse, yet only 27% of shelters asked about companion animals in their intake interviews. Workers were asked to estimate the percentage of homes where IPV and animal abuse co-existed, which ranged from 1% to 85%, with the mean estimate being 44%.

In 1998, Ascione undertook research with a Utah shelter to ascertain how many women had companion animals, and the prevalence of threats and/or actual harm to companion animals by women's partners. Thirty-eight women were involved in this study. Ascione (1998) found that 74% of these women had companion animals, either currently, or within the last 12 months prior to the women's entry into the shelter. Of these women, 68% had more than one animal, with cats and dogs being common. The women also spoke of horses, fish, birds, chickens, rabbits and a goat. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of women with companion animals reported that their male partner had threatened to hurt/kill, and/or had actually killed or hurt one or more companion animals. Actual harm against companion animals was reported by 57% of women with animals.

Following ground breaking studies by Ascione and colleagues, there have been nine<sup>8</sup> international studies investigating the prevalence of animal abuse within heterosexual relationships with IPV (Allen, et al., 2006; Ascoine et al., 2007; Carlisele-Frank, Frank, & Nielsen, 2004; Faver & Cavoza, 2007; Flynn, 2000c; Simmons & Lehmann, 2007; Strand & Faver, 2005; Tiplady, et al., 2012; Voltant, Johnson, Gullone, & Coleman, 2008). These studies suggest that between 50% and 75% of IPV survivors with companion animals report

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<sup>8</sup> Excluding the New Zealand study, which will be discussed later in more detail.

that their animals have been threatened or actually abused. These findings are supported by studies within the United States, Australia and Ireland, and among different ethnic groups (Flynn, 2011).

### **Function of animal abuse in intimate partner violence**

Feminist researchers and theorists assert that emotional abuse of women is “rooted in the perpetrators efforts to gain and maintain power and control over a female partner” (Faver & Strand, 2007, p.53). Power and control can also be used to explain animal abuse within a violent relationship. When women have a close relational bond with their animals, men can use threats, actual harm to animals and even purposefully causing the death of animals, to cause women fear, and sadness. Flynn (2000c) found that the stronger the bond was between women and their animals, the more likely it was that the animal would be harmed by the woman’s abuser. This bond with companion animals, concern for their safety, guilt about them being hurt, and fear about what the abuser might do to the woman are harnessed by the abuser to coercively control a woman’s behaviour. Stark and Flitcraft (1996) suggest that as women become fearful of future abuse they alter their behaviour to avoid negative punishment from their partner.

Adams (1995) proposed nine control strategies, or reasons, for the use of animal abuse in IPV, where subordination of both species and gender relations are used to achieve coercive control without a direct attack on the woman’s body and enact male dominance. These are (1) to demonstrate power, (2) teach submission, (3) isolate women from support networks, (4) in response to women’s attempts at self-determination, (5) to perpetuate a context of terror, (6) to prevent women leaving, (7) to punish women for leaving, (8) to involve women in the animal abuse and (9) to confirm their masculine power. Each of these strategies affirms his dominance and restricts a woman’s movements (Stark, 2012), and yet most research on IPV does not assess the significance of animal abuse as a coercive strategy in the emotional abuse of women (Faver & Strand, 2007).

### **Companion animals and leaving intimate partner violence**

Women have reported being very close to their animals while enduring IPV, often considering their animals to be members of the family or like children (Allen, et al., 2006; Hardesty, Khaw, Ridgway, Weber, & Miles, 2013). During this time, the animals act as a source of comfort for women, providing unconditional love and non-judgmental companionship (Hardesty, et al., 2013), especially where isolation is also present. The strong

bond women have with their companion animals means it becomes difficult to make difficult decisions about the possibility of leaving their relationships and the implications for their animals (Loring & Bolden-Hines, 2004) and also to women's experiences of entrapment (Stark, 2007).

Concerns for companion animal welfare impacts on women's decisions to leave their relationships. Ascione's (1997) study was the first to highlight this phenomenon. He found that nearly a fifth of women remain in their violent relationships longer than they would have, had they had no companion animals. Subsequent studies have supported these findings, with between 20.5% and 65% of women reporting that they delayed seeking shelter due to concern for their companion animals (Allen, et al., 2006; Faver & Cavazos, 2007; Faver & Strand, 2003b; Strand & Faver, 2005). Many women reported delaying leaving for one to two weeks, though some reported staying for as long as five years (Allen, et al., 2006; Strand & Faver, 2005). Where a woman's animals had been subject to threats or abuse, concern for their animal's well-being was higher and these women were more likely to delay leaving (Strand & Faver, 2005). Women with children were less likely to delay leaving their relationship out of concern for their animals (Allen, et al., 2006; Strand & Faver, 2005). Some women reported staying in their abusive relationships because their children were too concerned to leave their animals at home (Allen, et al., 2006). Other women reported returning home, either permanently or visiting, to settle their children's concern about their animals (Allen, et al., 2006; Strand & Faver, 2005). In a small number of cases, it was the concern for their animal's safety that promoted women to leave their relationships (Faver & Cavazos, 2007; Strand & Faver, 2005).

Many women who seek shelter can feel a loss of control regarding decisions related to their animals and where to house them (Hardesty, et al., 2013). With limited options available for temporary companion animal accommodation, women are often forced to leave animals behind with their abuser, or find it necessary to be apart from them leaving them in the care of friends or family who can look after them. In either situation, women have reported experiencing a great deal of worry about their animals' well-being (Flynn, 2000b; Flynn, 2000c; Strand & Faver, 2005). This was especially so when animals had been left with an abuser who had threatened to, or actually harmed, the animals in the past. Women reported that they were also concerned that their animals might not be being looked after adequately or be being purposefully neglected (Flynn, 2000b). Women still worried when their animals were with friends and family, but to a lesser extent (Strand & Faver, 2005). Women with



children generally experience less worry about their animals than those without children. However, Stand and Faver (2005) noted that in some instances, women with children had increased worry about their animals due to the need to reassure their children that their animals were safe, despite not knowing if this was the case.

### **Children, intimate partner violence and animal abuse**

Several studies have also found that children who grew up in an environment with IPV and animal abuse can also become perpetrators of abuse against animals themselves. Ascione, Weber and Wood (1997a) were the first to report this phenomenon in relation to IPV. They found that children's exposure to animal abuse was much higher in families with IPV than those without. About a quarter of the women residing in a domestic violence shelter, reported that their children had engaged in animal abuse, including the suffocation of animals and the breaking of their limbs (Ascione, Weber & Wood, 1997a). Subsequent studies with women and children residing in domestic violence shelters support these findings (Ascione, 1998, 2007; McDonald et al., 2015). These studies suggest a link between exposure to IPV and animal abuse, and children's own abuse of animals as part of a cycle of family violence.

### **Animals as victims of intimate partner violence**

While the early work of Ganley (1981) likened the abuse of animals to the destruction of property to hurt the woman, Adams (1995) has called for animals to be considered victims of IPV themselves, rather than merely tools in the coercive control of women. Adams differentiates the function of property destruction (an object) from animal abuse (another victim) arguing that there are in fact two victims. She states, "harming an animal inflicts physical damage, pain, and often annihilates someone – the animal. We cannot lose sight of *this* victim's perspective.... when a batterer harms or executes an animal, he not only affects the woman, he also affects the animal" (Adams, 1995, p.59). Thus, Adams has argued that animal abuse must be considered a unique form of IPV (Faver & Strand, 2008) precisely because it destroys the relationship between the woman and her animal.

Acts of abuse against animals within IPV are generally reported as being violent physical acts or acts of omission (neglect), such as not allowing animals to be fed or visit a veterinarian. Only three studies in the international literature have sought to quantify the types of abuse used against animals. Allen and colleagues (2006) surveyed women about the physical abuse experienced by their animals. They found that kicking was the most common form of violence used, followed by swinging animals by their tail, throwing animals, blows to the

body, drowning animals, burning them with cigarettes and administering alcohol. They also found that animals were primarily neglected through denial of food, followed by denial of shelter and lack of access to exercise or the outdoors. Volant et al. (2008) and Tidlady et al. (2012) also found that kicking was the most common form of physical abuse used against animals, followed by punching and throwing. These studies found similar types of abuse to Allen and colleagues (2006), but also found that the partners also used decapitation, abusive holding (such as holding by the ears and hanging animals by their lead), stabbing, shooting, choking, hitting animals with an object, belting and poisoning.

Adams (1995) and Walker (1979) suggest that within the IPV context, animals are also sexually abused and used to sexually abuse women. Walker (1979) details two accounts of sexual abuse, one where a woman and her German Shepard were forced to have sex on several occasions and another where a woman's husband put their children's live goldfish inside her vagina. Adams (1995) quotes several published accounts of the sexual abuse of animals and women. She also mentions accounts of women being forced to watch bestiality pornography and then are coerced into having sex with animals for their partner's pleasure. Beyond these anecdotal accounts, this is not a phenomenon that has come through in research about animal abuse and IPV. Flynn (2000c) comments that "the cats and dogs in these women's families suffered numerous and varied forms of maltreatment including physical, sexual and psychological abuse" (p.107), but does not comment further on the sexual abuse experienced by the animals. Adams (1995) suggests that this is likely because forced sex with animals violates the women's moral codes and shames them into silence.

The abuse animals' face is not purely physical or through neglect, animals are also psychologically and emotionally abused. Flynn (2000c) found that sometimes, psychological abuse of animals is regarded as being an indirect consequence of living in an environment with IPV. "For many animals, having to witness their human female companions being assaulted was extremely stressful" (Flynn, 2000c, p.108). Other times, Flynn notes that women reported more direct forms of psychological abuse directed at animals. For example, a woman's husband would stomp his foot in the face of their dachshund, Boomer, with the intention of intimidating and terrifying him (Flynn, 2000c).

Flynn (2000a) and Tiplady, Walsh, and Phillips (2014) are the only two pieces of research that have sought to understand the impact of IPV on animal victims. Flynn's (2000a) research with women residing in a domestic violence shelter, and Tiplady and colleagues (2014)



research with women who had experienced abuse residing in the community, found that during, and following, a violent incident, their animals would be either become aggressive as a means of protecting the women, or become scared and hide. Stress responses in the animals, such as shaking, shivering, cowering, hiding and urinating, were observed by the women in both studies. Raised voices and yelling, had a similar impact as exposure to violence on many of the animals. Despite evidence of abuse directed at the animals themselves, both of these studies discussed the animal's responses with respect to being around violence directed at the women, rather than their response to abuse directed at the animals themselves. This is an interesting finding, and it may be that any household with IPV, puts companion animal wellbeing at risk, whether the animals are the target of abuse, or not. Tiplady et al. (2014) concluded that animals can be "severely affected by intimate partner violence situations" (p.48).

## **Intimate Partner Violence and Animal Abuse – the New Zealand Context**

New Zealand specific research about the co-existence of animal abuse and IPV is very limited, with only two studies having been conducted. The first New Zealand study surveyed veterinarians about their recognition of animal abuse in their practice and their understanding of the correlation between animal abuse and human violence (Williams, Dale, Clarke & Garrett, 2008). Among the respondents, over half had seen deliberate animal abuse in the last five years, and over a third within the last year (Williams et al., 2008). Dogs were the species most likely to be abused, followed by cats, cows and horses. The types of deliberate abuses seen by the veterinarians included, broken limbs (including tails), bruising and haemorrhages, head injuries, poisoning, burns and genital trauma (Williams et al., 2008). Among the veterinarians who had seen deliberate animal abuse, 16% either knew of or suspected human abuse within the family (Williams et al., 2008). Most of the respondents were aware that animal and human abuse was related, with over three quarters knowing this in relation to child abuse, and just under three quarters in relation to spousal abuse (Williams et al., 2008). While the veterinarians felt a moral duty to respond to animal abuse, they felt less comfortable intervening in cases of suspected human abuse, citing lack of knowledge as a barrier. This research has opened up debates within the veterinary literature internationally, and has led to a call within veterinary practice in New Zealand to address issues of mandatory reporting and social responsibility in their duty of care (Robertson, 2010).

In 2011, the RNZSPCA and the Women's Refuge commissioned a study, known as Pets as Pawns, which offered the first comprehensive understanding of the co-occurrence of animal abuse and IPV in New Zealand. The purpose of this study was to understand the role of companion animals in IPV, the incidence and prevalence of animal abuse within families with IPV, the impact of this abuse on women and children, and to identify how the abuse of companion animals might create barriers to women leaving abusive relationships (Roguski, 2012). Pets as Pawns involved semi-structured interviews with 30 Women's Refuge clients who had experienced animal abuse as a feature of IPV. Thirty community stakeholders were also interviewed; this included refuge workers, police, Work and Income staff and RNZSPCA staff. In addition, there was a survey of 203 Women's Refuge clients and 17 local SPCA centre managers.

Pets and Pawns found that the incidence and prevalence of threats were similar to international research but that actual abuse towards animals was lower than found in the international literature. Of the 203 women surveyed, 81.2% of women reported experiencing threats and/or abuse towards their companion animals (Roguski, 2012). Approximately 55% of women had experienced threats of violence made against their animals by a family member<sup>9</sup>. Of these 111 respondents, 79.1% stated that at least one threat had occurred within the last two years (Roguski, 2012). Approximately one third of respondents reported a pet or animal had actually been injured or killed by a family member at some point during their relationship. The survey questions were different to those used internationally, in that they asked about abuse perpetrated by family members against animals generally, rather than being specifically about abuse by partners against companion animals. The survey then included questions about who the perpetrator was and what type of animals were being threatened or harmed (companion, wild or farmed<sup>10</sup>). These questions found that the vast majority of threats and/or actual harm to animals were perpetrated by the respondents' partners (Roguski, 2012), suggesting that threats against animals by abusive partners was 49.5% and actual animal abuse by partners was 32.8%. The majority of threats and actual injury or death was perpetrated against companion animals (Roguski, 2012). Dogs were the animals most commonly being threatened, injured or killed, followed by cats. In his study, birds were third most abused of animals and then cows (Roguski, 2012).

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<sup>9</sup> Family members include partners, children, siblings, parents and grandparents.

<sup>10</sup> "Farmed animals" is referring to animals kept for production purposes, such as dairy cows.

The survey didn't ask specifically about the types of animal abuse experienced but interviews elicited commentary about abuse similar to that seen in research overseas, namely the kicking of animals, punching or bludgeoning them, neglect, shooting them, setting fire to them, pouring chemicals in fish tanks, and decapitation. One type of animal abuse not mentioned in the international research was men's use of animals as a tool to harm another animal. The examples given by Roguski (2012) involved the releasing of pig dogs onto a sow, who was "ripped to shreds" by the dogs (p.21), bringing a kitten in to the family knowing that the existing family dog would kill the kitten, taking a family dog pig hunting knowing she would end up getting gored by pig's tusks as she was not trained for hunting, and kicking the family cat over the neighbour's fence where the neighbour's dogs savaged him. In all of these cases, the "target" animal was killed.

Roguski (2012) identified a number of ways in which threats and actual violence against animals are used to coercively control over women in violent relationships. These were the normalisation of violence, personal satisfaction, maintaining good behaviour, punishment for unsatisfactory behaviour, jealousy and abuse after leaving. These mechanisms were similar to those reported by Adams (1995), and Roguski (2012) offers three additional reasons for animal abuse that were not specifically mentioned by Adams; the avoidance of police detection, sexual gratification<sup>11</sup> and collateral damage. Similarly, Adams (1995) mentions the implication of women in animal abuse and perpetuation of terror as reasons for abuse against animals. Roguski (2012) comments on forcing women to engage in animal abuse behaviour but this as a form of punishment for "bad behaviour", rather than as means of protection by implicating the women in the crime as well. The perpetuation of terror was not specifically mentioned as a reason for abuse in *Pets as Pawns*, but the concept is evident throughout Roguski's interviews with women.

*Pets as Pawns* identified that many women delayed leaving their relationships due to concerns related to animal abuse. The survey found that one third of women reported staying in their relationship either completely, or somewhat, because they feared some form of retribution against their animals by their partner (Roguski, 2012). Concern was greater among women who had reported threats or abuse of their animals, with 40.6% of these women stating they delayed leaving due to concern about their animal's safety. While the pattern of animal abuse is slightly lower than those found in international literature, women who

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<sup>11</sup> Sexual abuse of animals is mentioned by Adams (1995) as a type of abuse against animals and women, rather than gratification as a reason for the abuse.

delayed leaving their relationship in part due to concern for their animals are nearly twice as high as international figures. The majority of women interviewed, said that they did not stay exclusively for their animals but that threats and cruelty towards their animals meant that they gradually lost confidence and developed a fear of leaving their relationship (Roguski, 2012). Concern for their animals was the reason why a fifth of the women remained in their relationship (Roguski, 2012). Consistent with international literature, women without children reported a greater propensity to remain in their relationships because of their animals. The remaining women stated that by the time they were ready to leave their relationship, they had ceased to care about the animals and their own survival, and that of their children's safety was paramount (Roguski, 2012). When they did leave, many women experienced threats of retaliation against themselves and their animals (Roguski, 2012). There were also instances of fatal violence against the companion animals of people helping the women escape.

Pets as Pawns identified several structural barriers that make it difficult for women to leave violent relationships. These barriers included a lack of rental accommodation that allows animals, the cost and limited number of kennel and boarding facilities, logistical difficulties, misconceptions about the SPCA services, and legal considerations and Police responsiveness (Roguski, 2012). There are also additional barriers experienced by rural women who have large companion animals, such as horses and cows. Unlike other countries, New Zealand has no formal foster systems for animals coming from violent homes, and with the exception of Tiaki there is no crisis accommodation for women and their animals. There are no funding programs to help women access short term kennelling and boarding facilities, and no laws to protect those with companion animals against discrimination by landlords.

What is clear from the Pets as Pawns research is that many women want to take their animals with them when they leave violent relationship, and to do so is in the best interests of women and the animals. However, women experience many obstacles to be able to do this, despite their very best attempts trying to make it possible. Tiaki is the only women's refuge in the country to provide a safe space for women, children and animals seeking refuge from IPV. This research aimed to explore the relationship women have with their animals within the context of IPV, and why the service Tiaki offers is important in enabling women and their animals to leave family violence together, while at the same time positioning animals as victims of family violence themselves.



# M ethodology

*Personal narratives of non-dominant social groups (women in general, racially or ethnically oppressed people, lower-class people, lesbians) are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in the dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules. Women's personal narratives can thus often reveal the rules of male domination even as they record rebellion against them.*

- Personal Narratives Group (1989, p.7)

Women's experiences have long been silenced in psychological research. Women have either been excluded from studies because matters of interest to women were not considered important, or when women have been included in studies they were treated as a homogenous group, deficient when compared to men and 'othered' (Nicolson, 1992). Feminist standpoint epistemology argues that women are the ones who hold the knowledge about their reality and that these knowledges are situated within their different socio-political contexts (Harding, 2004). Feminist inquiry too, has been challenged to re-examine the stability and coherence of the category 'woman'. With its examination of women's location(s) in the gendered social

hierarchy, feminist standpoint theory enables the multiplicity of women's positions through attention to intersectionality. By listening to women's voices and learning from their experiences, we are able to better understand the diverse reality of women's lives and the impact of gender and other social power relations (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). This understanding can then inform how we challenge social hierarchies and increase gender equality. By using a feminist standpoint framework to attend to the narratives of women who have experienced IPV and animal abuse, and those who support them, this research can increase our understanding of this lived reality and offer possibilities for change to improve the lives and safety of women and their animals.

### **Standpoint Epistemology**

Harding (1995) asserts that feminist knowledge is not merely a neutral presentation of women's experiences and what women say about their lives, but rather it is a "collective political and theoretical achievement" (p.343). To this end, feminist standpoint seeks to understand the social power relations that result in the gendering of women's lives and the diversity of women's experiences (Crawford, 1997). In this regard, feminist standpoint resists the notion of a universal women's experience, instead acknowledging the multiple standpoints we all inhabit, and the intersecting systems of oppression that bare down on us (Riger, 1992). Standpoint translates this oppression into a source of knowledge and potential for liberation through the empowering of oppressed groups, through valuing their experiences and pointing to a way of developing an oppositional consciousness towards change and social justice (Harding, 2004).

Standpoint theory claims that "what we know and how we know depend on who we are, that is on the knower's historical locus and his or her position in the social hierarchy" (Maracek, 1989, p.372). All human knowledge is partial and incomplete, limited by a particular historical location (Harding, 1995), thus our knowledge is always limited by the fact that we are not able to see everything and be everywhere, rather everything we know is bound in a set of particular cultural assumptions that "become visible only from outside that culture" (Harding, 1995, p.341). The theory argues that there are multiple ways of knowing about the world contesting traditional approaches to science that have given authority to dominant group views, resulting in the marginalisation of other ways of knowing and limiting our understanding of the world (Riger, 1992).

According to standpoint epistemology, those who come from marginalised positions in the gendered social hierarchy hold more well-rounded views than those holding the dominant view, because marginalised people are embedded in the assumptions of the dominant way of knowing, and as well as their own subjugated knowledge. To illustrate this point, Riger (1992) offers an example from bell hooks (1984) who describes the African American workers living in the deep South as having “double vision” (p.734). That is, they are able to see and interact with the perspective of the affluent White community while at work, but when they return home to their own sphere, they also engage with their own ways. The White (and dominant) community on the other hand, do not necessarily interact with the African America sphere, and thus can only access their own single perspective. Feminist standpoint epistemologies seek these partial, and less distorted, views about the world as they enable us to understand the lives of women and men, and the relations between them by understanding what arises from the women’s subjugated position, rather than from the men’s dominant one (Harding, 1995; Riger, 1992).

The emphasis that feminist standpoint places on historically, culturally and temporally located knowledges, necessitates that the researchers position, their situated knowledge, affects all aspects of the research process, from the questions asked through to how the research is conducted and presented (Harding, 1995), including the literature they bring to the project. In this sense, the researcher is an active participant in the research, with their background helping to shape their interpretation of the participant’s narratives (Personal Narrative Group, 1989).

## **A Narrative Approach**

Traditional psychological research has excluded or marginalised the voices of women in the production of knowledge and the meaning of experiences that are important to them (Furumoto, 1998). Narrative research challenges this silence by making visible the stories from a diverse range of women. Narrative inquiry is interested in how we talk about ourselves and our experiences within the socio-political context within which we are embedded (Crossley, 2007). The co-construction of a collective narrative enables people from oppressed standpoints to bring volume to their voices, thus increasing understanding of their position and making social change possible.



## **Narrative inquiry**

Narrative inquiry asserts that we are born into a storied world, where we live our lives through the creation and exchange of narratives (Murray, 2003). Narrative inquiry is often used in feminist research to understand women's experiences and how they make meaning of these experiences (Riessman, 1987). Riessman (1989) suggests that narrative analysis is particularly well suited to analysing the process of sense making. Narratives are a culturally specific human form of reconstructing and interpreting the past, they enable us to link our past experiences of the world with our efforts to describe it (Riessman, 1989).

Narrative inquiry enables us to de-centre the dominant position that western, heterosexual, masculinity takes within society as the normative standard for humanness, and attend to the diverse lived experiences of women and other marginalised peoples (Harding, 1995; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Women's narratives help us do this by providing an entry point for examining gendered and other sources of oppression, and the impact oppression has on women's identity, the meaning of their experiences and women's agency (Personal Narrative Group, 1989). Through the process of storytelling, the speaker's identity is constructed in relation to the different, and sometimes contradictory, positions that develop in the telling. These performed identities are embedded in dominant cultural storylines and act to either reproduce the dominant narrative or create counter narratives of resistance. As stories unfold, they are responsive to the telling, being modified depending on the audience. The meaning comes to be made through this co-construction of telling a narrative. Narrative inquiry sees the narrator as an active agent who is part of the social world and able to make change (Murray, 2003). This view enables narrative inquiry to afford women agency, rather than seeing women as docile figures in which they have no choice and can undertake no acts of resistance.

Stories are rarely clearly packaged and instead they need to be located through an interpretive process. How a researcher engages with this process, and the decisions they make when locating the stories shapes their meaning. This illustrates how narratives are co-produced (Riessman, 1993). There are cultural assumptions about what a narrative is and the progression of time. Bound in western notions of time moving forward, there is an expectation from white, middle class interviewers that narratives will be delivered in temporally sequenced plots and they may struggle when listening to experiences that are organised in a different way, such as episodically (Riessman, 1993).

Narrative inquiry does not seek to lay claim to objective truth about how things actually are, rather it seeks to reveal the truths of one's subjective experience, bring volume by connecting many stories from marginalised standpoints, open up space for counter narratives and making space for change (Personal Narrative Group, 1989). Such subjective truths need to be accessed through interpretation and careful attention to the contexts in which they are developed. Riessman (1987) and Taylor, Gillian and Sullivan (1996) highlight how differences in background and culture affects how we interpret, and in some cases misinterpret, what we hear. This highlights the need for reflexive practice and questioning our interpretation with research participants to ensure that we understand what they are saying.

### **Narrative analysis**

Feminist researchers have emphasised the importance of enabling women's previously silenced voices, through attending to their diversity of experiences. Riessman (1993) suggests that researchers can not directly access these experiences, instead they must hear the women's voices, and interpret them through our own situated knowledge. The resulting narrative is a collaboration between the participants and researcher, and their collective backgrounds (Personal Narrative Group, 1989). The co-construction of narratives brings a collective voice to cultural narratives. In this instance, they bring attention to the oppressive role of coercive control in the lives of women and animals, and enable discourses of resistance and social change to emerge.

Riessman's (1993) levels of representation enable us to explore the meaning making process in the co-construction of knowledge. She argues that narrative inquiry does not provide us with direct access to individual experiences, rather our experiences are always representations of other experiences and interactions that make them meaningful. According to Riessman (1993) this means that through the process of talking and listening, there is always a gap between the experience itself and talking about the experience.

There are five levels of representation, through which analysis of these narratives can be conducted. At each level, she cautions that decisions need to be made about how experiences will be interpreted and that these cannot be avoided. At all levels of representation, transmission of the experience is incomplete, partial and selective (Riessman, 1993).

The first level of representation, *attending to experience*, relates to the experience as it is taking place and what a person attends to during this time, the senses that are engaged and the feelings that are conjured. This process is selective, and what is attended to will depend on

the person's background, their previous experiences and the interaction between them (Riessman, 1993).

At the second level of representation, *telling about experience*, the person tells another about their experience, drawing on their own background and standpoint in the social hierarchy. Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that it is through the use of words to express the meaning, that the experience can be thought about, rather than solely lived. This is a re-presentation and not the event itself (first level) of experience in a conversation will change the re-telling, based on the cues of the listener. Through this process of talking and listening, the two parties co-construct the narrative together (Riessman, 1993). The re-telling of the experience is responsive to the listeners, a different audience will result in a changed meaning of the experience. At this level of representation, a gap starts to occur between the experience and the re-telling of the experience (Riessman, 1993).

At the third level of representation, *transcribing the experience* is the process through which the spoken words are transformed into written speech. At this point there is a shift in power from the teller to the listener, as the teller becomes a subject of interpretation. Riessman (1993) suggests that "there is no one, true representation of spoken language" (p.13) and this raises questions about how detailed transcriptions should be. Should they include unfinished sentences, overlapping speech, the listener participation or nonlexicals such as "ah"? It is at this point, she suggests, that one can no longer assume language is transparent and cautions that these are not mundane choices, but rather they have implications for how the reader will come to understand the narrative. The way transcription is approached affects the manner in which an experience is represented, and thus how we come to understand different realities (Riessman, 1993).

At the fourth level of representation, *analysing the experience*, the researcher is explicitly analysing the transcribed stories. Here the researcher makes decisions about how to re-order the text, and mould the collected narratives into a combined story, communicating what the narratives signify overall. Riessman (1993) suggests that at this level of re-presentation, the anticipated findings inevitably shape how the transcripts are analysed and what gets included and excluded.

Finally, at the fifth level of representation, *reading the experience*, the reader interacts with the written report about the experience. Here the reader brings their own socio-political context to their reading and meaning to the interpretation of the experience. In this regard

there is no “master narrative” rather the report is open to interpretation by the reader (Riessman, 1993, p.15).

### **Research aims**

The voices of women from relationships with IPV and animal abuse have only recently starting to be heard, and is reflected in the scant attention research has paid to the relationship. It is at this gap that we find the aims of this research, which are to make visible the meaningful relationships between women and their animals in the IPV context, to understand why the service Tiaki offers is important in enabling women and their animals to leave family violence together, and at the same time, positioning animals as victims of family violence themselves.

These aims were achieved through the use of narrative analysis with three participant groups, wāhine who have used the safe house at Tiaki, Social Workers at Tiaki, and Wellington SPCA staff. The women using the Tiaki safe house were able to story their subjective experience of their relationship with their animals and leaving their abusive relationship with animals. The social workers at Tiaki were able to provide a historical context for the animal facilities at the refuge, and had insight into multiple experiences that women and families who had used the refuge with their animals since 2012. They were able to talk about the difficulties and benefits of having such facilities for women and animals. The SPCA staff were able to provide details about animal abuse cases where there was suspected, or known IPV, as well as to talk to the realities of the SPCA accommodating animals when women leave relationships.

### **Method**

Narratives are developed collaboratively within the research process through the re-telling, interpretation and reading of experiences (Riessman, 1993). In the following section, I set out how this collaborative process was conducted in this research project, paying particular attention to ethical considerations.

### **Ethical considerations**

The Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa/New Zealand (New Zealand Psychological Society, 2002; the code) requires that psychological research be undertaken in a manner that will benefit members of society or, at least, do no harm. To this end, the code outlines practice implications for psychologists to follow, including the submitting proposals

for review by ethics committees, not utilising procedures that are likely to cause serious or last harm to participants, taking steps to protect participants from physical or mental discomfort or danger, and communicating findings to participants. With this in mind, I prepared a research protocol that addressed an important social issue, was methodologically sensitive, protected the wellbeing of my participants and respected the contribution that they made to this research.

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and because the research was undertaken with Māori participants, this research undertook the full ethics process with the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B. Of particular concern was re-traumatisation of participants, the cultural appropriateness of method and analysis, additional strain on refuge resources, management of current safety concerns for women and/or animals, should I have become aware of any and the maintenance of participant confidentiality. Burgess-Proctor (2015) suggests that some victims/survivors of abuse can find it therapeutic and empowering being involved in research that can help prevent against future victimisation of others. However, it could not be taken for granted that my participants would feel this way. Given my crisis work with the Wellington Women's Refuge and Wellington Sexual Abuse HELP, I was confident I had the skills to help immediately, should a participant have become distressed. Arrangements were made with Tiaki to provide ongoing support for the wāhine following the interviews. Incidentally, participants in my research commented that they wanted to be involved to help with further understanding of the issue and the needs of women and their animals. It seemed to be a positive experience for these women.

Prior to obtaining ethics approval the research focus and design was discussed with Tiaki, with respect to its appropriateness for research with Māori and specifically, the women using their service. This was deemed appropriate due their specialist knowledge working from a kaupapa Māori perspective within the family violence sector. Ongoing engagement with Tiaki throughout the research process provided me with cultural support. Of particular importance to this research process has been the principles of manākitanga and whakawhānaungatanga. Manākitanga is understood as a form of compassion for others, a genuine caring for another and their experiences (Durie & Hermansson, 1990). This was embodied through the research process by showing genuine interest in the participants, their experiences and feelings, and the sharing of kai and something to drink. Whakawhānaungatanga is understood as the “process of establishing relationships, literally by means of identifying through culturally appropriate means, your bodily linkage, your

engagements, your connectedness and therefore (unspoken) commitment to other people” (Bishop, 1996, p.219). This was embodied through the research process by being open with participants about my background, where I come from geographically but also through a shared understanding of values, my engagement with the Wellington Women’s Refuge, my whānau history of family violence and my work as an animal advocate.

I was concerned about the potential burden involvement in my research project would bring to a small community organisation with limited time and resources. Tiaki involvement in this project included their social workers’ involvement as participants, cultural guidance, assistance with finding research participants and providing further support for any wāhine who became distressed following the interviews. In discussing this with the Tiaki Kaiwhakahaere (director), it became apparent that they welcomed involvement in this project to raise awareness about the needs of women and animals who are victim/survivors of family violence. As such, they were happy to assist in enabling this research to develop and reach completion.

If any participants divulged current abuse to themselves or their animals, it was decided to make it clear on the Information Sheet (Appendix A) for the wāhine that a disclaimer was to be included stating the limits to confidentiality, so the women knew that the divulgence of any current and severe risk to animal safety or their own may need to be reported to the proper authority. This was an important consideration as it could potentially provide further protection, and also enabled the women to decide about what they shared. With respect to more minor animal abuse, I was confident that my background in animal advocacy and rescue work had prepared me well to address these matters with the women through education in a supportive manner. At the more severe end of the scale, there were many issues to balance. If a woman was still in a relationship with a violent partner and the animal was in current danger, reporting it to the SPCA would breach confidentiality with the women, and potentially put her and the animal at further risk, should the partner become angry at SPCA involvement. If there was abuse divulged, that was current and extreme, then the need to report required careful management. It was agreed that the specific circumstances would require activating supervision to form a safety plan that would also involve discussion with the particular woman and an agreed action taken. During the interviews, I did not hear about any current animal abuse or neglect. With respect to abuse of the wāhine, it was decided that I would talk to the women about the abuse and if needed also mention to the Tiaki social workers what the women had divulged. This was explained to the women during the

informed consent process. As it turned out, all the wāhine in this research were residing at Tiaki and were no longer in a relationship with their partners.

Finally, with respect to the maintenance of participant confidentiality it was proposed the participants' identities would be protected through the removal of identifying details and the use of pseudonyms, for both the animals and the women. In addition, the transcripts of the interviews needed to go back to participants to ensure that I captured our conversations accurately. I asked the participants the best way to return these to them and then get their approval, so I could progress to analysis. It was important that the transcripts did not fall into the wrong hands and this necessitated me taking the transcripts to the women by hand. With respect to storage, the transcripts have been stored in a password protected folder on my computer, along with the recordings of our interviews. Once the transcripts were approved for use, the recordings were destroyed.

The Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B<sup>12</sup> approved this research.

### **Recruitment and participants**

There were three participant groups in this study; wāhine who had used the Tiaki safe house and had animals, Tiaki social workers, and SPCA staff.

#### ***Wāhine***

The women in this research were recruited by Tiaki, on my behalf. As outlined in my ethical protocol, the Tiaki Kaiwhakahaere and I agreed that the refuge knows the women best after working with them intensely and would be well placed to assess the women's safety for participation in this research. Women who Tiaki thought might be interested were given an information sheet (Appendix A) about my research. If they indicated interest, the Refuge set up a time for us to meet and conduct the interview. Two interviews were held at the refuge office and one was held at the safe house. Two interviews had to be re-scheduled due to the participants' attendance at a tangihanga (funeral). One was re-organised through the social workers and the other via me text messaging the participant and arranging a time that suited her. I had been hoping to talk with more women who had used the refuge with their animals. Tiaki social workers contacted two women who had used the service over six months ago but both declined. I interviewed three women. They all self-identified as Māori. One participant has two children and a cat. Her animal had not experienced abuse from her partner, but had

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<sup>12</sup> Application 16/05



been abused by one of her children. She had chosen to leave her cat with her partner when she came into the Tiaki safe house. Another participant has two children and a cat. She bought her cat with her when she and her children left her ex-partner. She had experienced threats against her cat but no physical abuse was enacted. The final participant was pregnant and had a dog. She had initially bought her dog with her to the safe house but he was too large for the facilities and other arrangements were made for his accommodation.

### *Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge*

I recruited the Tiaki social worker participants during my initial discussions with the refuge about this research. Following ethics approval, I gave them a copy of the Information Sheet – Advocate (Appendix B) so that they could understand what my research was about and what I was asking of them. I interviewed two social workers at Tiaki. They were both Māori women with over ten years' experience at the refuge.

### *Society for the Protection of Animals*

I made initial contact with the Wellington SPCA CEO about recruiting staff for this research. He asked his Executive Assistant (EA) to assist me in finding participants. I gave her a copy of the Information Sheet – Advocate (Appendix B) for staff to understand what my research was about and what I was asking of them. This was sent to veterinary and inspectorate staff and resulted in two inspectors and one veterinarian agreeing to participate. The EA arranged the date, time and location for each of these interviews. The fourth interview came about upon the recommendation of an inspector who thought it would be useful to this research for me to talk to her colleague, another SPCA Inspector. I made email contact with the inspector and provided him with the Information Sheet - Advocate. He contacted me to arrange an interview time and location. There were three women and one man. All the SPCA participants were Pākehā; three from New Zealand and one had migrated from England.

For all interviews, the researcher discussed the information sheets and participant rights before obtaining informed consent (see Appendix C for Informed Consent Form).

### **Interviews**

The interviews were held at different locations, depending on the participant. The interviews with the Tiaki Social Workers were undertaken at the refuge office. Two of the women were also interviewed at the Refuge office and the third was held at the Tiaki safe house. The interviews with SPCA were arranged to take place in a meeting room at the Wellington



SPCA office. Upon obtaining written consent, the interviews were digitally voice recorded. The interviews took between 20 and 65 minutes.

All interviews were conversational in nature. Through the interview process, I listened to what the participants said and where appropriate asked further questions about what they had said. These questions were very loosely based on areas of interest I had for each group of participants. That said, I had no specific schedule of questions that were asked. This approach enabled flexibility and responsiveness to what the participants talked about. It also helped to establish a relationship between myself and the participants, and the co-production of narrative during the interviews.

### *Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge*

The interviews with the Tiaki social workers started by asking about the service they offered, how it worked and why they thought this was important. I was particularly interested in how the service came to be offered and why the refuge thought work in this area was important, given that no other refuges are offering anything similar in New Zealand. I then asked about stories of women who had used their safe house with their animals, the role that Ralph, the resident safe house cat, played for the women in the house. Finally, I was interested in any challenges they faced providing this service for women and their animals.

The interviews with the Tiaki social workers were conducted first to get a sense of the refuge, the women that they work with and the how the service for animals works. This enabled me to have a more nuanced conversation with the women in subsequent months.

### *Wāhine*

The wāhine interviews opened with the women talking to me about their animals, their names, what they looked like and how they came by the animals. They then moved on to talking about their relationships with their animals and what made them special. I asked if any violence or threats were made towards the animals before asking about leaving their violent relationship with their animals and why it was important that their animals came with them, or didn't in one case. Finally, we talked about the service at Tiaki, how this was important to the women and any challenges they faced being there. Through the interviews with Tiaki, I became aware that the safe house also had a resident cat, Ralph, so I also made inquiries about her role in the wāhine's lives at the safe house.

### ***Society for the Protection of Animals***

The interviews with the SPCA staff started by inquiring about their understanding of the link between IPV and animal abuse. I then asked about cases they had worked on where there was suspected or known co-occurrence of IPV and animal abuse. We talked about how the staff would work with a woman who disclosed abuse and needed temporary accommodation for their animal to enable her to leave the relationship. And finally, we discussed the accommodation options that the SPCA have available and what they thought might be a good temporary accommodation solution for women and animals leaving abusive relationships.

### **Transcription**

The audio recordings were transcribed by me following the interviews. I chose not to “tidy up” the transcripts for readability. Partial sentences, words, non-lexical terms and my questions and commentary throughout the interview were all included in the final transcripts. This was to acknowledge my role in the co-construction of the narratives. During this process, all identifying information was changed including human and animal names, animal breed and physical features, and locations. All human and companion animals were given aliases to further ensure the participants’ confidentiality.

The transcripts were then returned to the participants to give them the opportunity to withdraw from the research, make any amendments to the interview or return them unchanged. The wāhine transcripts were returned and collected in person to ensure that they did not compromise their safety. The transcripts from the interviews with Tiaki staff and the SPCA were returned electronically. All transcripts were returned unchanged, with the exception of one transcript, that was returned with one correction to a spelling error. When returning the transcripts, all participants also returned a transcript release form (Appendix D), confirming that they consented to extracts from the transcript being used in reports and publications arising from the research.

### **Analysis**

Standpoint epistemology and narrative inquiry informed the analytical approach in this research. Standpoint epistemology enables exploration of the research aims from three different socio-political positions. The increased understanding gained from these positions was intended to enable the development of a counter narrative towards social justice. My standpoint as a researcher, activist, daughter and woman was incorporated through narrative inquiry, acknowledging the co-construction of narratives through the research process.

Riessman's (1993) levels of representation guided the understanding of how my role as a researcher, and the standpoint I brought with me, influenced the narrative that unfolded and the positions that the participants took up within the narratives.

Through the analysis, storylines were identified if they captured something important in relation to the research aims, namely they spoke to the experience of animals as victims of family violence, the relationships women had with their animals or related to the provision of accommodation for animals when women left abusive relationships.

An initial reading was made across all transcripts as one group, attending to instances of animal abuse. This reflected my values that animal's lives hold equal value to those of humans, and calls from Adams (1995) that animals need to be positioned as victims of family violence in their own right. This initial reading revealed sub-story lines related to children's abuse of animals and the reason why participants thought animals were used as a tool for coercive control.

Following the analysis of abuse, the interviews were analysed separately for the three participant groups, wāhine, Tiaki social workers and SPCA staff. This was important as each group brought with them different context, background and expertise. Below is an overview of how the analysis was undertaken for each group.

### ***Wāhine***

The first reading of the transcripts was conducted to establish storylines across the wāhine group. In this initial reading, narratives related to animals as part of the family, the experience of being separated from them and the refuge service provided by Tiaki emerged. The second reading attended to the relationships women have their animals and teased apart the storylines relating to animals as family. This helped to develop sub-storylines related to the comfort animals brought the women, the lengths the women went to to protect their animals' safety, the challenges brought on by being separated from their animals, and how women maintained their relationships with their animals while they were apart. The third reading attended to the wāhine narratives of the experiences the Tiaki service offered for enabling women to bring their animals into the safe house, specifically related to why this service was important but also the challenges that it brought for the wāhine and their animals.

### ***Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge***

For the Tiaki group, the first reading of the transcripts was conducted to establish storylines across the group. This initial reading revealed narratives related to the place animals had in the kaupapa of Tiaki; safety, the well-being of women and children and the challenges of providing the service for animals. The second reading attended to how animals are considered to be part of the family and the role that this has in the safety and well-being of wāhine and children. The third reading of the transcripts attended to the refuge services, their kaupapa and the challenges of taking in animals. This helped to establish the sub-storylines related to their being no barriers to abuse, why animals are used in IPV, lack of awareness about the issues, limited resources, and tensions around managing sometimes competing needs.

### ***Society for the Protection of Animals***

For the SPCA staff, the first reading of the transcripts was conducted to establish storylines across the group. This initial reading revealed narratives related to their understanding of the link between IPV and animal abuse, the challenges of helping women and children and finding solutions. The second reading attended to the SPCA staff's understanding of IPV and animal abuse and solutions for the future safety of women and animals. This helped to establish sub-storylines related to assumptions about who is affected by IPV, the need for new resources, and long term solutions. The third reading attended to the challenges they faced helping women and animals. This helped to establish sub-storylines related to tensions juggling the needs of humans and animals, the difficulty in thinking abuse might be happening but not being able to confirm it, the impact of limited resources and the specific challenges related to dogs.

### ***Reflexivity***

Narrative research is an interpretative process and subjective in nature. Many feminist psychology theorists (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Harding, 1995; Riger, 1992) suggest that you cannot conduct research into woman's lived experiences without also taking into account the social, cultural, and historical context from which we come. The standpoint of the researcher is also crucial to this process and there is the need to take account of how their background, values and biases may be influencing the data collection and analysis (Harding, 1995). It is important for the researcher to be reflexive in the research process, acknowledging how they are reacting while undertaking the research, and how their own cultural context is coming to bare on the shape of the research (Willig, 2008). Throughout the research process, I have kept a reflexive journal, to clarify my ideas, develop linkages

between different parts of the research process and reflect on how my own background was embedded in the research project as it developed (Lamb, 2013).

In this research, my interest in the relationship between women and their animals, and efforts to keep both parties safe, stems from my own position as a mother to several fur-babies, as someone who seeks to challenge species and gender inequality and someone who grew up hearing, seeing and feeling domestic violence in my home. These positions have informed my choice of research question, my interactions with participants and the manner with which I conducted the interview, transcription and analysis process. For example, the value I place on animals' lives is evident in my attention to the abuse that they suffer as part of family violence and my positioning them as victims of abuse.



## Analysis and discussion

*The animals of the world exist for their own reasons. They were not made for humans any more than black people were made for white, or women created for men.*

– Alice Walker (1996, p.14)

Together the narratives across wāhine, Tiaki social workers and SPCA staff clearly identified that animal abuse is an issue within IPV. The animal abuse emerged through the re-telling of the wāhine and advocates experiences of threats and harm to companion animals by (ex)partners. Wāhine and Tiaki social workers understood animals to be important members of the family and they identified this relationship as the reason for the abuse of animals. They suggested that in harming the animals or making threats against them, men are able to coerce women into behaving how they want them to, including intimidating women into remaining in their violent relationships. The wāhine also spoke of their experiences being separated

from their animals and then being able to be together with their animals at Tiaki. The Tiaki social workers accounts spoke to the interconnected nature of family violence and animal abuse, the importance of animals to the safety and well-being of women and children and the challenges that came with providing facilities for animals at their safe houses. The SPCA staff narratives spoke to a limited understanding of the link between animal abuse and IPV, the challenges associated with helping women and their animals, and solutions for the future. The analysis is organised into four sections, first the three groups are analysed and discussed together to bring into view the experiences of animal abuse that they talked about, then the groups are analysed and discussed separately.

### **Experiences of Animal Abuse**

Feminist theorists suggest that the emotional abuse of women is rooted in the perpetrators efforts to maintain power and control over their female partner (Faver & Strand, 2007). Flynn (2000a) argues that “harming animals is part of a batterer’s strategies to control and intimidate women and children in families” (p.102). If a woman and companion animal have a close relationship, when the animal is harmed the woman will likely to experience fear for the safety of her animal (Adams, 1995). She will likely also feel fear for herself, as the harm the animal experienced is a warning about what her partner can do to her and her children. Adams (1995) suggests that the perpetrator uses this fear as a means of psychologically controlling his partner. This coercive control acts to regulate the woman’s behaviour to the perpetrators liking and trap her in the abusive relationship (Stark, 2012).

Adams (1995) also urges us to not lose sight of animals as victims of IPV. By using abuse to animals as a tool for hurting or intimidating women, the perpetrator also “inflicts physical damage, pain, and often annihilates someone – the animal. We cannot lose sight of *this* victim’s perspective” (p.59). Several studies have documented the physical abuse companion animals endure as a result of IPV; this has included animals being purposefully kicked, thrown and shot (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997a, 1997b; Ascione et al, 2007; Flynn, 2000c; Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, et al, 2012). A small number of studies have also started to attend to the psychological impact that this abuse has on animals; including increased stress, behavioural problems and anxiety (Flynn, 2000c; Tiplady, et al, 2012).

Across the three groups of interview participants, many shared stories of abuse animals had suffered or been threatened with by their partners and children, the impact that this had on

their animals and why they thought animals were used as part of the IPV they were experiencing.

### **He kept beating the dog**

The physical abuse and enforced neglect of companion animals renders them victims of IPV. Studies and anecdotal evidence within the literature have suggested numerous ways in which animals are subjected to physical abuse within IPV (Adams, 1995; Allen, et al., 2006; Roguski, 2012; Tiplady, et al., 2012). Animals can also be abused by the perpetrator controlling a woman's ability to care for her animals and enforcing neglect, such as not letting her feed the animals or restricting access to veterinary services (Roguski, 2012; Strand, 2003).

For some animals, the abuse they experience is the result of men asserting control of the couple's finances, thus limiting access to veterinary services when they are needed. In the instance below, Huia shares a story of a woman she worked with whose dog could not receive cancer treatment because her husband controlled access to their money. As a result, the dog was euthanised for his own well-being. The coercive control this woman experienced hurt both the dog and the woman. The dog was made to suffer and the woman was hurt by witnessing this suffering and then experiencing the grief associated with her dogs passing and the loss of their relationship.

***Huia (Tiaki social worker):** one woman that came in, her dog had cancer. And one way that he used control over her, over her movements was around, was around the animal's vet care. So financially she could not on her own, afford for the bills, so he withdraws the ability to take her dog for its cancer treatment. And when I saw her dog I had to talk to her in terms of you know, around things that were humane. And about the pain and suffering her dog was going through...we don't normally have a space inside but because it was so apparent that the dog was suffering, we needed, we needed that animal to have some comfort because it was at that night that I spoke to her about taking, taking the dog in to the vet to be euthanatised.*

More common across the interviews were stories of physical abuse of animals. Many women in the IPV context have strong relationships with their animals and it is these relationships that make the animals vulnerable to being used as weapons to enact harm upon the women through coercive control. By hurting the animals, perpetrators use intimidation strategies to coerce women into behaving in a manner that was acceptable to the perpetrator. During the course of her role as a social worker at Tiaki, Carmen has heard women speak of many ways in which animals are hurt as a function of the IPV they are experiencing.



**Carmen (Tiaki social worker):** *the guy would know how much the pet means to the children or to the woman and he can use that for intimidation... I have had women who have told me that he will come home, they will have an argument and he will go straight away and kick the dog in the head. You know, things like that. Or throw the cat around the house. Um, those sort of things. When he known how much it means to them...And you know, there was one woman where he had kicked the dog til it died, yeah so there are stories like that.*

Kicking has been documented as one of the most common means hurting animals in an IPV context (Tiplady, et al., 2012). Hitting animals, sometimes with objects as Moana outlines below, is also another common method used to cause animals pain (Tiplady, et al., 2012) and intimidate women.

**Moana:** *every time I would be at work and there would be texts going da da da da, you know, cos we have already had an argument and "I will go over and waste that fucking dog of yours and trash your house"...there have been some times when I have come home and he has been a bit dented up and that has been because of my partner...he will pick up the bats and stuff and try and hit him. Because if he goes in there trying to punch him he will bite his hands off. So yes, so like pick up stuff and whack him with it.*

The SPCA inspectors also shared instances of animal abuse and IPV that they were aware of in the course of their work. Charlotte recalled an incident with a puppy who had been repeatedly beaten but the abuse was not disclosed until after the woman had left the violent relationship. This dog became aggressive as a result of the abuse and was euthanised by the caregiver due to concerns for her safety and the well-being of the dog.

**Charlotte (SPCA inspector):** *she had her puppy at the time, and was sort of seven months previous to the phone call and had it into the vets and had its broken leg fixed. That was fine, um, we knew about it, I don't know why we knew about that but there wasn't any welfare concern about that. Dogs leg got broken, she got it fixed. Fine. It had fallen off a something. And then she had called, she had finally escaped from her abusive partner and then spilled the beans that it was actually him and that he had got mad at her and to teach her a lesson he had thrown the puppy and broken its leg. You know so she came forward afterwards. And she was just devastated, just disgusted with herself that she'd let him get away with that. He kept beating the dog, never so badly that it needed vet attention but it was constant.*

As was the case in Charlotte's story, women may be unlikely to disclose abuse to themselves and their animals, while still in their relationship, due to fears of retaliation from their partner. However, it can also be the case that disclosing the animal abuse while in the relationship, offers a woman a space to disclose her own abuse. This maybe especially so, following a particularly harrowing incidence of violence, such as in this case outlined by Hamish.

*Hamish (SPCA Inspector): the male person had um, was beating the dogs, um, there was a dog that had an ear injury...he was beating her. (She) told me told me that um, he he, had punched her in the stomach recently and as a result she had lost her baby.*

Throwing cats or swinging them by their tails is another common method of abuse used (Allen et al., 2006). In the following account, Hamish outlines how a kitten was thrown into the ground after a man had an argument with his partner. The violence against the kitten was carried out in front of his partner, resulting the kitten's death. Targeting the kitten not only harmed the kitten, it also acted to position the perpetrator as potentially dangerous to the safety of the woman and could serve as a warning of what he could do to her, if she continued to not give him what he wanted.

*Hamish (SPCA inspector): I think it was all over a guitar. He was playing the guitar and she wanted to have a turn or something and he wouldn't let her so he got up and smashed her guitar and then there was a young kitten and he got, he picked the kitten up and just smashed it on the ground. Um, she was right there in front of him when it happened.*

The coercive control of women can include purposeful physical abuse or enforced neglect of animals. The close relationship many women have with their animals, makes any harm to the animals a source of potential emotional distress for women and a mechanism through which women's behaviour can be controlled. This narrative supports Adams (1995) and Solot (1997) claims that that using animals as tools to hurt women renders them victims of family violence as well.

### ***He is taking it out on the cat***

Several studies have found that children who experience IPV and/or animal abuse can develop abusive behaviour towards the animals with whom they share their homes (Currie, 2005; Duncan, Thomas & Miller, 2005; Thompson & Gullone, 2006) and can be understood through the 'cycle of abuse' that sees children mirroring the behaviour they see in their homes and enacting it on more vulnerable members of the family. Baldry (2003) found that youths who abused animals were more likely to have witnessed animal abuse perpetrated by peers or parents, and reported more overall exposure to parental violence than their peers who did not abuse animals. Ascione (1998) found that 32% of women residing in an American women's shelter reported that their children had hurt or killed a companion animal. Instances of children abusing animals have also been found by Volant and colleagues (2008) who compared women with companion animals residing in a women's domestic violence shelter, with women with companion animals residing in the community. They found that 19% of the

shelter sample with children, reported that their children had committed actual animal abuse, compared with 1% of women residing in the community. Another survey of 767 domestic violence shelters found that an average of 43% of sheltered women discussed incidents of their own children abusing animals (Krienert, et al., 2012). Catherine commented that her children, especially her son, could be abusive toward their cat Buddy.

***Catherine:** they were also nasty to him too...when my son is angry, he will lash out. And the cat usually got the anger.*

Research suggests that there is a relationship between children who are exposed to violence in the home and externalising psychological symptoms, such as aggression towards animals (Ascione, 1998). Much of this research focuses on understanding and predicting future risk and pathology, rather than affording consideration to what is happening for the children and animals experiencing the family violence. Catherine suggests that her son takes out his frustrations on Buddy because he cannot lash out at the person making him feel hurt.

***Catherine:** he knows, he is just lashing out and he can't lash out at the person he wants to lash out to so he is taking it out on the cat.*

This resonates with the research conducted by McDonald and colleagues (2015) who reported that some children exposed to IPV directed their anger and negative emotions towards companion animals. Much like the cycle seen in IPV where the perpetrator oscillates between periods of being loving and then being abusive, children will often show this cyclical behaviour, whereby the child and animal have a positive relationship, and then the child becomes abusive towards the animal.

***Catherine:** but then when he was not lashing out, he was handling him and cuddling him and like he was like a sibling. One minute they are angry and next minute they want to pat it.*

McDonald colleagues (2015) also noted another reaction among children experiencing family violence and animal abuse, which is to take up the position of protectors for their animals, intervening when they thought their animals might be at risk of abuse. This counter narrative came through in Moana's talk about her children's protection of Ralph, the resident cat at one of the Tiaki safe houses.

***Moana:** having Ralph there is good but you have got to be careful with the other kids. They think it is funny that she is blind, stuff you know. My kids just automatically "don't do that to her" you know cos they've got a real affection for animals.*

Children's experiences of family violence can work to trap them in a cycle of abuse, where they themselves mirror the behaviour of the perpetrator and act violently towards companion animals. Within this storyline, there is also the suggestion of a counter narrative, where children resist the cycle of violence and take up a position as protector to their companion animals.

### ***I had to de-stress him***

There is limited literature about the impact that IPV has on animals. However, the literature that does exist suggests that beyond the obvious physical impacts associated with being physically abused, animals do suffer emotionally from the abuse (Flynn, 2000c; Tiplady, Walsh, & Phillips, 2012). Flynn's (2000c) participants reported animals having symptoms of stress similar to humans, including shaking, hiding, and urinating. Of the wāhine interviewed, Moana's dog Sox was the only animal to be subject to physical abuse by a male partner. As a consequence, Sox suffered not only physically, but also emotionally, as Moana outlines.

*Moana: they (the vet) did say that I had to de-stress him, cos my partner, cos that was one thing my boy had problems with, cos he would start stressing out because of my partner.*

When we understand IPV as an ongoing pattern of abuse, rather than an as isolated incidence we can think about the implications for all members of the family experiencing living with violence. Callaghan, and colleagues (2015) remind us that children experience family violence, rather than merely being exposed to it. This draws our attention to the understanding that animals are direct victims of abuse too. I would suggest that animals in violent families also experience the violence around them, even when not directly targeted. This is realised in the case of Snowball, Aroha's cat, who was never physically abused, but still suffered emotionally from living with the presence of IPV.

*Aroha: yeah because when they see that person they run and hide...as soon as that person, comes through the door she is hissing...she doesn't like yelling all, she doesn't like crying.*

In these stories about Sox and Snowball, there is an evident impact of experiencing IPV, as seen by manifestations of stress, behavioural reactions such as hissing, and avoidance of yelling and crying. This emotional impact is apparent even when there is no physical abuse.

### **Anything that hurts them, is going to hurt you**

The human-animal bond provides support and unconditional love to survivors of abuse that they may not otherwise receive from the perpetrator of their abuse (Krienert, et al., 2012).

The strong emotional attachment women have to their animals, makes animals an ideal targets of abuse, as cruelty to animals “serves to isolate, silence, control and coerce” women (Krienert, et al., 2012, p.281; Loar, 1999). Threats and intimidation to control women through the abuse of their animals creates an environment of constant fear and worry, not only about the safety of their animals but also about a woman’s own safety. When the perpetrator succeeds in hurting the animals, women can see this as their fault for not being able to protect their animals and thus can internalise the blame. This understanding of IPV and animal abuse is realised through Moana’s comment about why animals are used to hurt women.

***Moana:** the animals yeah are subject to the same things that the women and children go through. Especially if it belongs to that women and that child. They use it as a weapon against them to hurt them. And it is, it’s always been used like, I come from a god damn family where the cycle’s regular for that happening. And it has always been the animals that suffer just as much, cos its sort of like if we can’t get you and we can’t hurt you physically or emotionally, we gonna do it to your animal. And that hurts cos that is pretty much like picking up a child and being like we are gonna do this to your kid. Cos it is, you gain that attachment to your animals that they do become like your children. And anything that hurts them is gonna hurt you, and it might not be physical but it hurts where it counts and that is worse. That is worse than it being physical...I think I can take physical, just not the emotional and psychological abuse that it does to your head. Cos you can’t fix that overnight. Where physically you can slap some make up on that and fix it and you be sweet as for the next day. Where if it is emotional, yeah, its playing in your head all the time. And especially if they succeed in hurting your animal. And yeah, you don’t ever ever forget it. Especially cos then you start blaming yourself for the reason why your animal got hurt.*

This understanding of the dynamics of IPV and animal abuse were reported by Onyskiw (2007) who commented that, “abusing pets are a powerful means of control and intimidation. When people care deeply about their pets, it is terrorizing to have someone threaten or hurt them” (p.14). The constant threats and violence towards animals are a constant reminder of what abusers can do to their partner and children (Newberry, 2016). The abuse to animals can also isolate women from their last remaining support source, make them feel sadness and guilt for the harm caused to their beloved animal and coerce women into staying in abusive relationships due to concerns for their animals (Newberry, 2016). This has been the case for women that Huia and Carmen have supported at Tiaki.

***Huia (Tiaki social worker):** women have said at times that if the children are not there and she is not there, that the animals are the next target of abuse for that, for their partners. So they are hesitant to leave them behind. Whether that be women and children or women on their own.*

*Carmen (Tiaki social worker): pets are like family members and the children, also it is for their comfort, for their safety. Sometimes it is the only person, the only thing they can trust is the pet... why they can't because of you know the pet could be held to ransom, you know the guy would know how much the pet means to the children or to the woman and he can use that for intimidation, for ransom. Um, to keep her there.*

As evident in Huia and Carmen's comments, this dynamic of coercive control of women, through the abuse of their animals is well understood by those advocating for women experiencing IPV. This understanding led to the development of providing animal shelter services at Tiaki. The provision of emergency accommodation for the companion animals of women leaving abusive relationships enables women to leave earlier and helps women, children and animals to be safer.

## **Wāhine**

IPV is widespread in New Zealand and affects all ethnic groups. However, Māori women are three times more likely to experience IPV within their lifetimes compared with non-Māori women (King, et al., 2012). Not only are Māori wāhine are overrepresented, not only in the prevalence statistics, they also make up 48% of refuge clients (Haldane, 2009). Māori women's experiences of IPV is intertwined with the impacts of colonisation, the imposition of western patriarchal gender roles and structural racism (Hoeata, Nikora, Li, Young-Hauser, & Robertson, 2011). The pervasive impact of colonisation has resulted in the loss of traditional Māori society and values, and immense socio-economic deprivation of Māori contributing to the high prevalence rates of IPV among Māori women (King et al., 2012). In helping Māori women address IPV, emphasis is placed on re-connection with traditional values, concepts and culture (King et al., 2012). Māori refuges offer culturally specific care for their clients, which emphasises the importance of holistic approaches, connection and whānau (Haldane, 2009).

The three wāhine interviewed were residing at one of the Tiaki safe houses. They all had companion animals, and while the refuge provided emergency accommodation for animals, one participant left her cat behind, one was able to have her cat reside with her and one initially brought her dog with her to the refuge for safety and then had the experience of needing to house him in a private kennel facility. Within these interviews there were three key storylines that emerged in their narratives; animals as part of the family, the experience of separation and about experience of the services at Tiaki.



## Like part of the family

Throughout the wāhine narratives, there was a recurrent storyline about the animals being members of the family and having meaningful relationships with the wāhine and children. In her book on the history of companion animals in New Zealand, Swarbrick (2013) suggests that New Zealander's have not always felt this way and that there used to be a widespread belief that it was wrong to treat companion animals like they were human. In the twenty-first century, this view has shifted with many New Zealanders now publically and proudly treating their companion animals like children (Swarbrick, 2013). Walsh (2009a) suggests that the growing importance of companion animals may result from contemporary societal changes. With increasingly busy and stressful lives, companion animals offer moments of carefree joy, relaxation and replenishment. Walsh (2009a) also notes that animals offer “consistent, reliable bonds and facilitate transitions through disruptive life change” (p.470).

This view of animals as family members is consistent with findings of survey carried out by the New Zealand Council for Companion Animals (NZCAC, 2016). They found that the vast majority of companion animals in New Zealand are considered to be members of the family. This change in status is evident in the growing expenditure on companion animals. NZCAC found that despite the recent recession, those with companion animals prioritized spending on their animal's care and well-being, even if this meant choosing cheaper alternatives for themselves (NZCAC, 2011). Swarbrick's (2013) history of companion animals in New Zealand contains an example of a women making a large financial commitment to the health of her animal because she considered him human and part of her family. In other western countries, there has also been a shift towards extending familial membership to companion animals (Cowles, 1985; Toray, 2004). Similarly, Greenebaum's (2004) research participants thought of their companion animals as friends, children and “fur babies”.

The humanisation of companion animals was realised in the narratives of all three wāhine. In Moana's narrative, Sox was positioned as an active member of her family. Without children of her own, her puppy was easily recognised as ‘her baby’ in her whānau. Similarly, Snowball and Buddy were positioned as active members of their respective families.

*Moana: I was set on the notion that I wasn't gonna have kids, so when I grabbed Sox, it's why he is the way he is, cos I babied him. He was my boy...my boy would go pretty much to nan's, like all the other kids go to nan. Nan, will look after him you know, like she'll look after my boy and my sister's kids and that you know.*

***Aroha:** she is part of the family and I am her grandmother. As the kids say, that's my cat. So I become the grandmother. To a cat, not a child...they do everything for her. It is not a problem saying go and clean her dirt box. They will go and do it. We all take turns actually. Um, the current relationship is yeah, she just makes them melt. As soon as they see her they are, are like "ooo Snowball". It is good, you know, it just makes them feel, I don't know, complete.*

***Catherine:** so he was like something that wasn't a plan but when he came he just got accepted...like part of the family.*

Moana's efforts to maintain a relationship with Sox in her absence illustrates the depth of their bond.

***Moana:** like it doesn't matter how far or how long I have been gone, he still accepts me straight away...like nothing ever changed. Like I didn't just leave him for six months with someone and you know, you know. He would still be like it was, like I never left....I used to be there cos like when I would skype my family, it would be just to skype him actually, not to talk to them.*

The humanisation of animals within the narrative of these wāhine supports what Swarbrick (2013) suggests, that companion animals are now considered part of the family. Within this role as family members, animals are able to provide women with comfort and support, that they might not otherwise receive from their partner. This acts to strengthen the bond between the woman and her animals, making the relationship between them important.

### ***She will come comfort you***

Animals can be the only source of comfort for women and help them to manage through the abuse (Newberry, 2016). If the perpetrator is successful in isolating women from their friends and family, the relationship women have with their animals can be the only relationship that offers them comfort, companionship, unconditional love and a listening ear. This role of animal comforters was also mentioned by Faver and Cavazos (2007) who found that 62% of women reported that their animals were a very important source of emotional support. Similarly, Flynn (2000c) found that animals were very important emotional supports for women following an episode of violence, with some women commenting that their animals could sense that something was wrong and that they would come to provide comfort and unconditional love. This sense that animals know when a woman needs them was realised in Catherine's narrative about Buddy.

***Catherine:** when I was in a bad mood he would come up and go round the legs and tell me that he was there and meow and got his feed and leave me alone. Then he would come back and just snuggle. He would just rub up to you and I knew, when I*



*felt, when I was down, he knew something was down, going wrong. He would come and make me comfortable and make me happy.*

Women positioned their animals as not being like their abusers, but rather, as a source of support that can help them through challenging times. Kanat-Maymon, Antebi and Zilcha-Mano (2016) found that human-animal relationships maybe a source of need satisfaction for humans, leading to increased well-being and less psychological distress. For children, animals can help foster empathy, self-esteem and increased social participation (Walsh, 2009a). They are also a source of comfort and emotional support for children. Physical closeness to animals can act as a calming mechanism when women and children are experiencing distress associated with their abuse (Newberry, 2016).

**Aroha:** *when you cry, or if you are upset, she will come comfort you. I think that is why the kids like it too. It is good stability for them. Everything else is upside down but their cat isn't. They know that that is a guarantee that she is going to be there. If that makes sense.*

As Aroha stated, companion animals provide consistent and reliable relational bonds and help people to transition through difficult life changes and events (Kanat-Maymon, et al., 2016; Walsh, 2009a). The beneficial role of companion animals during life stress has also been noted by Allen (1995) who found that recently widowed women appreciated the non-judgemental, no expectations company of their companion animals, more than the support efforts from friends and family. Strong relationships have been found between companion animals and women who are experiencing cancer, with many women commenting on the comfort, physical closeness and unconditional love that their animals brought them (Walsh, 2009a). These sentiments are shared by Moana, who talks here about the companionship Sox offers her.

**Moana:** *it was my constant companion, that's who I would moan to, cry to, and fully have my bitch and stuff at...like a constant companion that I have had all the time, talked to and sleep with even cos he could, I would cuddle into him and he would cuddle into me cos he is so big. And yeah I do, I miss his paw sitting on my shoulder, I miss his head like resting on mine, like you know waking up with him was always the normal and it's weird not waking up with him.*

Like Moana, people with companion animals tend to view their animals as an important source of acceptance, support and love (Kanat-Maymon, et al., 2016). It is possible that within the context of IPV, that companion animals are even more important to women as they provide a source of non-judgemental support that they do not get from their abusive partners.

### *I protected him more than I protected myself*

The strong relationship and bond women share with their animals during abuse events, can lead to both trying to protect each other from violence. It is not uncommon for animals to attempt to protect a woman who is being abused (Flynn, 2000c; Newberry, 2016). A number of abuse survivors have reported that their companion animals have provided them with physical protection from violent partners. Newberry (2016) reported instances where women's dogs had attacked men when they were punching women. Intervening in the abuse can lead to the animal experiencing harm or the risk of harm. In these situations, women spoke of intervening themselves to protect their animals from harm (Flynn, 2000c). This is realised in Moana's talk of protecting Sox from her partner's abuse.

*Moana: I was anal about making sure that my boy was safe, I think more safe than me if I think about it, yeah. Especially because he was my baby, that was pretty much my pride and joy...I protected him more than I protected myself, like allot of the stuff that I took from my ex I didn't have to. I could have let him intervene but I was like no, cos that's my boy why would I take the brunt and then let him attack you and get him what put down.*

Moana's narrative illustrates the strength of the bond women can have with their animals and their desire to protect their animals from their abusers. These acts by women are counter narratives to women's positioning as passive victims of IPV.

### *I was not leaving him*

The strong bond between women and their animals has been found to result in some women remaining in violent relationships out of concern for their animals, even when animals have not been threatened or harmed (Ascione et al., 1997; Carlisle-Frank et al., 2004; Flynn, 2000a,b,c; Faver & Strand, 2003b; Roguski, 2012). The position of animals as members of the family means that they were not going to be left behind with the abuser. When they are finally able to leave, the importance of the animals in the women's lives is highlighted by their efforts to incorporate them into their future plans. In their stories of leaving, there was no doubt for Moana and Aroha that their animals were coming with them and that they were part of the family's future.

*Moana: I was not leaving him. Even though it's my house, I was not leaving him anywhere near that one, at all, ever. He would have attacked my ex, or my partner would have ran[ned] him over.*

*Aroha: we never forget her... I think, it's like one of your children and you can't just go and turn your back and leave them there.*

The commitment to their ongoing relationship with their animals is evident in Moana's narrative about her future plans with Sox and her unborn baby.

*Moana: for me and him, to hopefully settling down again and then I am going to have to integrate my baby with him cos he is gonna be, he is gonna be jelly.*

Not all women are as bonded to their animals and there is a counter narrative in the literature of women choosing to leave their animals behind with their abuser. When companion animals are not used as tools in the coercive control that women experienced, the emotional bond between them and their human guardians has been found to be not as strong as when women and animals were abused together. In these cases, women were more likely to leave their animals at home when they left relationships and were less likely to include them in future plans (Hardesty et al., 2013). This was the case for Catherine, whose cat Buddy was not subject to threats or actual abuse.

*Catherine: he is in the house that we left... I don't think that he has ever been used in that way as a weapon...I know that the cat was spoilt...I might just leave him there or I might go and grab him. I don't think he is being hurt or anything. It's just figuring out what we are doing first before bringing the animal back.*

The relationship that can develop between women and animals experiencing abuse together can result in women being unwilling to leave their animals with their abuser when they are ready to leave. This can result in women, children and animals remaining in violent and unsafe situations longer than they otherwise might have. Their animals are family to these women and when the opportunity to leave arises, the animals are part of that plan. Not all women share this strong bond and commitment to their animals. There is also a counter narrative that suggests there is more flexibility in whether the animals remain in the home or are included in the women's future plans.

### **Experiencing separation**

The separation of women and children, from their beloved animals is difficult for all involved, even when the animals are safe from abuse. The emotional attachment that families and their animals have to each other means that separation can result in feelings of worry and stress for both groups and lead to women and children missing their animals greatly. This resonates with the literature about how people cope with companion animal death, which suggests that the death of a beloved animal can be met with feelings of loss and separation that are the same as those experienced with human loss (Packman, Field, Carmack & Ronen, 2011). Despite death being more final than some separations of women and their animals in

the IPV context, these findings suggest that the emotions resulting from separation from a loved one can be the same, irrespective of species.

Moana was able to take Sox to the Tiaki safe house initially, however he is a very large dog and was too big to fit comfortably in the kennels available. She was forced, through lack of other options, to place him in private kennels. Though he was cared for by trained staff, this was hard for Moana.

***Moana:** It was hard, I don't know. I told them, I don't know if I can leave him. But it was pretty much had no choice, in the situation that I am in.*

The challenge of separation from beloved companion animals is shared by IPV survivors in the literature. Kreiner and colleagues (2012) found that, like Moana, being separated from their companion animals was associated with stress. In this study, there was agreement from the respondents that keeping women and their animals together was beneficial.

Within this theme of experiencing separation, the wāhine spoke about the emotional distress associated with not being there for their animals to provide them with their day to day care, the stress their animals experienced by being kennelled and the efforts that women put in to maintain their relationship with their animals while they were housed apart.

### ***That's not me watching him***

Given that animals are positioned as family members, being separated from them can be hard for the women and children. The difficulties of separation are especially challenging when there are concerns that the perpetrator may use abuse against an animal as a way to punish women for leaving or to coerce her into returning home. Even when there are no concerns about the animal's safety, women have reported being upset because they are concerned about their animal's emotional well-being when housed in kennel facilities and because their bond with their animals means that they miss their company. Allen et al. (2006) found that even when animals were in safe facilities after leaving a violent relationship, about half women and 80% of the children still worried about their animals, irrespective of whether the animals had been abused or not. Similarly, Strand and Faver (2007) found that women continued to worry about their animals' safety when they were placed with friends and family.

This resonates with Aroha's experience of being separated from her cat Snowball. When Aroha was in an Auckland refuge, there were no animal facilities at the safe house and

Snowball had to stay with a friend. During this time, they initially thought she was safe but the children still worried about Snowball. This became worse when Aroha's partner knew where Snowball was and purposefully let her out.

***Aroha:** the kids were always worried about the cat. You know, it's not worry that they need right at that point of their lives. You know. She had to go into kennels, um she, the kennels and then she went into the SPCA until we got a house cos we were there for three months. I had with a friend at first, and then the father knew where she was and went around and let her out. She didn't come back; they didn't find her for two weeks. She was living in the bush.*

***Jasmine:** did he do that on purpose?*

***Aroha:** yeah*

Attempts to hurt women and children, through a beloved animal, post separation is not uncommon (Roguski, 2012). Threats and abuse of animals are used by perpetrators to retain control over the women and either make her suffer for leaving or coerce her into returning home. Roguski (2012) found that post separation, perpetrators attempt to hurt women through the use threats, actual harm or execution of animals left in their care and the physical abuse of animals belonging to people who helped the women leave. Concerns that perpetrators of abuse might try to find and harm companion animals following separation have led to the development of anonymous foster care programs for animal victims of IPV elsewhere in the world (Komorosky, Woods, & Empie, 2015).

The relationship women have with their animals means that they like to be the ones overseeing their animal's care. So, even when animals are in confidential, safe facilities, women can still worry about the well-being of their animals. There is evidence to suggest that when animals are confined for periods of time, such as in kennel facilities, this can result in symptoms of stress, such as repetitive behaviour, vocalisations and physiological changes (Belpedio, 2010). These experiences resonate with Moana's narrative about the stress Sox exhibited during his stay at a private kennel facility.

***Moana:** yeah he started stressing and every time I went and visited he would howl like nothing, and the vet said so long as you keep him calm and give him freedom, cos he is used to being free and roaming the house and roaming his back yard and he is used to sleeping inside, like in a bed, not inside on a dog bed, but inside on a bed bed. Like yeah, he was used to those luxuries, so he was making himself crazy in the kennels really...he used to howl when I left the kennels and they used to be like we will walk you out and give him some freedom just so you know, calm him down. But he would always know when I hit that corner and leave that he was not going with me. So he would always play up after that... And it is bad enough that the women that*

*come through refuge are already going through enough stuff in our own personal lives, then on top of that have to worry about our animals as well, cos you know, it's not as easy as just leaving him or her there in the kennel and being like we can sort it out on another day, cos it is not like that. It is pretty much yeah, I see my boy pretty much as a child so I didn't find it easy just to leave him in the kennel and be like yeah he will be sorted someone's watching him. I was sort of like um, that's not me watching him you know. And I wouldn't, I don't envision the type to just leave my, just leave my kid either with someone and be like yeah it's alright. That's why I am sort of like it was hard, it was real hard.*

Women's close relationships with their animals during abuse, and the comfort and support that the animals offer them, means that during times of separation, women miss their animals and the companionship that they offer.

**Moana:** *you know, that was my constant companion. That's why when I did come in here and I had to put him in the kennels, it was like, I was sort of like yeah nah I did, I got anxiety for, from the separation. Especially as the weeks started going on and I had to sit there with that anxiety, that was always like is he alright, is he getting fed properly, is he getting this, stuff that I would normally be doing for him would be what I was thinking about most... That is my baby, I miss him so much....it is a hell of a lot of stress to be in one place and your animal be in somewhere else.*

Children are also bonded to their animals and miss them when they are separated. This is realised in Catherine's narrative.

**Catherine:** *I think that the kids just miss him the most because he does, did sleep with them in their beds. My daughter wouldn't go to bed, the other one, wouldn't go to bed without her.*

**Jasmine:** *how is she finding it now?*

**Catherine:** *she still wants the cat*

Companion animals are positioned as part of the family and are a great source of comfort for women and children, especially during difficult times. When animals are separated from their family, women and children worry about the physical and emotional safety of the animals. They also are concerned about maintaining the relationship with their animals, and miss the comfort and companionship that they provide. The absence of their animal adds another layer of difficulty to their experience of leaving abuse.

### ***Maintaining the relationship with their animals***

Animals can be a source of support and comfort for women and children experiencing IPV. Komorosky and colleagues (2015) suggest that when families are separated from their companion animals while in a safe house, visitations with their animals in foster care and kennels, might work to assist the healing process and help to assure the family that their



animals are safe. Crosstrails is an example of a foster program that is putting this in action. It is run through a domestic violence shelter in the United States and houses the animals of women residing in the shelter (Kogan, et al., 2004). This program has an inbuilt visitation system so that women, children and animals can maintain their relationship during separation. Aroha commented on efforts to maintain a relationship with Snowball while apart.

*Aroha: we went and visited her when she was at our friends because it was not far from their school so we would go there as much as we could.*

When Moana was younger and travelled for work, she tried to maintain her relationship with Sox through Skype. While she is in the safe house without him, she endeavours to continue a bond with Sox. He moved from the kennels to live with a friend who will transport Moana to and from her house for visits with Sox.

*Moana: and she's good, all I have to do is text her and she will come and get me for visits and stuff.*

Maintaining a relationship with their animals during such an emotionally challenging period is good for women's wellbeing and continuing the bonds between the family and animal. While fostering addresses the immediate physical safety issues for the women, children and animals, it can add emotional difficulties for women and children being separated from their companion animals who are a source of emotional support. Being separated during this time leaves women concerned about their animal's safety, missing their companionship and the comfort they provide, and requires women to invest additional energy in maintaining a relationship with their animals through visitations. Overall, this storyline of experiencing separation emphasises the importance of women and animals being housed together when leaving abuse.

### **The Refuge Service**

Lack of accommodation options for women with animals has been documented as a barrier to women leaving abusive relationships (Roguski, 2012). Internationally, there have been several programs developed to help women and animals immediately after leaving. These programs are either foster care systems, arrangements with kennel services or the development of onsite facilities for animals (Kogan et al., 2004; Noah's Animal House, 2015; Wuerch et al., 2016). With the exception of the services offered at Tiaki, New Zealand no formal programs to help women and animals leaving violent relationships. The previous storylines in the animal abuse and wāhine analysis have emphasised the importance of the

service Tiaki offer. As members of the family, animals can be subject to the same physical and psychological abuse that women and children suffer in violent homes. This renders the animal victims of family violence themselves and in need of refuge from abuse. With respect to the well-being of wāhine and their children, the presence of their companion animals offers them comfort, stability and focus on moving forward. Having the animals housed with the wāhine also reduced stress and worry of both the animals and their human family and reduces financial barriers to leaving with their animals.

Within this theme of the refuge service, participants spoke about why they thought the service offered by Tiaki was important for them, their children and their animals, and the challenges that came with being in the refuge with animals.

### ***Why the service is important***

An international study found that the majority of IPV agencies in their study asked about companion animals when doing their intakes into the service (Komorosky, et al., 2015). Just over half of these services helped women to find foster care or kennelling for their animals while in the safe houses. The authors suggest that this is indicative of an “increased awareness about the importance of companion animals in the lives of victims, and the need to keep them safe” (p.303). The importance of women’s relationships with their companion animals and the need to ensure their safety is captured in Moana’s story.

***Moana:*** *that is my baby, I miss him so much. I hard out miss my boy. I miss my boy and it’s hard to be in a house where you used to animals and then you can’t have the constant companion...A lot of women that come through refuge they do have animals that at the end of the day they end up leaving behind because they just can’t take them with them to where they are going into the houses and stuff, you know. All I am thinking was you know animals are a big support to the women that come into this house. Anything that can get it out there to help would be yeah, helpful to women, to all of us.*

As we have seen in the narratives from the wāhine, the well-being of the animals and the support that they offer is important to women, and being without them is very difficult, even when the animals are otherwise safe. It is not just any animal that that the women want, but rather it is the specific companion animal that they have built a relationship with, who will provide the most comfort, as Catherine illustrates here.

***Catherine:*** *it is nice having the cat there but I just miss my own cat. Yeah, even though it only came by me when the blanket was nice and warm and slept by my feet. It was nice to just seeing, just pat him or just give him a scratch... yeah they (the children) do miss the cat sometimes.*



Aroha further illustrates the importance of the existing bond between a family and their companion animal, as she talks about her experience of being in a refuge that didn't allow animals and at Tiaki, which does.

*Aroha: you know we have been in both situations and this time it has been a lot easier. We have stayed at a refuge before but we could not have our cat there and it was quite stressful.... so it is good with this house that we could have her around and it is also good for the kids because the kids that is their little company. I mean that cat comes and gives them the vibrations (purring) and then they like patting patting, you know, she sleeps with us and everything. But yeah. So. It's nice to be able to have her in this house...with the kids, Snowball is the saving grace for them. Only cos, like I said, she will go and comfort them, and when they are upset she will go away. When they see her they smile, it is automatic.*

Aroha also comments on the financial implications of not being able to bring animals to the safe houses. When she was in another refuge and could not bring Snowball, she had to be put in a cattery, which was a financial challenge for her family when they already had limited funds available.

*Aroha: I had to put her into a kennel, you know a boarding kennels and then it is another expense. Especially when you are already living on the bones anyway.*

also Several studies have found that the cost of kennelling services was a concern for women leaving violent relationships with animals (Komorosky, et al., 2015; Krienert et al., 2012; Roguski, 2012). Generally, women are expected to cover these costs themselves (Komorosky, et al., 2015) and this can act to prohibit women from taking their companion animals with them or forcing women to delay leaving so they can remain in their home to care for their animals, putting women, children and animals at further risk of abuse (Roguski, 2012).

Tiaki's service enables women to leave violent relationships with their animals when they are ready. Being together reduces their worry about their animal's safety and well-being, ensures that women can maintain their relationship with their animals, and offers women the comfort and support of their animals with whom they are bonded, without financial cost.

### **Challenges**

Tiaki offer a unique service in New Zealand, which enables women, children and animals to leave violent relationships together. However, this service is not without its challenges. Like many social services, the refuge runs on limited resources and has to fund the animal facilities at their safe houses on a shoestring budget and make do as best they can. As such,

there are limits to the number and type of animals that they can take into their care, as Moana experienced.

***Moana:** I reckon you know they need to more resources to help them house the animals along with the women really. Anything to help the refuge, yeah help with the resources, just to help with women with their animals would be great. Cos it's fully needed. (Sox) was too big. I did bring him in with me but he is pretty much bigger than that fence. And he pretty much jumped up on the door and they were like oh my gosh, his head and shoulders were past the fence. I couldn't put him down there, cos he would have jumped the fence and come up. Cos he'll play outside, he'll dig outside, he'll bury his bones outside, and have a nosey at other animals and prance around and what not but as soon as he is done he's at the door expecting to be let in. And go to the comfort of his own bed.*

There is also a tension around the kawa (rules) that animals are generally not allowed inside the safe house. This can be upsetting for both the women and their animal, who have to get used to a new routine. Many of the women find the physical closeness to their animals comforting and important for their well-being. It has been noted that animals can become stressed having to adjust to this type of arrangement (Ascione et al, 1997; Komorosky, et al., 2015). This was the case for Snowball, as Aroha comments on below.

***Aroha:** she is a bit stressed out at the moment I think. I don't know, pulling her hair out.*

Catherine was also worried about her boy, Buddy, becoming stressed in a new environment and possibly running away. This factored into why she did not bring Buddy with her.

***Catherine:** I am scared that if I bring him over he will take off and not come back. And there are all the different smells from all the different animals that have been through there, that would be quite confusing...At the moment there are four of us in a room so there is not much room for him too. And he is an outside cat too so being stuck in a room would just be horrible.*

Another tension arises in the safe house when families have different approaches to animal care and management, as Aroha has experienced.

***Aroha:** it's just hard because like not everyone is like us. Because some families are pretty mangere (lazy). And they don't buy good kitty litter, things like that.*

The refuge has kawa in place that extend to the care and welfare of any animal residents. However, enforcement of the kawa might need more attention for the safety and well-being of the animals' onsite. Aroha raises concerns about the way some children in the house interact with the resident cat Ralph and other animals at the safe house.

*Aroha: having Ralph there is good but you have got to be careful with the other kids. The kids that are there are no good. They think it is funny that she is blind, stuff you know. Kids have sick, sick, sick thinking...I tell them off when they do that. My kids do. My kids just automatically "don't do that to her" you know cos they've got a real affection for animals. So kids don't and you have got to be careful of that. You just got to be careful with the kids and they know the rules. You don't do this; you don't do that. You know it has got to be looked at and addressed properly with the children.*

The safety of animals is part of the reason why the animal facilities have been put in place at Tiaki but this can give rise to other safety issues for the animals.

Despite the importance of the service for families, there are challenges associated with it related to the limitations of the service due to resource constraints, not being able to keep animals inside and the tension that results from different families having different approaches to animal welfare and care.

## **Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge**

Women's refuges have existed in New Zealand since 1973 and today there are over two hundred community and national level organisations that work with survivors and perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence (Haldane, 2008). Tiaki is a women's refuge run in accordance with kaupapa Māori, for Māori women in the Kapiti and Porirua areas. For many years, Tiaki has incorporated animals into the kaupapa of their refuge, with the SPCA bringing small animals for children to spend time with and taking in animals into their safe house occasionally. Through their work the social workers at Tiaki saw how animals were hurt as a means of coercively controlling women and children, and how animals could calm women and children and help them heal from abuse. When they moved to a new property in 2012, Tiaki established facilities to start formally taking in animals of women who were escaping abuse.

The two participants from Tiaki have many years of experience working with wāhine who are living with, or leaving, IPV relationships. Within their interviews there were four key storylines; there is no barrier to abuse, safety of women and children, well-being and challenges.

## **There is no barrier to abuse**

Researchers interested in the link between IPV and animal abuse have found that in over half of relationships with IPV, threats of harm or actual harm to animals will be used as a means of psychologically abusing and coercively controlling women and children (Ascione, 1997;

Faver & Strand, 2007; Roguski, 2012). This understanding of the interconnected nature of abuse within family violence is evident in Huia's narrative.

***Huia:** there is not barrier to abuse, no, let's not get that confused...intimate partner violence, child abuse, animal abuse, you know. It is all interconnected... we got our new house it was a means of doing them both together and make that stand...we didn't have any money. We went and did it anyway...When I say that you have to make the commitment to do it, there is no money with it. You have to do it.*

The Tiaki social workers have a deep understanding of this link through their work with women who are experiencing IPV. Women and animals are subject to much of the same physical abuse in an effort to silence and control women. This is realised in Huia's talk about the tactics men have used to control women through harm to their animals.

***Huia:** well it's like women, it's like how women are killed, it is the same. It is no different for an animal when you use weapons. You know, you just, they use what's available. I can name three, you know, from a gun, to the um, sledgehammer, to wont you know, to boiling water. Those are three things that I know, that comes to mind. You know, they are, I mean if that's done in front of the woman or her children and you know that that is happening in place of you or as a tactic to control you. That is going to silence you immediately...so when you mention intimate partner violence, you know, just intimate partner violence, animals are right there, right beside it. So you'll see the same connection, what you see as intimate partner violence, that is exactly the same for them.*

Adams (1995) suggests that animals are abused in this way because of the strong relationships that women often have with their animals. Concerns for their animals' safety makes the abuse of animals an effective way of making women suffer and coercing women into remaining in their violent relationships. Despite this close relationship and the importance of animal safety to some women leaving abuse, research suggests that women can feel that their concerns about their animals' safety will not be taken seriously by authorities such as the police (Roguski, 2012) or refuge staff. As such, women may not raise these concerns, unless prompted. However, in this research the opposite narrative was encountered, with women actively talking about the importance of their animals to refuge staff.

***Carmen:** no, I have never come across a woman who thought it was silly to talk about it, um, for them their pets are an extension of their whānau. You know, so, they talk about their pets like it's their children. So, I have never come across that. I have come across..."so if I can't bring my pet, then I am not coming"... psychologically, that is a really big impact and um, the fear of leaving out-weighs the fear for their safety. So it is a huge impact on families. And even the children to be torn from their pets, to leave you know in the middle of the night. That could be also traumatic for our tamariki.*

Research suggests that when women feel that they are unable to take their animals with them, women will stay in relationships out of concern for their animal's safety and wellbeing (Roguski, 2012). This puts women, children and animals at further risk of abuse. Understanding the importance of women's relationships with their animals and the abuse of animals is used to coercively control women has seen Tiaki create new choices for Māori women in their region to leave violent relationships. These experiences are not unique to women in the Porirua area and having these choices across the country would help many women and animals.

*Carmen: it's not just our area that has this, um, it would be really good to see other refuges, you know, take up this as well. And it is a big issue. Pets used as pawns, you know for intimate partner violence. So hopefully, you know, other refuges will take up this.*

Despite Roguski (2012) documenting evidence of the co-occurrence of animal abuse and IPV in New Zealand and the need for accessible, temporary accommodation for animals when women want to leave their violent relationships, both the NCIWR and the RNZSPCA have not made steps to establish a formal program for addressing animal safety when women leave family violence. With the inclusion of animals into the kaupapa of Tiaki, the refuge has brought attention to the link between IPV and animal abuse and therefore enhancing safety.

### ***So passionate about animals***

Many advocates working with survivors of abuse are aware of the link between animal abuse and IPV, and the need for providing animal accommodation to enable women to leave abusive relationships but few have put in place animal accommodation programs, especially in New Zealand (Ascione, 1997, Komorosky, et al., 2015; Roguski, 2012). Within this storyline of a passion for animals was a deep understanding of the link between animal abuse and IPV and the knowledge that as members of the family, animals are also at risk of abuse. It was clear from the interviews with both Huia and Carmen that the inclusion of animals into the safe house facilities was borne from the needs of women using Tiaki, and the passion and commitment of Huia to the safety and well-being of women and animals.

*Carmen: I will never forget the time when we had several in the house and we were in a rush and I have not had breakfast. So I said I would put some toast on and Huia said " we have not got time" and then Ralph came in the door and someone said that she had not been fed. She said "wait on, we will just feed the cat". I just said, "Right". We took time out to go and feed the cat but I was not allowed to put the toast in. So yeah. So Huia is very passionate and that is the reason why we have what we have.*

Partnerships between domestic violence shelters and the Humane Society has seen programs implemented in the United States that connect children in safe houses with companion animals. Small animals are regularly taken to visit children in the safe house or where children were taken to the Humane Society to spend time with animals (Jorgensen & Maloney, 1999). A similar program was enacted at Tiaki to help settle the children. Huia saw the connection that people have with animals and their ability to help heal people during times of distress. Before they had the kennel facilities at their new safe house, animals were a feature of Tiaki's kaupapa, with the SPCA regularly bringing small animals to the house for children to interact with and help them assimilate into the safe house environment. During this time the SPCA were actively engaged with practicing their empathy education program "One of the Family" throughout New Zealand schools with All Black Norm Hewitt (Ryan, 2011). This program emphasised the links between IPV and animal abuse, and taught children to be kind to animals and grow up to respect others (Ryan, 2011).

***Huia:** we had a program in our old house um, with the SPCA with a student. So a student would come over once a week for two hours and bring small animals to the house. And allow the children there to connect and play with the cats, or pup or rabbits or whatever they bought over...that settled some of the children who missed having their animals around them.*

While they could not take larger animals in their old safe house, Huia stated that they were starting to take in smaller animals when women needed the facilities to enable them to leave their abusive relationships.

***Huia:** we were already having smaller animals at the house but we really didn't have the facilities to cater for a dog that someone had.*

With their move into the new safe house, it was a natural progression for Tiaki to implement facilities to take in more animals.

***Carmen:** when we moved, she saw the potential where we are now, that was the first thing that she wanted to do.*

The inclusion of companion animals into the kaupapa of Tiaki was borne from Huia's passion for the safety of women, children and their animals. In her experience working with women and children in violent relationships, she saw that building relationships with animals could be part of helping children heal and that animals were often used as a means to control women and prevent them from leaving their relationships. Providing these facilities, ensures their animal's safety and enables women and children to leave abuse and improve their well-being.



## Safety

About one fifth of women with companion animals delay leaving their abusive relationship out of concern for the welfare of their animals (Flynn, 2000b). This means that women, animals and children remain at risk of additional abuse. Women in several studies have commented that they would have left their abusive relationships much sooner if they had somewhere that they could take their animals (Ascione, 1997; Allen, et al., 2006; Faver & Cavazos, 2007; Faver & Strand, 2003b; Strand & Faver, 2005). These concerns are reiterated by Carmen.

*Carmen: there are some women that are too scared to leave the relationship or too scared to leave their animal behind, in case serious harm comes to the animal...we had a woman who came in and her son was 13/14, she said he really wants to bring his rabbit. That was hardcase. When I met them and there he is, and he was a huge 14-year-old, with this big black rabbit. So we have got this, well I call it a cat house and um, so I told him, yes you can get in the van and you bring your rabbit. And he was so rapped, cos he was standing back and didn't know whether to come or not. So he wanted to be with his mum but he wanted the rabbit also, so I took both of them and he was happy to put the rabbit in the cat house and he cared for it every day.*

When women are forced to leave their animals behind they will often be very concerned about their animal's safety, some women may return home regularly to check on them and other women may return home permanently. Carlisle-Frank, et al. (2004) found that nearly half of the participants had considered moving home out of concern for their animals and a quarter had returned home at some previous time to care for their animals. This has been the experience of social workers at Tiaki.

*Huia: a big contributing factor is when women were returning home way too early because um, you know their animals were still at home. There was a huge gap and still is...well we know that to be a fact. We know women, we had another wāhine who whose cat was hapu (pregnant) and was due. And um, she visited the home, the cat was at her neighbours' and she knew it would go back and forth cos that was its track. And the day she went home to check, just to check, she had had her kittens. So she returned home that same day.*

This illustrates that women who leave without their animals, will return home if they are concerned for their safety. Similarly, women will stay in violent relationships until they have somewhere to take their animals. This was evident in a study about the Crosstrails foster program, where women commented that they declined places at other women's shelters because they could not take their animals with them. Instead they chose to stay in their abusive relationship, putting themselves at further risk of abuse, until a place became available for themselves and their animals at Crossroads/Crosstrails (Kogan, et al., 2004). It

has been the experience of Carmen in her work with wāhine at Tiaki that when women have somewhere safe to take their animals, they are more likely to leave their relationships.

*Carmen: you know it takes a weight off their shoulders when they hear that of course you can come with your dog or your bird or whatever, not a horse or anything like that cos we haven't got room for that, but um yeah. You know, and cos when they ring us the first thing that they will say to us is "I have got a dog, I have got a rabbit, I have got this", not a problem. So that takes a big pressure off them. Then they realise that they can leave and they start packing up and they are out. Yeah...we had a woman who, who because she was not Māori she was European but she had a dog and she would not leave the relationship without her dog. So, we took her into our refuge and um, she stayed with us for a little while and she left us a letter that she was so, so thankful and grateful being able to bring her dog cos that was her world.*

Despite Tiaki being for Māori women, the refuge is focused on ensuring the safety of women, children and their animals. As such they are open to helping non-Māori women when they can. This example of a Pākehā woman going to Tiaki for their animal services suggests that there is demand for such facilities that other refuges are not providing.

Carmen and Huia's storyline about how having a safe place for animals ensures that women and children can find their own safety is supported by findings in the literature. Not having somewhere to accommodate a woman's animals is a significant barrier to a woman finding safety and places the women, children and animal's lives in further danger. The service provided by Tiaki is therefore important for ensuring the safety of a woman's whole family, by enabling them to leave their violent relationships.

## Wellbeing

Research suggests that companion animals can play an important in enriching and enhancing the quality of life for humans (Stable, 1995; Walsh, 2009a). Companion animals have been found to promote positive physiological responses in their caregivers, especially those facing major life changes (Kant-Maymon, et al., 2016). For example, animals can be effective in reducing blood pressure and promoting survival in patients who have heart disease (Stable, 1995). Psychologically, animals enhance wellbeing by reducing stress, providing companionship, security, happiness and support (Kant-Maymon, et al., 2016; Stable, 1995; Walsh, 2009a). The Tiaki social workers were aware of these benefits that have been reported in the literature and their narratives speak to the wellbeing that animals bring to women's lives in their safe houses. The animals help women and children to feel settled in a new environment and offer the women comfort and emotional support. The idea that animals might be able to sense people's feelings and needs came through from Carmen and Huia who



spoke about the Tiaki safe house resident cat, Ralph, who seemed to know which women and children need additional support.

***Carmen:** Ralph, who was a street cat when we first got there and now is our cat. And she seems to know, she seems to know who needs her the most. And we have a young girl up there at the moment who she sleeps with. She will go in the room, she will sleep. She just seems to know. Even for women, Ralph will know and she will go up on their bed. And they love it. Yeah. Even women who come in without children, there is Ralph there. They seem to adopt her.*

***Huia:** when women come in, no matter what time of the day or night, they look for the cat. And the cat becomes their kind of crutch. She loves it, she knows but she has a job. Because there's mice around. But where is she, she's in the women and children's room, they are cuddling her, they are nurturing her. But I think she is doing more for them, than they are for her. And so she earns her meal in other ways. Yeah. So I know that having their animals around is healing, is healing for them. And they can cuddle, and they can cry with the cat. They can go through all the emotions and she just purrs and cuddles into them or whatever. But it seems to comfort them in that darkness, in that strange you know, place...I think I, you know the example with Ralph, when women and children come to the house is huge. You know her ability to offer them comfort, warm and love, whatever that might be. And, and them have something to hold during the night, cos I can't find her so I know she is in one of the rooms. That is huge. To have something warm, with a heartbeat next to you when you're traumatized and lonely, and in a foreign space, house, foreign people. You don't know them. Absolute strangers. To have something to hold when you are trying to hold yourself together, keep yourself together, makes it possible for women to get up in the morning. And to have hope.*

Having the animals present helps women and children through the trauma they have experienced (Walsh, 2009b). Children in particular respond to the presence of animals. Levinson (1962) was one of the first therapists to start using animals during sessions with children and adolescents. Levinson found that when his dog Jingles was present, the children opened up and told Jingles their story or spoke through Jingles to communicate with him. This resonates with Carmen's talk about children in the safe house.

***Carmen:** the children talk to the animals all the time you know. And I have heard the kids with Ralph, you know. They will tell Ralph their story, it is amazing. Or, I went in one time and a little girl is laying in bed with Ralph and reading to Ralph and she is just laying there lapping it up. So the connection with animals and children, or with animals and women is very strong.*

Animals help women and children to assimilate into the environment at the safe house. This resonates with research about the human-animal bond that suggests companion animals help facilitate coping, resilience and recovery from difficult life events and transitions (Walsh, 2009b). Leaving family violence and moving to a new house with people you do not know is

a very stressful time for women, having their animals there for support during this transition is helpful, as Carmen and Huia suggest.

***Carmen:** you know when they bring their animals along, they are more willing, you know for the children they don't know, well they do know what is going on and so they are already in that state. So for them to be able to hold on to their cat or guinea pig or dog or whatever it helps them to progress and to be in the whare, in a place that is unfamiliar but that is the one thing that they trust and love.*

***Huia:** it helps them to integrate into a foreign place. A foreign house, among foreign people.*

Enabling women to bring their companion animals to the safe house helps women and children transition into an unfamiliar house and assists with their resilience and ability to cope during a time of change. This helps women to move forward with their lives.

***Huia:** so when these women have whatever pathway or stage that that light bulb goes on for them, it needs to shine on everybody that has an emotional attachment to them, which is their children and their animals. Whatever is important to them as a family unit, then if we can include that unit in their actual case management and safety planning, then it is more likely to succeed for her. And it is more likely that the children can settle down as well, and be part of the plan if those that they cling to, which is often the animals, are included. So, um, for the ones who have come in with their animals, that's what, that is what we have experienced.*

The role that animals play at Tiaki helping women integrate into the safe house and recover from abuse reinforces the need for women and animals to be able to leave violence together. This is realised in Huia's comments about the concern women and children have for their animals when they are forced to leave them behind.

***Huia:** you know, they love their animals...so do they, they don't see them as separate, so if they are worried about their children, they are worried about their animals. Why because their children worry about their animals as well. They can't settle, they can't settle on moving forward if half their family are left behind.*

The social workers told of how the provision for animals at Tiaki enables women to work through their emotions. An example here is a woman being able to safely grieve for her terminally ill dog.

***Carmen:** an older woman up in Kapati and she had a really old dog and she needed somewhere so we took her in with her dog. And yeah. And she was very happy and her dog passed away as well. So it is just like, well you know, but the woman is saying that if they hadn't been around, if they had left the dog, the guilt would have been unbearable. So they had the dog and they knew the reasons of the dogs passing, you know their pets passing was natural causes. So I remember her saying to me, I think if*

*he had of passed away at home with her ex-partner she probably would have thought that he had done something to the um, to her pet.*

Enabling animals to come with women to the Tiaki safe houses offers women a sense of wellbeing. The narrative from Carmen and Huia suggests two main reasons for this sense of wellbeing, the first being that animals provide women with a sense of comfort, companionship and unconditional love, which helps women navigate the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship and helps them to settle into the unfamiliar environment of the safe house. For children, animals offer a friendly ear to which they can share their stories, process the trauma they have witnessed and experienced, and more effectively transition into a new environment. The second reason is that when women have had to leave their animals behind, they tend to worry for their safety. Being able to have their animals nearby and know that they are safe helps alleviate this burden for women.

## **Challenges**

Having animal facilities at the Tiaki safe houses also has its challenges. The main storylines that came through in the interviews with the Tiaki social workers were about the lack of awareness about the link between animal, child and woman abuse, limited funding and resources and the difficulties of managing the needs of the refuge, women, children and animals.

### ***Lack of Awareness***

Despite growing evidence of the link between animal abuse and family violence, there is still limited awareness of the link among society, politicians, and human and animal service organisations. The abuse of animals as a means of coercively controlling women is an ongoing experience for women and their animals, rather than a series of isolated incidence (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). The widespread, and everyday nature of IPV can make gaining public attention challenging. Generally, it tends to be the extreme examples of abuse that garner media attention, and thus public and political interest. The lack of awareness is a big challenge of the work that Tiaki do.

*Huia: so what you get is media coverage, you get media coverage, for example, around the calves. Everyone is horrified. Why? Why are they horrified because it is at the moment. It is extreme and it is at that moment and it is on the news...this is every day. You walk past women and children who are abused every day. Unless an animal gets killed, or maimed or it is horrendous in front of everyone and you can attach something concrete to it, it is going to go under the radar. Just like intimate partner violence. No one is going to look hard enough because no one comes to the safe house or see the trauma and the its more than bruises. The real, you know, when women,*

*when the real damage, no one see the real damage. They only see the one offs. Those extreme one offs. They don't see the everyday damage, that we see every day and that the children see every day.*

**Jasmine:** *do you think that, this is more related to intimate partner violence, but do you think that people see intimate partner violence as the physical act of someone hitting someone, not that continual psychological um,*

**Huia:** *but that also happens to the animals. That is what I am saying.*

Adams (1995) has suggested the abuse of animals is used as a means of controlling and hurting women. This is psychological abuse, yet there is limited recognition of the severe impact that psychological abuse can have on women (Stark, 2007). As Huia has highlighted, people tend to focus on the graphic, physical aspects of violence against women and animals, and fail to appreciate the impact that consistent, psychological abuse can have. Continued focus on incidents of physical abuse and extreme cruelty to animals, rather than the everyday nature of psychological abuse and torment of animals, limits our understanding and ability to address IPV and animal abuse.

### **Limited Funding and Resources**

Onyskiw (2007) suggests that one reason we have been slow to recognise the link between animal abuse and family violence is because western society treats each kind of abuse separately and addresses it with different plans and organisations. For example, Child Youth and Family address matters relating to child abuse, the SPCA addresses matters relating to animal abuse and the Women's Refuge generally address matters relating to abuse against women. Despite the knowledge that many of these organisations will be involved with the same families, separate service delivery systems mean that these organisations often compete for the same small pool of funding and resources (Onyskiw, 2007). This has been the case for Tiaki, who have found accessing funding a challenge, particularly for their animal shelter services.

**Huia:** *well it is terrible to go straight to funding but it is. Trying to get resources and resources um, resources and man power to help build your shelter, connected to the safe house is virtually impossible. We have virtually built the shelter bit by bit, including the fencing, the gates. As we have been able to. Everybody knows, thinks and says it is not ok, but no one actually steps up and does anything. So remembering that we are 24 hours, seven days a week service and the majority of the work of our hours are women's, women's hours and women's unpaid hours. The skill base that we have is reflective of our background that we come from. So the animals we take in, some of our construction around fencing and barriers to keep them safe, um are questionable but work. Um, the way we care for the women is, is you're dependent on what resources we have at the time. You know. So it is very, very hands on.*

This funding challenge is shared by women's shelters in the United States that provide facilities for animals leaving abuse (Komorosky, Woods, & Empie, 2015). A lack of resources for animal services means that there are limitations to what animals that can come into the safe house and whether at any given time there is room. The risk here is the potential that some women might remain with their abuser because they do not want to leave their animals behind.

***Huia:** it's one house, with everybody sharing space, including the animals. So um, and it is an ordinary sized house. So we can have three or four families in there with all their children. So our ability to cater often depends on what animals they have, the size of the animal.*

Lack of awareness about the link between animal abuse and IPV and funding limitations are linked. With increased awareness of the issue, the challenges that face women, and the importance of services, such as those at Tiaki, would likely increase public and political interest in the safety of women and animals and lead to an increase in funding for services that ensure the safety of both.

### ***Managing everyone's needs***

Internationally, collaboration between human and animal services is emerging to ensure that there is temporary accommodation for animal victims of family violence (Komorosky, et al., 2015; Krienert, et al., 2012; Wuerch et al., 2016). Despite the documented benefits for women, children and animals being able to stay together, many of these programs provide shelter for animals at separate locations. A review of Californian domestic violence shelters policies regarding companion animals found that none of the shelters routinely allowed animals to stay with their guardians (Komorosky, et al., 2015). Shelter staff commented that it was not necessarily an issue of space, but concerns about the cost of having animals onsite, how the animals would adapt to the shelter, how to deal with aggressive animals and health concerns about animals being in contact with each other and in the safe house. This tension between the needs of women, animals and the shelter was evident in the interviews with Carmen and Huia. In an effort to manage everyone's needs Tiaki have kawa in place that outline the responsibilities of everyone in the house, including the care of animals on site.

***Huia:** so you have seen the rules of the house. Rules for the children, and rules for the care of the animals. And we monitor that on a daily basis. Walking the dog, TLC, is all part of the rules. Because often when everything is overwhelming and we, we have supports in place to see that that's all been addressed but we can only do so much you know. The women need to take responsibility for animal care as well...one afternoon I got back to the house and there a puppy that's been snuck in and I got back early and*

*here's the puppy all curled up on the couch and it's often a reminder about you know, about the rules and respecting each. You know because there are other families in the house as well. That everyone be comfortable. It is about, it is a whole lot of things. So it is about being in their designated areas. And those designated areas are there for everyone's comfort.*

Within the kawa it is clear that animals must remain outside the house. This is to limit issues associated with allergies and animals interacting with people that they do not know. Yet women's relationships with their animals and the comfort they provide means that women would prefer to be able to have them physically close to them, especially during the transition period.

**Carmen:** *Most of the women, sometimes I think that the only negative thing, or they may see it as negative, but I don't think that they really do, but is that they can't have them inside. And that's only because of other children and other families could be allergies or could be safety. The animals don't know these other people.*

The kawa outlines that the animals' needs must be taken care of while the women are in the safe house. As Huia comments, sometimes the animal's welfare is compromised and Tiaki social workers need to take a more active role in making sure the animal's needs are addressed.

**Huia:** *we had another young girl, although intimate partner violence was the primary issue, she also had an alcohol, she was an addict, this one. And she really begged us if she could bring her four-month old dog. And we were very strict around care, cleaning, food, we our rules around ensuring that they are cared for, it's just as, it's not strict, but firm. Cos they need to be cared for as well, around bring them in, you know. They need a lot of TLC as well. She was good while she was clean, but her addiction still was stronger than her love for her dog. And she really loved her pup. And it came to a point, maybe two months down the track, after several talking to around the care and around food. Cos one minute the dog would have one day, she would have all this food and be well fed for one day and then she'd struggle for three or four days, so I had to remain vigilant around that. And so I said to her, just like paramountcy of the child, paramountcy of her dog became my responsibility. And for her it was our social workers. But I was the dogs advocate.*

When women are struggling to care for the welfare of their animals, it can necessitate some Tiaki staff acting as advocates for the animals and others as advocates for the women.

## **Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

The New Zealand SPCA are New Zealand's leading animal welfare organisation. As part of this role, the SPCA has acknowledged the interconnection of abuse of animals and family violence in a number of ways, including the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Child Youth and Family (CFY) that acknowledges the link



between animal and child abuse (Child Youth and Family, 2008). They also commissioned the Pets as Pawns research (Roguski, 2012) to increase their understanding of the link and operated the “One of the Family” program for school children to increase their empathy towards companion animals (Ryan, 2011).

The SPCA participants in this study came from the inspectorate and veterinarian services. From their interviews three key storylines emerged; understanding the link between IPV and animal abuse, challenges to helping women and animals who are experiencing abuse, and solutions for the future.

### **Understanding of the Link between Intimate Partner Violence and Animal Abuse**

Due to the recognition that family violence is a system of coercive tactics of control, those working across the animal and human welfare services are likely to encounter both animal abuse and IPV within the same households (Faver & Strand, 2003a; Long, Long & Kulkarni, 2007). People working in these sectors are well placed to identify the connected abuses and where possible take action. Through the SPCA staff narratives, there was a definite understanding that violence against humans and animals was linked. Personal opinion, knowledge of research in this area and experience working on cases that confirmed the co-occurrence of abuse, appeared to guide this understanding.

*Annabelle: yup, I mean I can't say I have had too much personal experience um, or professional experience you know within my role but on a personal opinion and in my view it is most definitely linked. Violence to children, women or partner, and the animals and I often think that they are often used as the bait to keep a situation happening as well.*

*Charlotte: I do know that there is, um, a fair amount of research behind that and there is definitely a link, um, which definitely makes sense.*

Despite the staff's understanding of the link and their experiences in the field, there appeared to be limited institutional focus on this co-occurring violence, the impact that this could have on animals and families, and possible avenues for intervention. Given the evidence linking IPV, child abuse and animal abuse, Faver and Strand (2003a) suggest that human and animal welfare organisations might be able to better strengthen their prevention work and service delivery through greater inter-organisation co-operation. They note that efforts in the nineteenth century to protect children were linked to the animal welfare movement but that during the twentieth century the issue devolved into separate sectors (Faver & Strand, 2003a). These sectors work with animals, children and women separately, and are dependent on

different training, means of investigation, reporting and services, with limited interaction between agencies (Krienert, et al., 2012). Faver and Strand (2003a) posit that these separate institutions, the specialisation of services and perceived conflict of interests between the interests of these groups has “impeded attention to the link between animal cruelty and interpersonal violence” (p.239).

Internationally, increased awareness of the link has resulted in the emergence of multiagency alliances to prevent IPV and cruelty to animals (Komorosky, et al., 2015). I asked Hamish if they had received any specific training about the interrelated nature of family violence and how the SPCA implements understanding the link.

***Hamish:** the only MOU [with CYFs] that there is, there is one with Child Youth and Family, so there is a big document on it. But you know, all it really talks about is that this is the correct reporting line. You report it to our head office who reports it to their head office rather than us ringing directly. For anything else, there's probably not even a lot of training um, on, on, you know who to call for what. It is just kind of just, knowing about it, I guess...I am not sure if it is in the, like the Unitec that the inspectors get trained. I am not sure if there is a component in there on that. And it is certainly not talked about regularly. You know, it's not in our compulsory trainings. So it is probably something that has happened and that box has been ticked to a degree.*

Training on the link between human and animal abuse was generally reduced to knowing the correct reporting lines, rather than about how animals were used as part of human abuse. I asked Charlotte and Jessica if they had received training on “the link” and its visibility as an issue among staff. Like Hamish, they commented that specialist training was limited.

***Charlotte:** I found for the most part in University probably talking about it was actually from student run projects. You know we had to do PowerPoint presentations on animal welfare issues and that sort of stuff and it was often bought up by the students. So I think it is well known, but probably don't receive that much specialist training on it.*

***Jessica:** um, I think that, we like, in its not very formally discussed but I think our team isn't really into that sort of formalities of things anyway. But we are always chatting about how we can do things better. And so I do think it comes out but um, because of the lack of formality in our team that maybe you know that information would be better shared among our team if it, it was.*

Within this narrative about the SPCA staff's understanding the link between IPV and animal abuse, there were storylines highlighting draw attention to the limited understanding of the dynamics of family violence and the acceptance of stereotypes about who victims/survivors



of IPV were and how they should respond. The need for SPCA staff to have increased awareness about IPV was noted by Roguski (2012) in the New Zealand based Pets as Pawns research. He recommended that SPCA staff receive training to enable them to understand animal cruelty as a form of IPV, their use as pawns to keep women and children in the relationship, the difficulties for women disclosing their abuse, and confidentiality.

### ***You wouldn't have picked it at all***

Given the limited training about IPV that the SPCA staff received, there was understandably limited knowledge of the dynamics of family violence, the use of animals in the coercive control of women and its widespread nature in New Zealand. This lack of knowledge shapes the way the SPCA staff position survivors of IPV, how the understanding what IPV is, who perpetrates it and what is expected of those who fall victim to it (Haldane, 2009). Their ideas about IPV are similar to those reproduced in the media and society, where family violence is considered to be predominately isolated instances of extreme physical violence, perpetrated by visibly aggressive men, and in families with limited financial and social means (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2014). There is also a narrative about the expected behaviour of real victims. The inspectors had experiences in their work that both confirmed these dominant narratives, and some experiences offered a counter narrative.

There was limited knowledge of how coercive control is enacted in IPV to silence women and limit their sense of autonomy (Faver & Strand, 2007; Stark, 2007). Yet a sense of the limits to autonomy is realised in Charlottes narrative about some women she has encountered in her role as in inspector.

***Charlotte:** um, so sometimes you can go to a property and say the husband or the father, won't be home and I will be trying to ask them questions about the animals and they will feel like they need to ask permission from the male in the house to answer the questions, even if it is as simple as what are you feeding him, how often are you feeding him. What is his name, you know, um, they seem to me like they are too scared to say anything. Um, and then you know, comments like "if you do that he will be really mad". Even if it is something like moving the kennel to somewhere more sheltered. Something that should not be a big deal, um, is.*

Research suggests that IPV can, and does, occur across all social classes and cultures, with approximately a quarter of all relationships enacting some form of violence (Hoeata, et al., 2011). Despite this evidence, there is a strong narrative in New Zealand that IPV is something that happens predominately, or exclusively, within poor families (Family Violence

Death Review Committee, 2014). The belief that IPV is associated with low socio-economic groups was evident in Charlotte's narrative.

***Charlotte:** he had got mad at her and to teach her a lesson he had thrown the puppy and broken its leg...Um, and this um, this couple you know they um, owned a pretty expensive place in a really nice part of town and they are both quite respected in their community and stuff. You know you wouldn't have picked it at all.*

Hamish drew on the dominant understanding of IPV as 'battering' with an expectation that IPV means will show physical signs of abuse.

***Hamish:** she didn't have any obvious injuries or anything, you know.*

Within the SPCA narratives, there was a storyline based on a dominant cultural narrative that positioned victims of abuse as highly emotional. Yet, often the women they encountered in their work were composed and factual in their accounts of their abuse, and this offered the staff a counter narrative.

***Hamish:** um, she was quite, she was very matter of fact and quite a hard lady. She didn't really go into any emotion about it really. She was very very very matter of fact. You know like, with the baby thing. It was just, it was just a fact. And talking to the Police Officer, she's, she's the Wellington family violence (person), and she said that they can get like that. They are just like boom boom boom, this is what happened.*

***Hamish:** I said you know, are you ok here? you know, like, you know. She brushed it off, you know but, just again matter of fact, you know.*

In the SPCA narratives, there was also a storyline about expecting women to want to leave their abusive relationships. This draws on the narrative within contemporary Western society, which asks "why doesn't she leave?" (Elizabeth, 2013). Framing women as responsible for ending the abuse, makes women not leaving the key problem (Elizabeth, 2013). Positioning women in this way suggests limited understanding of how coercive control, structural barriers and social expectations act to trap women in violent relationships (Stark, 2007).

***Jessica:** but um, in more recent, last couple of weeks, we have been and visited her as she had more animals that she took on that she wanted us to take on because hasn't managed. And I have hardly been able to recognize her because her face has just been swollen out to here. And, um, because of the previous involvement we have been quite heavily involved in with the Police in that case, so we were aware already that he had gone into custody for that particular incident. But for some reason, she still continues with that relationship, regardless of everything that is going on, which is something that I don't really understand.*

The SPCA staff interviews revealed limited understanding of the widespread nature of family violence and the role of coercive control in IPV. A lack of training means that SPCA staff draw on dominant narratives about IPV, that frame the violence as primarily physical and position women as emotional victims, responsible for stopping the abuse. This dominant understanding of IPV has potential implications for the way in which SPCA staff interact with women leaving abuse. Roguski (2012) noted that the SPCAs lack of family violence knowledge might have led to some SPCA staff as having “minimized or mistrusted women’s explanations that they were surrendering their animals because of needing to leave a family violence situation” (p.49).

### **Challenges to helping women and animals**

It was evident in the interviews with the SPCA staff that they are compassionate and empathetic not only towards the needs of animals but also those of their human companions. As such the staff expressed a desire to be able to help women and animals who are experiencing violence. While they were generally solutions focused, there were clear challenges that the staff face in these complex situations. A key challenge that emerged in their narratives was the competing interests that animals and humans can have and the implications that this had on their ability to do their jobs. In addition, participants all commented on the difficulties that come with feeling like abuse could be happening to women, children and/or animals, but not having ‘proof’ to act. Another barrier to action was a narrative of limited resources. Not only financially, but also with emergency accommodation space and human resources, such as animal foster parents. And finally, there was a clear storyline around the increased challenges faced by women with dogs.

### ***Feeling that something is going on but it is never confirmed***

Women who are experiencing IPV do not disclose their abuse for fear of retaliation (Stark, 2007; Stark & Fitcraft, 1996). SPCA staff noted several occasions where they thought it was likely that violence was occurring against women and/or animals in some of the families that they visited but that it was difficult to confirm that this was the case.

***Hamish:*** *I mean I have probably suspected dozens and dozens over the years. Which would be hard to pick out specifically but you just sort of get the feeling that something is not right. Um, yeah but you know there is not enough to make a report or anything.*

**Charlotte:** *it's hard to say because you know it's not like we often get it confirmed. Um, the whole sort of I guess a patriarch of the family we see quite a lot, especially in the low socio-economic areas. Um, and yeah, you do see it a lot like most of the time you be expected to deal with a head person of the house and the other people don't really want to talk to you until that person has been involved...It can be hard and it is always guess, it's always quite a lot of guess work. Um, normally it is because their reaction to something is too much for what is called for, if you know what I mean. So, no dog, especially a fearful dog, likes to have a hand go above their head because they can't see what is happening and stuff. But to almost flatten yourself to get away from it, that is not usual dog behaviour. Um, so, I mean it's not like yeah, I very much doubt the owner will ever admit it, you know.*

**Jessica:** *we definitely get a fair few cases where it is alleged that they have you know, beaten an animal and yeah, you definitely get a sense if you know if it has happened and to what severity when you see the reaction of the animal to the person. So when there's other people in the house, partners and children, you do think, you do try and see what their reactions around the person are as well. Cos you know, if we do have those concerns we know that we can turn to other agencies to look into those sort of things.*

Sometimes abuse is suspected when animals behave in a fearful manner or overreact to certain people and objects. Again, this suspected abuse can be hard to confirm.

**Annabelle:** *um, I think more than the physical evidence in regards to fractures and knocks, what we probably see in practice more is the response of canine's to the male owners that come in...and one of the upsetting things for us is sometimes seeing how the animals do reaction when the owner comes in. The general rule is that when the owner does come in the animal is generally, if it is in with us and has been hit with a car there is obviously a certain amount of pain and when the pain is under control you do see the animals sat in their cages subdued and a little bit unhappy and suddenly when their owner who has been looking for them does come forward you know their whole world melts and you know they response and they bounce and this that and the other. From time to time we come across those animals that slowly come out of their shell with us and are happy to be taken on their little lead walks whilst in care. But then an owner comes in and they sink to the floor, they crouch right down and that is sometimes the most um, heartbreaking for us because there is nothing against that person, there are not complaints, there is not evidence, no nothing.*

Munro and Thrusfield (2001) conducted one of the first studies describing veterinarian's experiences of the non-accidental injury (NAI) of companion animals. They found similar injuries to those found in animals who have experienced family violence, and often found animals had multiple NAI. A New Zealand survey of veterinarians' experience of NAI and the correlation between animal abuse and violence against women (Williams, et al., 2008) found that most veterinarians had seen cases of animal abuse in the last five years, with dogs being the animal most abused. However, only 16% either knew of or suspected IPV within those families and yet 77% agreed that people who abuse animals are also likely to abuse

their partners and children. When animals present with injuries, it can be challenging to know for sure if they were accidental or on purpose, and to ascertain who inflicted the injuries (Munro & Thrusfield, 2001). The challenging nature of forensic veterinary medicine is reiterated by Annabelle.

***Annabelle:** it is not a common occurrence and often, often violence to animals whether it is a kick or a knock, it is very hard to collect the evidence. Um, so humans you can see bruises and things. Unless there is an actual fracture or what not it is really hard to see bruised tissue on an animal. You can see lameness on animals, but you know, you know a kick to the back of the dog won't actually cause a sign that you can actually collect as evidence. Um, we have seen a few fractured limbs of animals that have fallen, we have had a double front paw fracture, and surprisingly we, we see more evidence in cats and kittens. Um, we have actually had animals bought in and people have actually told us that someone has thrown this animal against the floor or what not. And um, and obviously kittens you can imagine are much more frail than dogs. You can definitely see the signs. Often it is um, often the blame is put on a child, so a child will often "oh it is was my son" or what not who did it. But sometimes the force of the impact that the, the force of the throw is obviously indicative that it's an adult, um, because you know kittens are quite you know, sturdy and hardy. It takes a real knock to cause that damage that you sometimes see.*

Forensic veterinary medicine is made more challenging by misinformation from the animals' guardians. Mistruths about animal injuries were mentioned by half of the SPCA staff, and without an understanding of women's fear of reporting, positioned women who are experiencing IPV as untrustworthy. Understanding that women may also feel some shame and embarrassment about their abuse that leads to non-disclosure is important for SPCA inspectors (Roguski, 2012). There was a realisation from Hamish and Charlotte, that the connection between IPV and animal abuse was difficult for women to disclose.

***Hamish:** it turned out that was all just a complete fabrication because she was petrified of saying anything in front of the guy. Um, he was beating her.*

***Charlotte:** she had her puppy at the time, and was sort of seven months previous to the phone call and had it into the vets and had its broken leg fixed. That was fine, um, we knew about it, I don't know why we knew about that but there wasn't any welfare concern about that. Dog's leg got broken, she got it fixed. Fine. It had fallen off a something. And then she had called, she had finally escaped from her abusive partner and then spilled the beans that it was actually him.*

It can be unclear when abuse is happening to women and animals in the families that the SPCA work with. When family violence is suspected, the staff did not have the evidence required for reporting, and this was exacerbated when women were unable to disclose the violence. Training on how coercive control functions in IPV to keep women silent, may help SPCA officers communicate with women who they suspect are experiencing abuse.

## ***Women-animal tension: it is one of the hardest things to juggle***

Within the SPCA staff narratives, there was a clear sensitivity to the needs of women in violent situations and the implications for women who do disclose their abuse. The staff spoke of instances where there was an obvious desire to not make the women's situations more dangerous for women and to help where they could. Sensitivity to the implications for women is evident in Hamish's narrative.

***Hamish:*** *so she was obviously just incredibly scared of him but also at the same time wanting to stand up to him too. Um, so yeah that was yeah, that was the probably the most tricky one that I have dealt with. The interactions with her, you know, just texting and letting it all be on her terms, when she wanted to meet up with me to give the dog and she also had a metal bar that was allegedly what was used against the dog, um, so trying to get that and in the end the Police dealt with that side of it but um, just not being too pushy but at the same time trying to sort of help her. Help her out with what she was trying to achieve but on her own terms.*

This sensitivity to women's needs often came into conflict with their roles as animal welfare inspectors and the needs of animals in abuse situations. The staff spoke of the challenges they faced in balancing the needs of these two vulnerable groups. Hamish spoke of following up a complaint he had received about a dog with a very bad skin condition. When he visited the property he found that both the dog and woman were subject to abuse. Ensuring the woman's safety conflicted with his ability to document the condition of the dog.

***Hamish:*** *when I asked her, I said "do you mind if we just take some photos of the dog so I can get a record of the skin". She said "yeah that's fine but please just don't tell him because he will smack me in the face". So I didn't take the photo. Because I didn't want to run the risk.*

Following this, I asked him how he manages to collect evidence and do his role under the Animal Welfare Act, while at the same time managing the human needs.

***Hamish:*** *it is some of the, it is one of the hardest things to juggle. Um, that sort of thing.*

The tension between the needs of women and animals occurred when women resisted rehoming their animals.

***Annabelle:*** *I think that the biggest concern with us and our situation is animals being left in limbo. Um, and um, you know having a plan for the outcome of that animal.*



The Wellington SPCA has got emergency accommodation for particular situations, such as helping homeless people with animal accommodation or if someone is in an accident and cannot care for their animals while in hospital. The Wellington SPCA has worked with the Women's Refuge in the past, the pressure to provide care for indefinite periods of time was a challenge to the welfare of the animals. For Charlotte, long term kennelling rather than rehoming animals positioned women as irresponsible.

*Charlotte: um, so what you often find is that the emergency boarding with us will be two weeks, then two months, then six months. And the whole time they don't want to surrender because they hold out hope that they are going to be able to have that dog with them. Um, that also puts a lot of stress on the dogs...I think sometimes people, feel like they are doing their best for the animal, but what they are actually doing is looking out for their own emotional needs. And if they stripped it down to the barebones they would realize that the best thing for the animal would be as further away from the situation as possible. And, yeah, I think that people need to understand that that is a valid possibility.*

Managing the tension between the needs of animals and women can affect the ability of the SPCA staff to fulfill their roles and can compromise the well-being of both women and animals. In addition, the provision of emergency accommodation to help women leave abusive relationships reveals a tension between women wanting to maintain their relationship with their animal and the potential stress caused to the animal by needing to be kenneled for an uncertain period of time.

### ***Dog Difficulties: a couple of complications***

A significant and recurrent storyline that emerged in the SPCA narratives was the unique challenges faced by women with dogs. More than other companion animals, dogs were seen as being more likely to be abused as part of IPV. This suggestion is supported by research undertaken in New Zealand (Roguski, 2012; Williams et al., 2008) and internationally (Munro & Thrusfield, 2001; Tiplady, et al., 2012).

*Charlotte: we probably deal with more cats here. But I would say with intimate partner violence it is the dogs. I mean with cats being so um, free roaming, you know they just stay away. You know, they just won't come near the guy, won't come inside the house if he looks like he is going to flip out they just run. Whereas a lot of the time these dogs are chained and can't get away. Um, it's also the emotional thing as well. People get really attached to their dogs, possibly more so than cats. Um, and so that, yeah, if they want to punish the wife or the child or whatever, they will beat the dog.*

Dogs are more likely to develop anti-social and potentially dangerous behavioural issues resulting from being abused and being around abuse. Family dynamics may contribute to the development of anxiety in dogs (Riva, Bondiolotti, Michalazzi, Verga & Carenzi, 2008). Tiplady and colleagues (2012) found that dogs were the species most likely to be targeted in IPV situations. Following this abuse, 85% of women reported behavioural changes in their dogs. These changes included “fear of men and anxiety, persisting longer than the IPV relationship and sometimes for the entire life of the animal” (p.51). Flynn (2000a) found that dogs who experience abuse living in a violent home displayed symptoms similar to stress in humans including shivering, shaking, cowering, hiding and urinating. Anxiety in dogs has been associated with submissive and aggressive behaviour (Riva et al., 2008). Research suggests that families under investigation for child abuse experienced 11 times more dog bites than did families without child abuse (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). These anti-social behaviours make dogs more likely to have difficulties in the shelter environment and are associated with barriers to securing long-term rental accommodation. Dogs then become a particular problem group for the SPCA.

***Charlotte:** it's a tricky one, you know cos you don't want to, if you have got an abusive partner, it is so hard to leave, let alone knowing that you have got to leave an animal behind. But, the resources and actually the reality of starting a new life with a dog, is really difficult.*

***Annabelle:** I think dogs have a couple of complications. One long term housing... Um, second, is that way you manage behaviour.*

***Jessica:** I mean dogs is the most difficult.*

During our interview I asked Charlotte and Annabelle if aggression was a behaviour you might expect to see in dogs coming from violent households.

***Charlotte:** yeah so, um, you know there are different reasons and different types of aggression and one of the types of aggression that you see in dogs like that is fear aggression. Um, and that is basically where they are aggressive because they are terrified and that is how they react. You know, they would run if they could, but if they can't run they are going to be aggressive. Um, it is unfortunately it is quite a hard habit to break... Which is awful because very, you know, very few or I would say if any dogs are born fearful.*

***Annabelle:** ...the potential as well that this animal is not a happy animal. That it has been through a lot of situations and a lot of the times um, aggressive responses are seen from fear, from anxiety.*



Annabelle notes, it is not so much the behaviour that is problematic but its combination with size and strength in medium to large dogs that causes difficulties when dogs become aggressive and difficult to re-home.

***Annabelle:** you can have a really grumpy cat that can swipe you something mad but it is never going to be a real danger to a person. So you can have a really grumpy cat, that hates being in a cage, that hisses at you. Those cats that you pat twice and they are happy with the first pat and then they turn around and give you a nibble...and people just put it down and go ohh. The same with a Chihuahua. You can have a Chihuahua that you know doesn't like you picking it up and you deal with it. When you have an animal that weighs over 10-15kgs, that is unpredictable, that could be dangerous to an animal, to another animal, to a child, to a human. That is where the complication comes with canine's.*

Aggression is a behavioural symptom that can have fatal consequences for dogs, as is evident in Charlotte's comment.

***Charlotte:** he kept beating the dog, never so badly that it needed vet attention but it was constant. And that dog ended up, um, not by us but the woman ended up needing to get it euthanised because it became aggressive from being constantly beaten by this guy.*

It is not always the case that dogs become aggressive as a result of family violence. Hamish offers a counter narrative in his talk of his experience working with a woman who had surrendered her friendly dog to the SPCA after they both escaped an abusive relationship.

***Hamish:** despite what the dog had seemingly been through she was still a really nice dog and she is with a family with young kids now. Which is really good.*

The shelter environment has been shown to be inherently stressful for dogs in general, due to isolation, separation from companions, noise levels, and a new routine in an unpredictable environment (Walker, Dale, D'Eath & Wemelsfelder, 2016). Tiplady and colleagues (2012) suggests that dogs who suffer from anxiety may find it more even more difficult to "assimilate to life in a foster home, animal shelter or boarding kennel" (p.51). Three of the SPCA staff shared their concerns for the well-being of dogs coming from violent homes and then going into kennels.

***Jessica:** yeah, I mean it is a stressful environment for them as it is but with all the other things that have gone on in its past that yeah, that would attribute to it being more sensitive to this sort of environment.*

***Annabelle:** sadly, if an animal is um, potentially or fear aggressive or showing that type of anxiety in their home and with the family, that is just going to multiply by ten*

*in a new situation, especially in a new situation like a shelter where you are handled by different people cos we have got volunteers, this that and the other. You are rostered on, you are rostered off. You finish, you start this that and the other.*

**Charlotte:** *you know we try and make the SPCA as welcoming and nice for the animals we possible but at the end of the day there we are housing a lot of different animals, a lot of different animals, a lot of people. Um, and its noisy, there is lots of different smells and it can be quite stressful for a dog so you have to weigh up, yes that dog probably does love that woman, and that family very much, but is that enough to have it be in this distress for months.*

Finally, SPCA staff perceived dogs as a barrier to women securing long-term accommodation. This was a barrier noted by Women's Refuge staff and women using refuge safe houses in the New Zealand based Pets as Pawns research (Roguski, 2012). In that research, refuge staff commented on a woman with three dogs who ended up living in her car, with her dogs, for nearly a year because she could not find rental accommodation. In the end, she had no option but to re-home her dogs. Many women who leave violent relationships will have to find rental accommodation and those with dogs, and in the end face having to re-home their beloved companions.

**Charlotte:** *I mean, it's a hot topic in the media how hard it is to find a rental with a dog. So these women are just starting, they are not just trying to find a place for a dog, they are starting from scratch with nothing. And you know, people who are already well established and everything find it hard to find a rental with dogs, it is extremely difficult for these women to find places that will allow women with dogs. Especially because Housing New Zealand is cracking down on the dogs as well.*

**Annabelle:** *people are more than happy to bend the rules for cats, more than happy to bend the rules for rabbits and guinea pigs and birds. No problem. Um, you can even you know go to a, open house that says no pets and you know you go and there is a cat flap.*

This storyline highlights the unique challenges women with dogs in violent relationships. It can be difficult for women to find long-term accommodation that allows dogs, due to property owner bias against dogs in particular. Roguski (2012) noted that a commonly reported barrier for women and animals leaving abuse was difficulty finding rental accommodation that allowed animals. If women need to leave their dogs in long term kennel facilities this environment can lead to the development behavioural problems. There is a tension here because women want to keep their dogs but the SPCA staff think that women need to consider making their dogs available for re-homing due to potential development behavioural issues and the uncertainty of when women will find stable, long term accommodation.

## **Finding a solution: we always try**

There was a narrative throughout the SPCA staff interviews of being solutions focused and problem solving within a challenging environment of limited resources and a high workload. This makes providing emergency boarding for animal victims of IPV a risk for the SPCA. Krienert, and colleagues (2012) noted that IPV shelters often found it challenging securing free accommodation for animals at local humane societies, due to limitations on how long animals could stay. This is realised in Charlotte's talk about the resources required in the accommodation for animals from violent homes.

***Charlotte:** we used to do a lot more with Women's Refuge and holding animals, the problem is that we take on the animals and then it would be months that the animals would be in care with us and being a charity and running off donations, having so many of our other animals in need, we just, it's not sustainable. It is not something that can be done on a big scale. It's not something that can be offered to everybody because we don't have the money or space.*

Different animal needs, varying animal intakes and inconsistent adoptions makes pinpointing available accommodation extremely difficult (Wuerch, et al., 2016). This was noted by the staff who spoke of the challenges managing available accommodation at the SPCA.

***Annabelle:** we do, do emergency boarding in situations of desperate need. We often get asked what's your capacity for animals. What's your capacity for dogs? Million-dollar question. We may have five dogs that play together but don't want to sleep together. Therefore, they all need an individual room cos they are spoilt little boys or girls. We may have 20 animals and they are all super happy to be room-mates and we are able to accommodate double the amount. We may adopt out four adults this week therefore, our capacity is doubled. We may not adopt out any so our capacity is half. Our structure is based on a lot of volunteers. Um, fosters so we have a lot of animals out to foster all the time. Whether it is because they need it medically or because they not coping with the behaviour in the center, because some animals become institutionalised. They don't like the situation. Especially when they have come from a background of a home environment. So there is a variety of, of situations that effect our capacity. Um, for Wellington SPCA to say "oh we have capacity for three animals who need accommodation for supporting this initiative, we would probably fill those animals that are in the pound and they would have a seven day. And the day we need it.*

To avoid putting additional pressure on the limited accommodation available, the SPCA staff are resourceful in finding temporary homes for animals, as Charlotte and Annabelle explain.

***Charlotte:** I always try and work with women who want to leave and get out and that, you know, in ways that don't mean that the dog has to come into the center. Um, so like if they go into say a friend's house and the dog can be there because it's not fully fences or um, the landlord won't let them or um, you know things like I will try and give them shelter or a crate that the dog can stay in when no one is home so it doesn't*

*escape, or see if I can talk to the landlord to see if the dog can stay there. So I try and have the dog with them if possible.*

***Annabelle:** definitely finding a solution. Um, we are extremely proactive at um, resolving situations as they happen. Sometimes you do need to go out and um, having a brand behind you and you are calling a kennel and saying listen this person lives half an hour down the road from you, you know we don't have space to take this dog in today are you able to house this dog for however long you know. Um, and often you will find positive responses to people.*

There was clear support for the SPCAs involvement in helping women and animals leaving abusive homes, but they also spoke of a definite need for new resources to establish sustainable solutions for the temporary accommodation of animals leaving family violence situations.

***Jessica:** we do have a huge foster base and it is predominately for smaller animals and our dog fosters are such a valuable resource that any that we just hold on to for dear life. So those resources are so, so valuable. Not in terms of monetary obviously but just um, purely those peoples time and their facility. I think that having something separate set up so maybe, and you know, in conjunction with the SPCA but having a separate source of you know. A separate base of fosters that would do that sort of work alongside what we have already got would work a lot better.*

***Annabelle:** if you think about it, you know, if, if that person is sat in temporary accommodation or what not, thinking oh no my dog is in a little square room you know, and all the, the perfect situation for that animal to be fostered in an environment that they are comfortable with and what not, and what you have said, you know, a specific stream, supported by the SPCA um...you would approach that type of database. You would go to the domestic violence charity and look into that pool of people. And say listen, we are looking for something different, we are looking for something new to help support families in this situation. Therefore, you are not dipping into a general pool of people who have been asked and asked and asked over and over again. So now we are fostering for this and now we are fostering for that, and now we are fostering for this. So you need to go straight out there and something new and interesting.*

The need for resourcing temporary accommodation for animals was recommended by Roguski (2012), who suggested that a new program be established with funding to ensure that the service could be free and include the provision of veterinary services. He further suggested that while many participants thought that such a program would ideally sit with the Women's Refuge, there was some concern that not all women would reach out to refuge services and there was a need to provide a program that had broad appeal and was accessible to all. It was recommended that the SPCA, Women's Refuge and Ministry of Social Development, as key stakeholders, work together to administer this program and associated funding (Roguski, 2012).

Annabelle also commented on the need to look beyond the initial accommodation needs for animals and women leaving IPV, to how they re-establish their lives post abuse. Previous sections have emphasised the challenges women with dogs face finding accommodation, as well as those living in Housing New Zealand properties, which lead to the discussion of priorities.

*Annabelle: I think the priority should be looking long term solutions and not short term. At the end of the day those animals are important for those families, but the priority for those women should be looking after herself and her kids and she may not want to leave the property if her animals are left there, which I 100% agree with and I understand that sometimes they won't do that if the animals are there um, but to be perfectly honest, once under that pressure, or in that situation, if we are able to say hey we will do this, we will take the animal and look after them. You look after yourself. I think that the ideal would be to be able to provide them with some long term solution, as opposed to putting all the effort into finding a month's accommodation for their animals and then when they are looking for further accommodation there is no accommodation with animals.*

Much of the literature has emphasized the importance of animal accommodation at the point of leaving a violent relationship, but there has been little focus on how women re-build their lives with animals in the long term and what their collective needs are during this time.



*All social inequalities are linked. Comprehensive systematic change will happen only if we are aware of these connections and work to bring an end to all inequality – not just our favorites or the ones that most directly affect our part of the universe. No one is on the sidelines; by our actions or inactions, by our caring or our indifference, we are either part of the problem or part of the solution.*

- Loyd-Paige (2010, p.2).

I grew up seeing, hearing and feeling the abuse my mother endured. This experience sensitised me to oppression, to social hierarchy and to the needs of others. It has seen me drawn to the plight of those marginalised within society, including animals and the earth, and inspired me to want to challenge inequality. This thesis brings together two issues close to my heart, the safety and well-being of women and animals. Carol Adams (1990) suggests in the *Sexual Politics of Meat*, that the subjugation of women and animals is part of the same system of oppression, which sees both women and animals objectified, commodified and consumed by men who hold the social power to dominate these two groups. The intersection

between the oppression of women and animals has informed this research and offered opportunity to create space for change and social justice for women and animals.

As this project developed, it became clear that within the discipline of psychology, including psychological research, that the motivation for examining animal abuse has focused almost exclusively on its association with human abuse, rather than because it is harmful to animals themselves (Flynn, 2011). Where animals have been the focus of research, they are generally positioned as barriers to women leaving and tools for early detection of abuse. It is rare for animals' lives and their experiences of abuse to be considered important. Flynn (2011) suggests that research on animals and animal abuse needs to see animals as "worthy of moral consideration, where their victimisation, similar to other oppressed groups, is seen as social and *systemic*" (pp.465-466). Animal abuse is embedded in a social system that accepts and normalises the unequal treatment of animals through social practices such as meat eating, structural violence and the privileging of human superiority. Psychology reinforces the dominant narrative that animals are inferior to humans.

In an effort to challenge the speciesist view of animals within violence research, this research aimed to offer a counter narrative where animals are positioned as victims of family violence themselves, and not merely tools of abuse. As an animal rights activist and someone undertaking this research from an eco-feminist standpoint, it was important that this research positioned the experience of animals within family violence as important and worthy of consideration, alongside and in relation to the women and children. My analysis found that animals are victims of family violence in many different ways. They suffer the similar types of physical abuse that women do, being hit, punched, kicked, thrown to the ground and killed. For dogs, repeated beatings can cause them to develop aggressive behaviours, leading to them being euthanased. This abuse can come from the male partner but also from children within the household whose experience of violence sees them engaging in a cycle of abuse. Animals can also be subject to neglect, leading to physical suffering. This can be through men preventing women from giving animals' adequate care, such as removing a woman's ability to pay for her animal's veterinary treatment. Even when animals are not physically harmed, experiencing the violence in their home can lead to animals experiencing signs of stress, such as vocalisations, physical reactions to the perpetrator and aggressive behaviour. When we understand that animal's experiences of abuse render them victims of family violence themselves, we open up space for considering how our social systems act to



maintain the unequal treatment of animals and to take action to ensure that the animals welfare is taken care of.

Within the context of IPV, this research sought to understand the importance of women's relationships with their animals. The analysis found that women often talked of their companion animals as valued members of their family, offering a counter narrative to the idea that animals are not worthy of consideration. As members of the family, animals played an important role in women's lives. They were positioned as sources of comfort, companionship for the women and children. The importance of the relationships with their animals was demonstrated by the women in many ways, including their insistence that they leave their violent relationships together, checking on their animals when they were left at home despite the risks to their own safety, concern for their animals when they were apart, and the women's efforts to maintain their relationships with their animals' during times of separation, including efforts such as skyping their animals and ensuring that they had regular visits with their animals. Understanding that women and animals share a genuine relationship in this way challenges Ganley's (1981) assertion that animal abuse within IPV is akin to property destruction. Not only are animals lives and welfare important to themselves, it is also important to their guardians with whom they share a bond. The wāhine and their advocates understood that it was the connection women have with their animals that lead to men using actual or threatened abuse of animals as a means of coercing women into remaining in their abusive relationship. The relationship women share with their animals is one that can be a source of pain when animals are abused, but also a source of great love, comfort and support during difficult times. It is incumbent on those who support women experiencing IPV to understand this dual nature of women's relationships with their animals and to actively help women to maintain their relationship with their animals, while they try to leave abusive relationships.

With the provision of facilities for animals at their safe houses, Tiaki have acknowledged the link between animal and IPV, the real feelings and relationships women share with their animals and the harm that IPV does to animals. They have taken a public stand in support of women and their animals who are experiencing abuse and opened up new possibilities for safety and wellbeing for them. This research aimed to understand the importance of the animal facilities that Tiaki offers. From the narratives of the wāhine and Tiaki social workers, it was clear that there are many benefits to women and their animals being housed along-side each other. The animal facilities at Tiaki were found to be important to women and their



animals for several reasons. Primarily, the service ensured that the women and animals were both physically safe from abuse. Beyond this, the service enabled women to maintain their important relationships with their own animals. The animals' presence was seen as a source of comfort for women and their children during a difficult transition and enabled them to better settle into their new lives and the environment of the safe house and beyond. Having their whole family safe and in one place means that women can focus on moving forward and envisaging a future free from violence. When a woman's animal was safe, but not housed on site at Tiaki, the woman experienced stress and concern about the well-being of their animal and they felt loss related to the closeness they shared with their animal. Not all women are necessarily able to acknowledge the harm their animals experience, and this research did not seek to explore the complexities of what can be understood as harm. While there has been a suggestion in the research literature that women who may not recognise the effect of IPV on their animals are less connected to that relationship, it is also possible that like many women who do not report IPV, their understanding of abuse is constrained by dominant discourse of what constitutes abuse.

The work that Tiaki are doing regarding animal abuse and IPV is ground breaking in New Zealand. Not only does this work challenge the way we conceptualise family, it also challenges us to think about the way we conceptualise family violence and to see the insidious everyday pattern of family violence that leaves no member of the family untouched. As important as this work is, it is not without its challenges. The social workers spoke to the lack of awareness about the link between IPV and animal abuse and the difficulties this has for helping women and their animals, and accessing resources and support for their animal service. When family violence is understood as isolated instances of physical abuse, rather than ongoing pattern of psychological, emotional, sexual and/or physical abuse, it is challenging to get the public, and institutions, to recognise the persistent and everyday nature of the link. The limited awareness of forms of violence against women and their animals means that there are limited funding and resources available to establish and maintain facilities like those at Tiaki. Despite the need from women and animals in their community, there are limitations on the number and type of animals that Tiaki can take in at any one time. Such limitations may act as barriers to women leaving abusive relationships. Women who can find alternative accommodation for their animals while at Tiaki, are likely to experience anxiety and stress related to the separation from their animals. The wāhine and Tiaki social workers also spoke of the challenges associated with having the animals at the safe house. At

times there is a tension between needs of Tiaki, women, children and the animals. For example, Tiaki require that animals remain outside the actual safe house, and this can create some tension between the women who want to have their animals inside with them, and the social workers who have to maintain the kawa.

The SPCA are New Zealand's leading organisation for animal welfare, and are especially concerned with well-being of companion animals. This places them in an ideal position to work alongside human service organisations to raise awareness of the link, and develop accommodation services for the animals of IPV survivors. The Pets as Pawns research made several recommendations for the SPCA regarding staff training about IPV and animal abuse, dissemination of information about their services and collaboration with the Women's Refuge and Ministry of Social Development to develop services for human and animal victims/survivors of family violence. These recommendations appear to have had little traction within the SPCA. The Wellington SPCA staff expressed compassion for women and animals in abuse situations, and were generally focused on finding practical solutions to help. However, it was clear from interviews with the SPCA, that while staff are aware of the link, there is limited wider institutional support for training staff to understand the dynamics of IPV and the use of animal abuse as a tool to coercively control women. This limited understanding of IPV saw SPCA staff reproducing dominant narratives about women who experience IPV. These narratives included positioning these women through stereotypes that assume IPV is more likely to occur in low socio-economic groups, and that women are untrustworthy, and overly emotional. The SPCA staff identified a clear tension between the animals' welfare, fulfilling their role as warranted inspectors under the Welfare Act, and maintaining the safety of women who are being abused. At times they suspected that abuse was happening to women and animals but had no evidence to take action. Conversely, when there was evidence of animal abuse, reporting it had the potential to put women at risk of further abuse. Another tension for the SPCA was their prioritising long term animal safety and what they perceived as a lack of concrete plans by women in crisis. The need to provide animal accommodation in these situations for an indefinite amount of time has meant that the Wellington SPCA has limited how they work with the local women's refuges.

This research has highlighted the need for systematic changes to the way we understand family violence, how we view animals within our society, and the need for practical assistance to help women and animals leave family violence together. The Family Violence Death Review Committee (2014) challenges us to address the social conditions within society

that accepts and normalises violence against women. We can no longer view IPV as a private matter that can be addressed on an individual basis, but rather, we must seek to challenge the normative gender practices that maintain the unequal treatment of women and the privileging of men's power. As Adams (1995) points out, the oppressive treatment of women is also linked to the way our social systems subjugate animals. We can no longer view companion animals as expendable and replaceable like property, they too have lives that matter, both to themselves and the women and children who love them. Many women form strong bonds with their animals, developing relationships where their animals act as comforters, confidants and sources of support during difficult times. By not making accommodation available for women and their animals when they leave family violence we are knowingly putting in place a barrier for women, children and animals to live lives free from violence. Or, if women do leave without their companion, or family member, they have the added burden of the guilt and worry of leaving their beloved animals in a volatile and risky situation. By forcing women to make decisions that they do not want to, such as re-homing or abandoning their animals, we are acting to strip women of more of their autonomy and risk further isolating them from support systems, and in this way, we contribute to women's entrapment

Like any other study, this research has its limitations. The goals of this research were based on the assumption that women have meaningful relationships with their animals and that it is important to women to take their animals with them when they leave their abusive partner. I take a standpoint that the lives of animals are important, in and of themselves. I also take the standpoint that the abuse of women and animals operates through social power relations that privilege men's domination over both groups.

From these standpoints, I am aware that I have represented the participants' accounts through a narrative of animals as victims of family violence and animals as important to women's safety and well-being. For example, because I was interested in demonstrating the importance of animals to women, I attended to their narratives of animals as family members and sources of comfort for women. In this way, I paid attention to storylines that addressed what I considered to be of critical importance to the aims of the study.

According to Riessmen (1993), narratives are co-constructed between the participant and the researcher, based on the context from which they come. In this way, the narrative is responsive to the telling. My standpoint and assumptions about this project shaped the

narrative that was co-produced. This may have limited other narratives and interpretations that could have been produced with a different researcher.

Future research could examine the social conditions that lead to the acceptance of IPV and animal abuse within New Zealand. This could open up space to raise awareness about the issue and challenge the structures that enable men to control both the women and animals in their families.



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# Appendix A

## **Women and their furbabies: leaving domestic violence together**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

Kia ora, my name is Jasmine Gillespie-Gray. I am a student at Massey University enrolled in a Masters of Science in Psychology. I am undertaking a qualitative research project as part of this qualification. The project will explore women's relationships with their animals in the context of intimate partner violence, and what it meant to be able to leave an abusive relationship together.

Before I talk about this research more, I would like to tell you a bit about myself and why I want to do this research. I currently live in Wellington with my partner Edward, though originally I am from Auckland. I was very fortunate to grow up at the beautiful west coast beach Muriwai. I volunteer for the Wellington Women's Refuge and Te Whare Rokiroki after hours crisis line and work at Wellington Sexual Abuse HELP. For the last 14 years I have been an active animal advocate, involved in animal rescue and rehoming, investigation of animal abuse and campaigning for legal and social change to how we treat animals. I am very passionate about the health and wellbeing of women and animals, which is why I want to do this research. I hope that your stories, and those of your animals, will help policy makers and the public understand the relationship women have with their animals in the context of intimate partner violence and why it important that we can provide safe homes for women with their animals.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing stories of your relationship with your animals and your experience of being able to take them with you to Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge. You may not know but Tiaki is the only refuge in Aotearoa New Zealand with the facilities to take women, children and animals. This makes this refuge and your experience unique.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. To be included in this study participants must be over 18 years old, and have used the Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge with your animal/s.

Your participation will entail a single one-on-one interview of between 60-120 minutes, and scheduled for a time and place that is convenient to you, and that is safe for both of us. The aim of our conversation will be to explore your relationship with your animals and what it meant to take your animals with you when you left your relationship. The interview will be conversational, rather than with a list of questions. If you find the conversation distressing or upsetting the social workers at Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge can work with you following the interview.

The interview will be digitally recorded, and I will personally transcribe these to maintain and protect your confidentiality. The original digital recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed, and a copy of the interview transcript will be provided to you for review. You will then have the opportunity to amend the transcript before granting your approval for analysis. If you are interested in hearing about the results from this study please let me know, and a summary of the research findings will be provided to you once analysis is complete.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Interview data and any information that you provide will be stored securely, and password protected. Your details will not be disclosed to anyone and any identifying information (such as person or place names) disclosed during the interview will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

Please note that if it is divulged that you or your animal/s are currently in a very unsafe situation, this may need to be reported to Te Whare Tiaki Wāhine Refuge (in the case of you) and/or the SPCA (in the case of your animal/s). This would be discussed with you first.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any point up until the release of your transcript;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;



- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded via email or post;
- Be given a \$20 petrol voucher to thank you for your participation

Should you have any queries about this research project, I can be contacted at any time by phone: 027 201 3858, or by email: [jasminegillespiegray@gmail.com](mailto:jasminegillespiegray@gmail.com). Alternatively, my supervisor, Senior Lecturer Leigh Coombes, can be contacted by telephone: (06) 356 9099 ext. 85075 or by email: [L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz).

*This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 16/05. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Rochelle Stewart-Withers, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83657, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz)*





# Appendix B

## **Women and their furbabies: leaving domestic violence together**

### **INFORMATION SHEET (Advocates)**

Kia ora, my name is Jasmine Gillespie-Gray. I am a student at Massey University enrolled in a Masters of Science in Psychology. I am undertaking a qualitative research project as part of this qualification. The project will explore women's relationships with their animals in the context of intimate partner violence, and what it meant to be able to leave an abusive relationship together.

Before I talk about this research more, I would like to tell you a bit about myself and why I want to do this research. I currently live in Wellington with my partner Edward, though originally I am from Auckland. I was very fortunate to grow up at the beautiful west coast beach Muriwai. I volunteer for the Wellington Women's Refuge and Te Whare Rokiroki after hours crisis line and work at Wellington Sexual Abuse HELP. For the last 14 years I have been an active animal advocate, involved in animal rescue and rehoming, investigation of animal abuse and campaigning for legal and social change to how we treat animals. I am very passionate about the health and wellbeing of women and animals, which is why I want to do this research. I am interested in your experiences in working in the sector to provide safety for women and their animals.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research by sharing your knowledge of the complexities of working in the field.

Participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. To be included in this study participants must be over 18 years old, and have worked with women and animals who have experienced abuse.

Your participation will entail a single one-on-one interview of between 60-120 minutes, and scheduled for a time and place that is convenient to you, and that is safe for both of us. The interview will be digitally recorded, and I will personally transcribe these to maintain and protect your confidentiality. The original digital recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed, and a copy of the interview transcript will be provided to you for review. You will then have the opportunity to amend the transcript before granting your approval for analysis. If you are interested in hearing about the results from this study please let me know, and a summary of the research findings will be provided to you once analysis is complete.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Interview data and any information that you provide will be stored securely, and password protected. Your details will not be disclosed to anyone and any identifying information (such as person or place names) disclosed during the interview will be replaced with pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any point up until the release of your transcript;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded via email or post;

Should you have any queries about this research project, I can be contacted at any time by phone: 027 201 3858, or by email: [jasminegillespiegray@gmail.com](mailto:jasminegillespiegray@gmail.com). Alternatively, my supervisor, Senior Lecturer Leigh Coombes, can be contacted by telephone: (06) 356 9099 ext. 85075 or by email: [L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz).

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Appendix C

**Women and their furbabies: leaving domestic violence together**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I wish/do not wish to have this interview recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

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Appendix D

**Women and their furbabies: leaving domestic violence together**

**AUTHORITY TO RELEASE TRANSCRIPT**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

.....

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