

# Focus

## BROOKE FRASER

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### SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

## CONFLICTING INTERESTS?



Felicity Goodyear-Smith is married to Bert Potter's son John, above, who was jailed for four months for indecent assault on an underage girl. Right, Bert Potter.

Main photo: Phil Doyle

Professor Felicity Goodyear-Smith is a senior academic and doctor who was commissioned by ACC to research sexual abuse counselling. She is also the daughter-in-law of Centrepoint guru and paedophile Bert Potter, is married to a convicted sex offender and has controversial views on the workings of the 'sexual abuse industry'. Tim Hume examines allegations of Goodyear-Smith's influence in ACC's recent drastic cut in support for victims of sex crimes.



Critics dubbed the new pathway a "rapists' charter".

LAST OCTOBER, ACC changed the rules governing the support available to victims of sex crimes, introducing a heavily criticised new regime that severely restricted access to counselling.

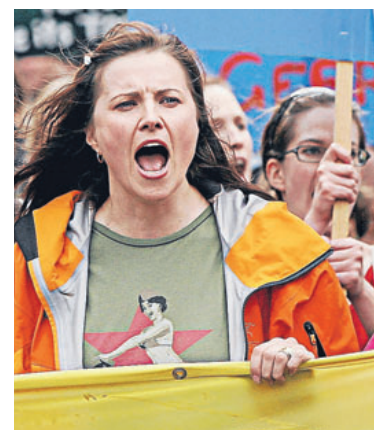
But what most concerned critics was an apparent similarity between a requirement in the new "clinical pathway", and a recommendation contained in research ACC had commissioned from a controversial senior academic. The research was led by Professor Felicity Goodyear-Smith, who has been a vocal detractor of the field of sexual abuse counselling and who, as the daughter-in-law of Centrepoint founder Bert Potter, has ongoing personal relationships with convicted child sex offenders.

During the eight months following the clinical pathway's introduction, ACC paid out \$7 million less to 2889 fewer claimants than it had over the same period a year previous. Approved new claims, running at 1313 in the eight months prior to the pathway's introduction, subsequently dropped to 240 over the same length of time. Among the hundreds to have their claims denied were two women believed to have later committed suicide.

Despite a record \$4.8 billion loss sustained by ACC the previous financial year, ACC Minister Nick Smith stressed the policy was not an attempt to cut costs, but was driven by a desire to implement best practice for sexual abuse victims, known as "sensitive claimants". Critics dubbed the new pathway a "rapists' charter".

The scheme's many detractors were primarily concerned by a new requirement that, before they could access ACC counselling and support, claimants had to be diagnosed formally with a mental injury as defined by the American Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV). Whereas previously, ACC might have accepted a GP or counsellor's description of symptoms such as flashbacks, panic attacks or nightmares resulting from a sex crime, now a formal diagnosis of a mental illness such as post-

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