



**National Council of  
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera  
Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Report to the ICW Executive Council Meeting (ECM) from the  
National Council of Women of New Zealand,  
Te Kaunihera Wahine O Aotearoa**

It is our pleasure to share with ICW-CIF members, in our 120th year, a report on our work to progress gender equality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

**NCWNZ's vision - a gender equal New Zealand**

In consultation with our membership, our key focus (since the 2015 General Assembly) has been to develop and implement our Gender Equality strategy for New Zealand. By building understanding and driving action for gender equality, NCWNZ enables New Zealanders to have the freedom and opportunity to determine their own future. The greatest impact of gender equality is stronger more resilient communities – where people have a sense of belonging and value no matter what their gender. If we are to successfully achieve our vision of a gender equal New Zealand the potential impact is huge. Our white paper, published in November 2015, *Enabling women's potential: the social, economic and ethical imperative* outlines the economic, social and moral case for investing in gender equality.

We believe the problem of gender inequality is too large and complex to solve unilaterally. It requires mass collaboration by local communities, government, business and non profit organisations. It takes a mega community – a collaborative network of organisations and individuals working together for the shared vision of gender equality. NCWNZ has the depth, reach and reputation needed to lead such a mega community and to take gender equality to the next level

Progress has been made towards equality in many areas, and the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) has been influential in this work over the past decades – but, we know there is still much work to do.

**NCWNZ membership and reach**

We are an umbrella group; our membership includes 43 national organisations and 240 local organisations who are members of our 21 branches around the country. In addition, about 260 women are individual members of branches. Collectively our reach is over 290,000 women (this is a very large membership base as New Zealand's current population is 4.6 million). Many of our

member organisations represent all genders. Among the wide range of national member organisations are UN Women National Committee Aotearoa NZ, E tū (the largest private sector union in NZ), Zonta International, the Royal NZ Plunket Society (which providing services to the families of over 90% of new born babies), NZ College of Midwives, Business and Professional Women NZ, Rural Women, NZ Council of Trade Union (umbrella group for all unions), PACIFICA, St John, Graduate Women NZ and the Salvation Army.

We have undertaken a number of significant initiatives in the past 12 months to strengthen our organisation, and get back to core business after several years when all our energy and resources had to be expended on the restoration of our charitable status.

## Celebrating 120 years

This year, we celebrate our 120th anniversary. During our anniversary conference held in September this year, we were reminded of different facets of gender inequality in Aotearoa New Zealand today through our range of delegates, both from within the membership, and externally. There was a range of perspectives, backgrounds and areas of work represented by those attending. This was the first time an NCWNZ conference has been opened to the public and around 180 people attended on the two public days. Attendees enjoyed a diverse programme of topics with keynotes, panels and workshops. Within the broad range of topics and speakers there were many common themes and threads:

- Achieving gender quality needs new ideas and greater innovation. There is a need to do things in a different way.
- Women can't do this on their own — we need to help men be good men.
- The need for artful communication as an essential tool to help us move forward.

We were privileged to host Dr. Jungsook Kim, ICW President with us in New Zealand for our Conference, and hear from many speakers including the Hon John Key, Prime Minister of New Zealand, and past international and NCWNZ national president, Dame Miriam Dell.

And as we heard and discussed with multiple speakers, although New Zealand is making progress in addressing gender inequality, we still have a long way to go. Whether it is the gender pay gap, disproportionate representation in leadership, violence stats, the impact of mainstream pornography on young people, the media, making sure women are fairly represented in democracy, or any number of other areas, the evidence shows we do not live in an equal society.

A key thread uniting those at the Conference was the courage and tenacity to look honestly at the statistics and feel soberly inspired to keep working towards a more equal society. This is the real positivity needed to make change, not ignoring the numbers or burying our heads in the sand.

## Changes to help build a gender equality movement

This year, we have been able to turn our attention to our organisations rationale and how we can best continue to serve the women of New Zealand. What we saw when we looked at ourselves closely was that NCWNZ was in serious decline, and that unless we took urgent action we would be unable to fulfil our core objectives.

On day three of our milestone conference, the NCWNZ Board proposed three significant organisational changes for the membership to consider, and these generated much robust debate. These recommendations came from a review of the operational model, membership model and brand undertaken by the Board to make sure that everything we do is contributing to our strategy. In order to make an ongoing difference, we know we need to be more flexible, grow our membership and attract funding.

Not all members agreed with all the proposed changes, but that is only to be expected in a healthy and challenging organisation which has 120 years of history and a bright future ahead of it. Two of the three motions were approved by the two thirds majority required, the third lost by one vote. Members approved a new membership category, allowing individuals to join NCWNZ at a national level; and the ability for changes to be made to our organisation's Constitution document at a special general meeting. These two changes open up the ability for our movement to grow, and change to be made in a more fluid manner.

These two changes are the stepping stones to help implement our 2015 Strategic Plan, with its vision for a Gender Equal New Zealand. Through these changes, we hope to gain momentum and build a gender equality movement, by getting more people involved to shift some of the key cultural levers in society.

## Progressing gender equality in New Zealand

Our work is varied due to the interests of different members and branches. At the local branch level, the following activities are being delivered:

- Engagement with young women - local branches have run speech competitions for secondary students to increase understanding of gender issues and encourage action towards equality; events like breakfast to expose career ideas to young women; and many branches are running their own content and updates on social media channels.
- Public meetings and seminars - including 'how to run for council' and 'meet the candidate' sessions before this years' local council elections to facilitate interest and provide information.
- Leadership training and experience – to support local branches to operate, and gather content for our government submissions to progress.

At a national level we are:

- Delivering on 12 key actions from our White Paper – discussing and taking steps from our 2015 paper to improve our understanding, culture, structures, leadership and governance,

and data. This ‘blueprint for action’ involves work to be actioned not only by NCWNZ, but by other influencing sectors of society, including government.

- Meetings with influencers - many meetings have been held with Government Ministers, local MPs of all political parties as well as government agencies and in the business community.
- Submissions to government and other initiatives and proposals impacting on gender equality - researching and representing the views of our members on the inequalities faced by New Zealand women in the home, the work place and community, with close to 30 submissions a year on government bills and other consultations that are the most important to women.
- Member engagement and communication – distributing *The Circular*, a monthly members’ newsletter to over 700 members, a publication that carries topical news highlights, opinion pieces from member organisations and useful information to build awareness and knowledge; and maintaining strong and engaging social media channels, particularly on Facebook. In March 2017 we will celebrate the 600th edition of *The Circular*.

Our ten Standing Committees have continued their work in the areas of Education, Economics, Social Issues, Public Issues; Health, Family Affairs, Justice & Law Reform, Consumer Affairs, Employment and Environment. Our Parliamentary Watch Committee has assisted to ensure these committees are up to date with the latest consultation documents released from Parliament, and have delivered oral submissions to Select Committees when required.

During April 2015 to March 2016, 28 submissions were made at a national level to Parliamentary Select Committees and Government Departments and another 39 were made by local Branches. Government submissions are based on issues of global and national significance that affect human rights, health and welfare of women and girls and planet earth. This work is developed through research and discussion at local branch meetings and by other National Organised Members (NOMs), relevant to the ICW-CIF 2015-18 theme of ‘Transforming Society through Women's Empowerment’.

The President and members of the Board accepted many invitations to speak at events locally, nationally and internationally. These professional events offer a great way to meet new people, share our ideas, and build brand awareness for a gender equal New Zealand.

Our reach on traditional and social media has continued to grow, through more active work through our raised profile and ability to be proactive with the media. TV, radio and opinion pieces have increased our profile in the New Zealand public. Online and social media has been proactively maintained, now with more engaging conversation on our Facebook page, strengthening our relevance and brand.

## Ongoing funding

Funding continues to be an issue and is in part a reflection of increased demand from the community sector for funding and also the decline in NCWNZ membership. NCWNZ’s current change programme seeks to address this by widening the membership and increasing opportunities for supporter engagement. There has been strong interest from potential members to this initiative. Concentrating

on gender equality and engaging national conversations around progress is another strategy adopted to address this. Our current staffing is 3.5 full time equivalents and we remain dependent on volunteers from our diverse membership base to provide the additional support required.

### Working at the international level

We help New Zealand meet its international obligation to human rights, with work including:

- Participating in ICW meetings and initiatives – representing NCW at the International Council of Women (ICW) General Assembly held in Izmir, Turkey (29 May - 6 June 2015) with papers presented on Climate Change and Violence against Women and Trafficking by the President and Vice President; the National Council of Women of Australia in Melbourne (9 - 14 October 2015) where the President presented a paper on how New Zealand's legislation affects NZ Women.
- CEDAW and international reporting treaties - measuring New Zealand's progress in collaboration with other organisations to table the New Zealand Shadow Report to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on behalf of New Zealand; and reporting on the 1995 UN Women's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The New Zealand Government submitted its CEDAW report in July this year and NCWNZ is convening the alternative report drawing from its national members and others.
- Presenting and attending CSW - contributing to international initiatives, for example through the UN's policy-making body the Commission on the Status of Women (March 2016) where the President presented on Women's Leadership as part of an ICW panel.
- International delegations to New Zealand - briefing and hosting international delegations, as requested by embassies or our government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We are proud of our affiliation to the International Council of Women (ICW-ICF), and hope to continue with strengthen NCWNZs relevance and build equality in this corner of the world.

### In conclusion

The future will see us collaborating with others to build the movement to secure a gender equal New Zealand. We will focus on exposing and removing cultural barriers to achieving gender equality and holding New Zealand to account by building our benchmarking and monitoring framework for gender equality, and build an external taskforce of key influencers to guide our ongoing work.

Putting the past charity deregistration behind us, we feel positive about our future, understanding there is a lot of work to be done. Operations and funding remain challenging. We know that with new thinking, networks and a broader movement, we can be positive and work towards achieving important gender equality goals through revitalising our organisation. Ultimately, if we change, we can help bring change to New Zealand women; and New Zealand will remain a world leader in women's basic human right to be equal.