



**National Council of
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Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Standing Orders Committee on the
Members of Parliament (Pecuniary interests) Bill**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 33 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international level through research, study, discussion and action.

Members of the Public Issues Standing Committee have considered this Bill and have the following comments:

Part 1 subpart 1, Clause 3.

The purpose of the Bill is to disclose "pecuniary interests" not actual monetary wealth and we applaud its aim to strengthen public confidence regarding matters of potential, but not actual, conflicts of interest. We believe that this information is of public interest and, as disclosure is already a requirement for Cabinet Ministers, it is fair for this obligation to be extended to all Members of Parliament.

Part 1 subpart 2, Clauses 8-11 & 21.

The requirements regarding the contents of the return are clearly explained and we commend the accessible way that the summary of the returns will be published.

Part 2 Clauses 19-20

Although the explanatory note says that one of the main features of the Bill is "sanctions for non-compliance include publicity and political pressure, and inquiry and report by the Controller and Auditor-General", Clauses 19-20 appear to give the Auditor-General wide discretion.

Clause 19 (1) states that the Auditor-General **must** review the returns but Clause 19 (2) states that he **may** inquire into any issue. Clause 20 allows for the application of the Public Audit Act, **with any necessary modifications**.

The members of our Public Issues Committee feel that very recent history has shown some Members of Parliament are strongly impervious to publicity and political pressure. The discretion which this Bill appears to give to the Auditor-General suggests that any investigation of non-compliance could be prolonged and litigious and may not be seen to be non-partisan.

NCWNZ would like to see more specific direction to the Auditor-General within this legislation and penalties which provide a strong disincentive for non-compliance.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our views on this legislation.

Beryl Anderson
National President

Mary Gavin
Convener, Public Issues Standing Committee

