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**Submission to the Ministry of Health on the Discussion Document
New Zealand Suicide Prevention Strategy: A Life Worth Living**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 40 nationally organised societies. It has 33 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

The National Council of Women (NCWNZ) is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this document as we have always taken a keen interest in anything that is to help in the prevention of suicide.

NCWNZ was disappointed that we had such a short time to reply to this document as we were not able to use our usual method of putting the information before our members through our monthly Circular, thereby receiving a greater response.

Consultation Questions:

Part 1: Framework and Strategic Context

1. Do you agree with the scope of the Strategy and associated definitions?

Yes. We see assisted suicide and euthanasia as separate issues to self inflicted self harm and suicide.

2. Do you agree with the proposed vision, goal and outcome measure for the Strategy?

Yes.

3. Do you agree with the title and cover design?

Yes.

Part 2: Key Issues in Suicide Prevention

4. Do you agree that the key issues for suicide prevention in New Zealand are fairly summarised?

Yes, although we would wish to add illicit drugs and alcohol use, peer pressure, parental expectations, and job loss.

Part 3: Principles Informing the Strategy's Approach

5. Do you agree with the five principles informing the Strategy?

Yes.





6. Have any key principles been omitted?

It is worrying to see the very high rate of 39.1 per 100,000 of suicide in men 85+, so we would see a great need to address this under Principle 3. The use of mind altering illegal drugs is becoming far more common and our members were very keen to see this addressed as we see this as an important contributing feature for people taking their own life.

7. Are the five principles reflected adequately in the objectives and potential actions?

Yes.

8. Should any of the principles identified be modified to better reflect the evidence base and developments and trends in the area of suicide prevention and mental health services or other government strategies, and/or wider society? If so, how should they be modified?

No.

Part 4: Objectives for Preventing Suicide

Objective 1: Promoting protective factors in our communities

9. Do you agree with Objective 1: 'Promoting protective factors in our communities'? If not, how does the objective need to change?

Some of our members thought that there is a need for a comprehensive study of the previous Strategies of Suicide Prevention to see where they have not met with the standards in order to determine more effective strategies.

10. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you particularly endorse?

Identify and build on projects that strengthen social inclusion of key risk groups at a regional and community level.

New Zealand has a real problem with the 'Tall Poppy Syndrome'. We need to turn this around so that we are proud of other's achievements, and become encouragers to make people feel good about themselves. This needs to start as early as preschool.

11. Have any key principles been omitted?

No.

Objective 2: Improving early identification and intervention.

12. Do you agree with Objective 2: 'Improving early identification and intervention', and its associated actions? If no, how does the objective need to change?

We agree.

13. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you particularly endorse?

- Build on programmes that promote help-seeking and problem-solving skills in a range of settings – at home, in the workplace, in sports clubs, in prisons and in educational institutions.
- Identify ways to strengthen the data collection on incidents of intentional self-harm and suicide, so that risk factors can be more clearly identified.

14. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you think need to change?

None.

**Objective 3: Improving crisis support, treatment and care****15. Do you agree with Objective 3: 'Improving crisis support, treatment and care' and its associated actions? If no, how does the objective need to change?**

We believe that this is the most important objective.

16. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you particularly endorse?

- Strengthen emergency services training (Police, ambulance) and first response services (such as Child, Youth and Family social workers and mental health professionals) to assess suicide risk and respond to episodes of intentional self-harm.
- Invest in research on the effectiveness of the current and future service responses to incidents of intentional self-harm.

17. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you think need to change?

None.

Objective 4: Providing support after a suicide**18. Do you agree with Objective 4: 'Providing support after a suicide'? If no, how does the objective need to change?**

Yes.

19. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you particularly endorse?

- Implement training for a range of community organisations and service providers who respond to those bereaved or affected by suicide.
- Provide guidance to community groups and other organisations about developing their own safe responses to suicide in their settings – whether it be at home, the workplace, sports club, school or other institution.

20. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you think need to change?

None.

Objective 5: Building the evidence base - research, information and evaluation.**21. Do you agree with the Objective 5: 'Building the evidence base - research, information and evaluation'? If no, how does the objective need to change?**

Yes. No change needed.

22. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you particularly endorse?

- Undertake research examining ways to improve help-seeking and problem-solving behaviours for high risk populations and priority groups.
- Promote the establishment of an Australasian association for suicide prevention, to strengthen regional collaboration.
- Promote opportunities for research and building an evidence base across a range of educational institutions and government bodies.
- Ensure that a range of information about suicide prevention is available, widely distributed and accessible in a way appropriate to the target audience



23. Which actions in the potential actions for this objective do you think need to change?
None.

24. Do you have any other comments about the draft Suicide Prevention Strategy and the potential actions as a whole that you would like to make?

NCWNZ has for many years been extremely concerned about the rates of suicide in New Zealand. We welcome this new strategy. We are pleased to have been able to contribute to this, but would have wished to have had more time to correspond with all our membership, rather than just a small cross section.

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