



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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LoS 15.01

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Women
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Minister

Letter of Substance on proposed new terms of reference for NACEW

Thank you for your letter, received on 14 October, advising me that you are undertaking a review of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (NACEW). The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is a strong supporter of NACEW and its work. Indeed, NCWNZ was a member of the Joint Committee on Women and Employment which lobbied the Government to establish the Council in 1967. As a NACEW partner, we welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Review and its Terms of Reference and we comment on the two proposed changes noted in your letter.

To move all members to being appointed directly by the Minister

We note that the current membership of the NACEW includes: six ministerial appointees; two representatives of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) (we understand that one is from the public sector the other from the private sector); one representative of Business New Zealand; and representatives of government agencies relevant to the employment of women.

The majority presence on the Council is, therefore, already one of ministerial appointees and government representation. Given current events around the issue of equal pay in the aged care and education sectors, with predicted wider implications, it seems even more important to ensure that the voice of the NZCTU and Business NZ is included. If anything, we believe there is a case for increasing that representative membership.

In our view, making all NACEW members ministerial appointees would be a backward step. NACEW would be seen as a political arm of the Minister. It could not "...continue to provide an important independent source of advice on current issues for women's employment." as your letter states, as its relatively independent reputation would be severely damaged.

There appears to be some contradiction between 5.1.b and 5.1.c of Section Five of the proposed Terms of Reference. 5.1.b refers to members not being selected as **representatives** of their organisations, while 5.1.c calls for membership providing: "... a range of perspectives, including business, labour force **representatives** ..." While the reference to "business" is clear, what is meant by "labour force representatives" is not. We understand that the largest organisation in New Zealand representing labour force participants is the NZCTU, NACEW's current member. NCWNZ has wide and longstanding networks amongst women's organisations and in our view the NZCTU, and in particular its National Women's Committee, provides irreplaceable insight into women's employment issues.

We note that there is no reference to NACEW's partners in the Review's Terms of Reference. The partners (Maori Women's Welfare League, NCWNZ, Pacifica, Rural Women of New Zealand and YWCA) currently provide a diverse representative reference group for NACEW. It would be disappointing to lose the continuity, diversity and historical knowledge that the partners currently provide and we trust that no change is being proposed in that regard. NCWNZ values its partnership role with NACEW and our preference is to see it continue.

We believe that constructive and lasting progress on employment equity for women is more likely if representatives of all parties, government, employers and employees, are around the NACEW table. We are not convinced that the proposed change is necessary and do not see that there is a significant problem with NACEW's present structure. It has a proud history of advocacy and high-quality research around legislation and policy to improve women's employment circumstances. We believe its long life has been due to the quality of its work, its representative nature and its accumulated experience in providing independent advice to ministers whatever their political persuasion.

To regularly rotate all members, on a three year term to ensure that their advice is relevant and covers emerging and evolving issues

We support the proposal. We believe that a three year term is a good length of time in which to provide meaningful input and effectively contribute to NACEW's work. Our understanding is that some members already follow this practice. However, a staged rotation of the three year terms would be necessary to ensure some continuity. That is, not all members should leave the Council at the same time so there would be some overlap of terms.

We would be pleased to have an opportunity to further discuss the Review and its Terms of Reference with you.

Yours sincerely,



Rae Duff
National President



Margaret Ledgerton
Convener, Employment Standing Committee