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**Submission to the National Ethics Advisory Committee on
Ethical values for Planning for and Responding to a
Pandemic in New Zealand**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 38 nationally organized societies and a number of individual women. NCWNZ has 31 branches to which women from 150 societies are affiliated. The Council's function is to serve women, families and the community through research, study, consultation and action.

NCWNZ has a keen interest in planning for a possible pandemic since this organisation's interest is the welfare of families and communities. While the four branches who responded to the Questions for Feedback p. 45 of the Statement for Discussion, welcomed the opportunity to comment and commended the Advisory Committee for its endeavours to design clear rules for decision making, it was generally felt that implementation of the values would depend on the severity of the pandemic, the qualities and ability of the decision-makers who were left to implement action, and the geographic impact of such a catastrophe. The number of respondents was approximately 60 people.

Part of this response is based on the general policy developed by NCWNZ over 110 years. During that time NCWNZ has supported the teaching of values and social relations in schools, ethical behaviour in administering health and providing education for the benefit of all consumers, equity of opportunity in respect of employment and pay, and quality communication and consultation. Support of NCWNZ for the ethical values for planning for and responding to a pandemic in New Zealand is partly extrapolated from these general policies.

Answers to the feedback questions are as follows:

A Is the scope of these ethical values appropriate? Why? Why not? For example could the statement be of use to communities responding to a pandemic as well as to policy makers in pandemic planning?

The scope of the ethical values was considered appropriate. Each aspect of the key values is explained with sufficient information to provide some clear guidance to policy makers and to those who would have to put the policy into action. One Branch thought that the values would be equally useful for policy making and action in other kinds of disaster.

B Are the ethical values and processes identified above, the ones you feel are most important? Why? Why not?

None of the respondents listed alternative ethical values or processes. One thought that priorities should place children in a special category for preferential treatment because of their vulnerability and their importance for the future.





C Could the statement of ethical values be made more useful? How?

No suggestions were made for improving the usefulness of the ethical values themselves except in the format of presentation. Some kind of brochure format which alerted communities to the key values and priorities for decision making would be useful and more likely to be accessible when needed, than a document of considerable size. A simple brochure would have most practical use at the local or individual level and would alert people to the fact that decisions were being made on the basis of ethical priorities into which large numbers of New Zealanders had had input.

While some members thought that it was not necessary for ethical values to be spelt out, that good sense and human kindness would automatically come into play, the majority considered that the issue of difficult decision making needed to be addressed well in advance of a possible pandemic and at least thought about deeply to develop a state of mental and physical preparedness. In the event of a pandemic, volcanic eruption, earthquake or tsunami, the Ethical Values for Planning and Responding would be very useful in themselves as a spring board for action. In planning for the largely unknown, there must be flexibility and practicality. The ethical values statement allows for both of these qualities.

NCWNZ thanks the National Ethics Advisory Committee for the valuable work that has gone into this document and for the opportunity to comment on it.

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