



26 March 2018

S18.10

## **Submission to the Social Services and Community Committee on the Child Poverty Reduction Bill**

### **0. Introduction**

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing 245 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 19 branches. In addition, about 350 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 350,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Consumer Affairs & Economics Standing Committee and the Parliamentary Watch Committee and builds on comments from members recorded in previous submissions as referred to below.
- 0.2. NCWNZ has previously submitted on associated submissions such as the Child Support Amendment Bills (2001 and 2012),<sup>1</sup> Child Support and Domestic Maintenance - Amendments to Assessments (2016),<sup>2</sup> and Support for Children in Hardship Bill (2015).<sup>3</sup> In addition NCWNZ Resolutions have supported Universal Basic Income support<sup>4</sup> and a Universal Child Allowance.<sup>5</sup>
- 0.3. NCWNZ supports this Bill and endorses the principle that the best interests of the child be given priority over those of the parents or caregivers.

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<sup>1</sup> S01.49 NCWNZ Submission to the Social Services Select Committee on the Child Support Amendment Bill <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S01.49-Child-Support-Amendment-Bill.pdf> and S12.17 NCWNZ Submission to the Social Services Committee on the Child Support Amendment Bill <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S12.17-Child-Support-Amendment-Bill2.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> S16.07 NCWNZ Submission to the Inland Review Department on ED0183 Child Support and Domestic Maintenance – Amendments to Assessments <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/S16.07-Child-Support-and-Domestic-Maintenance-Amendments-to-Assessments.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> S15.18 NCWNZ Submission to the Social Services Committee on the Support for Children in Hardship Bill 23 <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S15.18-Support-for-Children-in-Hardship-Bill.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> 4.2.1 That NCWNZ supports a universal basic income (UBI) for all New Zealanders. (2017)

<sup>5</sup> 16.3.5.14 That NCWNZ recommends that each child between the ages of 0 and 18 years inclusive receives a universal child allowance to replace all present government living allowances for children, which is linked to the Consumer Price Index and paid to the main carer of the child. (2014)

- 0.4. This support is echoed in the views of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) who are welcoming of the Bill and its comprehensive multi-tiered poverty lines providing a broader picture of the depth of child poverty.
- 0.5. NCWNZ encourages greater commitment to action by Government for all children, and especially for families and whānau in poverty.
- 0.6. Whilst NCWNZ agrees that the setting of legislation ensures strategic commitment to addressing child poverty, NCWNZ recognises that Government needs to work in partnership with community, whānau, agencies, parents and schools who collectively have a role in endeavouring to ensure the wellbeing of all children of Aotearoa.
- 0.7. Transparency and accountability to measure and report on progress in reducing child poverty is also needed. In general NCWNZ believes the targets are realistic and ambitious in order to achieve better outcomes during a normal period of activity. However, the time frame of 1 July 2025 for defining "persistent poverty" is disappointing and NCWNZ encourages Government to explore international practice in this regard, along with consultation in New Zealand to identify ways this definition can be determined sooner.

## **1. Comment on Clauses of the Bill**

### **Part 2, Clauses 10 to 13 *Primary Measures***

- 1.1. NCWNZ appreciates the importance of having measures of low income, material hardship and persistent poverty, and encourages government to ensure these definitions are all confirmed within the stated timeframes.

### **Part 2, Clauses 15 to 20 *Supplementary Measures***

- 1.2. NCWNZ supports the Supplementary Measures as outlined in the Bill.

### **Part 2, Clauses 21 to 23 *Targets***

- 1.3. The ten year "long-term" targets with three year intermediate targets to support them appear realistic to NCWNZ in order to address deeply entrenched child poverty.

### **Part 2, Clauses 30 to 36 *Reports***

- 1.4. Whilst annual reports on child poverty and seven year reports on persistent poverty are deemed appropriate, NCWNZ encourages statisticians to also produce indicative forecasts in relation to persistent poverty to ensure wide community awareness and engagement.
- 1.5. Whilst needing to follow best statistical practice reports NCWNZ believes such reports should be communicated in formats and channels that are well understood by key stakeholders such as education, housing and social agencies and other NGOs.
- 1.6. NCWNZ strongly encourages reporting on gender impacts and changes in key measure areas.

### Part 3, Clause 45

- 1.7. NCWNZ recognises the role of all agencies to work together to improve the well-being of particular groups of children, and recommends additional supports be implemented through this Bill to assist in achieving this. Such measures should include: free counselling, budgeting, cooking, gardening and parenting advice; increased access to education and training to enhance parent job prospects, skills and levels of remuneration; mentoring and buddies for families in poverty; and extra financial assistance when required such as fuel and supermarket vouchers.

## 2. Conclusion

- 2.1. NCWNZ supports this Bill that reflects the set measures, accountability and reporting by Government in order to reduce Child Poverty for all children in Aotearoa.
- 2.2. NCWNZ encourages the determination and setting of measures to be achieved within the stated timeframes and that additional support services be provided in order to address this complex issue.
- 2.3. NCWNZ recommends progress reporting to be presented in ways that are clear and informative for key stakeholders and that a gender lens be applied.



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