



6 April 2018

S18.12

Submission to the Education and Workforce Committee on the Education (National Education and Learning Priorities) Amendment Bill

- 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 Education Standing Committee and the Parliamentary Watch Committee, based on previous consultation with the membership of NCWNZ and established policy.

1. General Comments

- 1.1. NCWNZ members have a long history of supporting a holistic, broad-based and inclusive education system, and the need for full and authentic consultation. NCWNZ therefore supports the Bill, with minor modifications.

2. Clause by Clause

4 Section 1A amended (Minister may issue statement of National Learning and Education Priorities).

Sub-Clause 4 (1)

- 2.1. Given that subparagraph 1A (1) of the Education Act 1989¹ has only one sentence, it is difficult to know what this sub-clause is referring to.

Sub-Clause 4 (2)

- 2.2. This sub-clause proposes to replace a focus on educational attainment with 'providing learning experiences', and adds an additional emphasis on providing an equitable system.

¹ Education Act 1989.

http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html?search=ta_act_E_ac%40ainf%40anif_an%40bn%40rn_25_a&p=1

- 2.3. NCWNZ members acknowledge that successful schooling can look different for different people, especially those people with special needs. Educational achievement has often been narrowly measured in qualifications attained, which is not the measure of successful education for some people. One of our members summed up the wider aspirations for our students when she stated that *'if girls and boys leave school and don't want to change the world, we have failed them in education'*.² It is not reasonable to legislate the outcomes of education, as they rely on many different factors including the individual student. It is reasonable, however, to strive to provide the best learning experiences possible for every student to have the opportunity to realise their potential.
- 2.4. The addition of an acknowledgement of the role the educational system as a whole plays in achieving equitable outcomes is also welcomed by NCWNZ. The White Paper produced by NCWNZ in 2015³ shows how gender equality needs to be addressed at a variety of levels, from the individual to the societal level. Structural inequality is built into our educational and other systems, which *'explains how the same rules and opportunities can be applied to all genders but have different outcomes due to life experiences, inequalities, sexual orientation, poverty, deeply embedded practices, or unconscious bias'*.⁴ These inequalities, which apply to more than just gender inequality, will not be eliminated by narrowly focusing on individuals. This was the view in the NCWNZ submission on the Inquiry into Special Educational Needs⁵ when it was stated that *'The overall picture presented by NCWNZ members ... is ... the system reinforces and reproduces the inequality currently present within society rather than education being a way to improve individuals' and families' future quality of life'*.

Sub-Clause 4 (3)

- 2.5. This sub-clause broadens out the objectives of the existing Act to include life-long learning, a better definition of social skills and of community participation, and replaces a narrow objective of 'work preparedness' with one more focused on holistic growth and development.
- 2.6. NCWNZ members agree that *'socialising and socialisation of children and young people [is] a major function of the education system'*.⁶ Further, NCWNZ has concerns about the quality of relationship education in our schools, which was shown when members passed a resolution⁷ at the 2014 conference saying that NCWNZ supports the promotion of education on sexuality. The NCWNZ White

² NCWNZ. 2015. Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Updating the Education Act 1989 Discussion Document. S15.33. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S15.33-Updating-the-Education-Act-1989.pdf>

³ NCWNZ. 2015. Enabling women's potential – the social, economic and ethical imperative.

<https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/what-we-do/enabling-womens-potential-the-social-economic-and-ethical-imperative/>

⁴ *ibid*, p. 31

⁵ NCWNZ. 2015, Submission to the Education and Science Committee for the Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorders in primary and secondary schools. S15.24, p. 1. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S15.24-Inquiry-into-Special-Needs-Education.pdf>

⁶ NCWNZ. 2016. Submission to the Education and Science Committee on the Education (Update) Amendment Bill 160-1. S16.25, p. 2. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S16.25-Education-Update-Amendment-Bill.pdf>

⁷ NCWNZ. Appendix "D" Resolutions of National Meetings 2011-2017. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Appendix-D-Resolutions-2011-2017.pdf>

Paper⁸ also comments on the general sexist culture in Aotearoa New Zealand which undermines healthy relationships of all types. The changing of a word from ‘good’ to ‘positive’ relationships might seem like a small move, but language can make a big difference to attitudes. NCWNZ therefore supports the change to ‘positive relationships.’

- 2.7. NCWNZ members have also emphasised that they see education as *‘a right of citizenship, which enables full and fulfilling participation in Aotearoa New Zealand society’*.⁹ The inclusion of the word ‘active’ in subparagraph (iii) is welcomed as an indication that participation is not merely a function of being present in society. The proposed objective might give government agencies some authority to question schools such as Glorivale which deliberately restrict the education of students of all genders, resulting in reduction of those students’ ability to actively participate in Aotearoa New Zealand society as a whole.¹⁰
- 2.8. NCWNZ supports the proposal for a more holistic objective than ‘preparedness for work’. This new objective is better able to recognise and support the many roles and choices available to all genders, which includes unpaid work in the home and voluntary sectors.

Sub-Clause 4 (4)

- 2.9. The major change in this proposed sub-paragraph is from ‘the inclusion within society’ to ‘an inclusive society’.
- 2.10. This is a small change, but as mentioned above, small wording changes can have a big effect. ‘Inclusion within society’ focuses on individuals, and ‘an inclusive society’ focuses on society changes. As argued above, we support the focus on making structural changes in our society to create greater inclusion of all people, which would incorporate gender equality. The difference in the wording here can probably be illustrated by the example of Salisbury School, the residential school in Nelson for girls with complex special needs, which NCWNZ has supported in the past.¹¹ ‘Inclusion within society’ focused on mainstreaming these girls into state schools regardless of the preference of the girls or their parents, and led to a proposal to close the school. ‘An inclusive society’ would recognise that education for these girls may need to be tailored to their specific needs, and provide that tailoring. NCWNZ is pleased that the current government has committed to keeping Salisbury School open.
- 2.11. The actual wording of the proposed replacement has incorrect grammar, that is, sub-section (3)(c) says “to instil in each child and young person an appreciation of the importance of the following:”

⁸ NCWNZ. 2015. Enabling women’s potential – the social, economic and ethical imperative.

<https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/what-we-do/enabling-womens-potential-the-social-economic-and-ethical-imperative/>

⁹ NCWNZ. 2015. Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Updating the Education Act 1989 Discussion Document. S15.33. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S15.33-Updating-the-Education-Act-1989.pdf>

¹⁰ Gordon, Liz. 2015. “Glorivale: A question of rights and values.” *The Circular / National Council of Women of New Zealand*, 583: 8-9

¹¹ NCWNZ. 2012. Submission to the Ministry of Education on Development of a New Intensive Wrap-around Special Education Service and Consultation on the Future role of Residential Special Schools. S12.23.

<https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S12.23-Special-Education2.pdf>

therefore sub-paragraph (3)(c)(i) should not be starting “To instil an appreciation of the importance of an inclusive society...”

Sub-Clause 4 (5)

- 2.12. The proposed subsection 4A details the consultation that would be required if a statement about National Education and Learning Priorities were issued. If this sub-clause is passed, there would also need to be an amendment to subsection 4 where it says that the ‘Minister must consult with those ... he or she considers ought to be consulted’ as the consultation scope would no longer be discretionary.
- 2.13. NCWNZ supports ensuring that consultation is full and authentic. Members have often expressed their support for better consultation¹² or their disappointment at the lack of authentic consultation,¹³ and show by their continued contribution to NCWNZ submissions that they value opportunities to give their views on matters of importance.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. NCWNZ members have always been concerned to ensure that the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand is broad based, inclusive and accessible for all New Zealanders as a citizenship right. This Bill further refines the wording in the Act around the purpose of education, and in general this refinement is supported.



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¹² NCWNZ. 2015. Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Updating the Education Act 1989 Discussion Document. S15.33. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S15.33-Updating-the-Education-Act-1989.pdf> (for example)

¹³ NCWNZ. 2014. Submission to the Education and Science Select Committee on the Education Amendment Bill (No 2) 193-1. S14.08. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/S14-08-Education-Amendment-Bill-No-2.pdf> (for example)