



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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S15.04

Submission to the Health Select Committee on the Health (Protection) Amendment Bill 234

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 organisation's 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 Health Standing Committee and the Parliamentary Watch Committee after a limited consultation with the membership of NCWNZ.

Introductory comment

NCWNZ welcome the opportunity to be able to make a submission on the Health (Protection) Amendment Bill. Responses have been received from members of the Health Standing Committee and from individual branch members. While NCWNZ does not have specific resolutions relating to the general management of Infectious Diseases, nor relating to UV sunbeds, its resolutions do show a strong preference for education over coercion. Therefore voluntary co-operation would always be the preferred option of its members.

Part 1. Infectious Diseases

NCWNZ members agree that proposed changes in the bill are timely in light of the recent Ebola virus outbreak. Some members have expressed concern about the Ministry's ability to manage the spread of infectious diseases. They agree that increasing the range of notifiable infectious diseases and having an over-arching structure in place with standardised principles and procedures to follow, will provide the tools for public health personnel to better deal with any people with infectious diseases. The somewhat ad hoc decision making of the past, which was implemented somewhat piecemeal whenever serious outbreaks of influenza virus and "bird flu" threatened the general population, as in 2007 and 2009, will be standardised and modernised. All medical personnel will be better equipped to better manage and prevent future outbreaks of disease or epidemics.

Clause 7. New Part 3A inserted

Proposed new sections 92B and 92C

NCWNZ members strongly support the provision for voluntary compliance as the preferred option and for least restrictive alternative measures to be applied for an individual posing a public health risk, in the belief that voluntary consent for treatment should remain the preferred approach for managing risk infection.

Changes in society as well as increased movement of people around the world over the last 20 years have led to an increase in the strains and spread of infectious diseases. Members suggest that a strong public education programme would ensure better understanding of proposed changes to the management of infectious diseases by the public and why the need to protect public health in New Zealand is so important.

Clause 10. Schedule 1 amended

Clause 11. Repeal of the Tuberculosis Act 1948

Clause 12. Revocation of Tuberculosis Regulations 1951

NCWNZ members strongly support tuberculosis being included as a notifiable disease under the Health Act 1956 and the consequent repeal of the Tuberculosis Act and Regulations. Updating the list of notifiable diseases to include tuberculosis is long overdue. Members are aware that medical personnel have been expressing concern for years over the increasing incidence of tuberculosis, particularly in the Far North. Public Health personnel will welcome the changes for management if tuberculosis is included as a notifiable disease.

Part 2. Artificial UV Tanning Services

Clause 13. New Part 5 inserted

Proposed new Part 5. Artificial UV tanning services. Section 113 Interpretation

NCWNZ has no specific resolutions regarding ultra violet sunbeds. As has already been stated, the organisation's resolutions show a strong preference for education over coercion. Also, members firmly believe all positive steps should be taken to reduce the incidence of cancer. Artificial UV tanning has long been associated with increased risk of developing skin cancer and evidence has shown that young people are more vulnerable to this risk. It is also evident that voluntary compliance with guidelines on the provision of commercial UV tanning services is low.

Members are aware that fashion dictates amongst young people and that many young people seek artificial tanning. Amongst our members who have been consulted are two women who, years ago when they were young women, were prescribed UV treatment for medical purposes. As a result, over many years, they have both experienced on-going problems associated with skin cancer.

Proposed new Section 114. Ban on providing artificial UV tanning services to persons under 18 years

The age of 18 is in line with our policy passed in 1969¹ requesting that 18 be the minimum age for a person to obtain a tattoo without consent. The concern again, was in reducing risk amongst young people of developing skin cancer.

NCWNZ members agree that banning the provision of artificial UV tanning services to persons under the age of 18 years will be a positive step towards reducing the incident of cancer. Using the same definition for 'approved evidence of age document' as in s.5(1) of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012 gives a clear message to people who provide artificial tanning services. It clearly states liability on conviction if the ban is contravened.

Conclusion

NCWNZ thank the Health Select Committee for this opportunity to comment on the Health (Protection) Amendment Bill. We agree in general with proposed amendments to improve protection of the public from harm which may occur with infectious diseases and with artificial UV tanning.



Rae Duff
National President



Ailsa Stewart
Convener, Health Standing Committee

¹ 9.16.2 That NCW request the Minister of Justice to introduce legislation making it illegal for tattooists to operate on persons under the age of 18 years without the consent of parents or guardians. 1969.