



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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Submission to the Social Services Committee on the Social Security Legislation Rewrite Bill 122-1

The National Council of Women of New Zealand , Te Kaunihera Wahine O Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 288 organisations affiliated at either the National level or to one of our 20 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 Family Affairs Standing Committee, Economics Standing Committee and Parliamentary Watch Standing.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. NCWNZ has a long history of promoting legislation to improve the outcomes for Women and Children in New Zealand and has made many submissions to the Social Security Act over the past 50 years. NCWNZ has supported the intention of these previous Acts to cater for woman and children and all who use these services. Successive additions, alterations and reductions to the Social Security Act have supported this view

2. Objectives

- 2.1. NCWNZ agrees that all legislation should be accessible, available, navigable and clear. Improving the language used will make this Act more user friendly and easy to understand. This will enable everyone to have a clear understanding of its intentions.

3. Policy Changes

- 3.1. The majority of NCWNZ members support the Policy changes but a few have expressed concern about the changes to the Emergency Benefit. Renaming this the Exceptional Circumstances Benefit gives the impression that previously requested aid may not fit into the new criteria that are contained within this new wording. The Emergency Benefit has helped with unexpected events that often occur for women with children and this change will put extra pressure on them and may inhibit their eligibility to access this Benefit for any unexpected events. The explanation used to explain the changes does not give the impression that previously accepted criteria for the Emergency Benefit will

still be accepted. Members are concerned that this will impact more on women as the majority of primary caregivers for children are women.

- 3.2. Members have also noted that there is no indication that the changes planned will include family members previously eligible for payments for providing alternative care for dependant relatives under the Act in the Family programme, nor for including the cost of travel for those who provide home based care. As the majority of caregivers are women this is seen as disadvantaging them.
- 3.3. NCWNZ members support moving the Residential care and Disability Support Services into a stand alone Act as they believe this will be more accessible and easier to follow.

Conclusion

NCWNZ in general supports the intent of the Bill to make it more user friendly. As pointed out in the submission there are some points which have raised concern but generally merging the existing Acts into three separate Bills should make for better access and understanding.

NCWNZ thanks you for the opportunity to make comment to these proposed changes

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National President

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Convener, Health Standing Committee