



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Draft Discussion Document on
New Zealand Digital Content Strategy**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 Nationally Organised Societies and national members. It has 31 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of these societies as well as some 150 other societies, and many individual members. The Council's function is to work for the well-being of women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

General Comments

NCWNZ supports the aim of the Digital Content Strategy and applauds the government on its intent and initiative to develop this tool but it needs to be emphasized that it is only one tool.

As an NGO operated mainly by volunteers we have several concerns:

- That information and documents can only be accessed by the internet.
- That doing this shifts the costs from the sender to the recipient.
- That there are still areas in New Zealand where broadband does not reach and others where electronic access is still slow and sometimes erratic.
- That electronic methods of communication and providing information are quite exclusive. Some people cannot afford the equipment or are isolated from access and they will therefore be excluded from receiving material or providing input.
- That an organisation like NCWNZ which consults its wider membership for opinions and experience on many topics, and some of whose membership do not have electronic access, will find it prohibitively costly to disseminate large documents.
- Disability, age and language ability need to be considered when information is disseminated in digital form.

NCWNZ agrees that it is extremely important that intellectual property rights are protected and especially that Maori are consulted adequately to safeguard their intellectual property.

It is important that permission protocols are stringently followed for any material that is disseminated. Those organisations and individuals who provide information material must have agreed that it will be available and this must be recorded.

NCWNZ is concerned about the short time frame given to respond to this Draft Strategy. It does not give us time to inform and consult our membership adequately so that we can get a wide response.

NCWNZ is also concerned about the short notice given For Regional Presentations, NCWNZ relies on its volunteers to attend such meetings, many of whom are mothers at home or in the paid workforce; the timetable for holding such public consultations needs further consideration.



**Specific Comments:***1. Do you agree with the vision, purpose, outcomes and goals?*

NCWNZ supports the aim of creating a digital New Zealand.

No agency however will communicate or inform its audience any better using digital technologies than it does in non-digital technology unless that agency has a publishing and communication strategy that identifies its audience and purpose, and distribution methodology.

Creating digital content will not necessarily meet the stated goal of 'content important to New Zealand is easy to access' (p 14) and nor is it necessary for New Zealand to be a world leader in leveraging digital content (p 14) – it is far more important that New Zealanders can access the information that they need when they require it, in a format that is useable to them.

It is also preferred that the cost of accessing government information be zero.

There seems to be some discrepancy in the definition of formal, informal and commercial content (p 8) where it says that 'they broadly correlate to the government community and business sectors', then uses the same terminology (formal and informal) in a completely different way.

Although the sector is not government it should not be construed that the content is informal

2. Are the challenges and objectives the right ones? If so, which are the most important and why? If not, are there alternatives? Please describe

The challenges have been clearly articulated.

It is important that international standards be used (p 16) rather than creating new ones, and publicly-funded and community generated content must be visible (p 16). Access to information created through publicly-funded research may not be attainable as much of the output is published in commercially produced journals.

The ability to share information digitally does increase access (p 18), particularly to those who do not live in the centre where the original is housed and also to reduce the handling of a fragile original. The challenge for organisations providing digital content will be having the resources to maintain their digital access 24 x 7 and to contend with the enquiries received.

A skilled digital workforce (p 20) will be essential – but being in the workforce is not the only determinant of a user. There needs to be skilled creators and users whether they are in the workforce or not. Most community groups will provide their content through voluntary workers.

3. Are the proposed actions the right ones? If so, which are the most important and why? If not, are there alternatives? Please describe

Creating a skilled digital workforce (p 21) means not only assessing the relevance of the existing school curriculum elements at all levels, but also devising programmes for those in the workforce.

There is no action in relation to providing skills for the intended creators and users of digital information who are not in the workforce.



4. *Building the Digital Foundations*

There are many projects that have yet to come to fruition such as easy access to New Zealand's legislation. The PAL project has not to date achieved its purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this discussion document

Christine Low
National President

Joan McDonald
Convener, Public Issues Standing Committee