



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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Submission to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee on the 2015 Budget Policy Statement

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 288 organisations affiliated at either the national level or to one of our 21 branches. In addition to our organisational membership, about 260 women are individual members of branches. NCWNZ's function is to represent and promote the interests of New Zealand women through research, discussion and action.

This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Economics Standing Committee and the Parliamentary Watch Committee, supported by established policy.

Summary

NCWNZ welcomes the focus on supporting families in need and the continuing work to deliver better outcomes from the provision of social housing. There should be a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of families, rather than focusing only on the costs. Consideration should be given to a universal child benefit and a universal basic income for all New Zealanders.

Families in need

The Budget Policy Statement states that government will “focus on users and customers, with services designed around their needs rather than agency boundaries.” The first step in this will be to “look hard at the billions of dollars already spent on vulnerable families and children to determine whether this can be better spent.”

NCWNZ supports looking at the needs of customers and users, rather than access to support being determined by agency boundaries, and ensuring that government spending is well directed. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that many families are finding it hard to meet ordinary everyday expenses, including the costs of putting meals on the table, and sending children to school. Waiting to review government spending before addressing these needs may risk more harm to vulnerable families and children right now. NCWNZ urges the government to ensure

that current needs are being met, at the same time as it determines whether the money already being spent can be better directed.

NCWNZ policies include support for a universal benefit for children indexed to the Consumer Price Index, and investigation of a universal basic income. These policy options should both be included in the review of spending on vulnerable families and children.

Housing

The Budget Policy Statement states that government will continue work “to deliver better outcomes from social housing for people in need” and that it expects that “community housing providers will continue to grow in importance in the social housing sector.”

NCWNZ policies support the provision of social housing through both private and public organisations. However, no matter the provider, rentals paid by low income people and beneficiaries, should not exceed 30% of net income.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2015 Budget Policy Statement. NCWNZ will await the presentation of the 2015 Budget to ascertain how the intentions of the Budget Policy Statement are to be implemented.

Rae Duff
National President

Dr Deborah Russell
Convener, Economics Standing Committee