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Submission to the Ministry of Education on the Reform of Vocational Education

Introduction

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 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 Parliamentary Watch Committee, based on previous consultation with the membership of NCWNZ and existing policy.
- 0.2. NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the reform of vocational education and wishes to acknowledge the consultation work already undertaken by the Ministry of Education and the Tertiary Education Committee (TEC). NCWNZ also wishes to acknowledge the involvement in this reform process of staff and students of affected industry training bodies, Institutes of Technology and polytechnics [ITPs] and Wānanga. For many, this will be a period of immense uncertainty after several challenging years across the sector.
- 0.3. Given the relatively short time allowed for feedback, this submission focuses on the two overarching questions in the Consultation Discussion Document.

1. Questions from Consultation Discussion Document

Q1. Does this document's description of the current problems and opportunities within the vocational education sector look right to you? Is there anything you would add or remove? What problems or opportunities do you think should be the priority?

- 1.1. NCWNZ urges the Government to ensure that gender impact assessments be undertaken before planning changes to the tertiary education sector, to secure all genders from disadvantage.¹ Our members feel it is important to consider any changes to the tertiary education system from a gender

¹ NCWNZ, 2001, Resolution 5.3.9.1

perspective, because a gender equal New Zealand will not be achieved unless there is positive action to remove the discrimination within society.

- 1.2. After a parenting break many women take their first steps back into the paid workforce through non-vocational training. Public benefits accrue from education across all levels 3-7 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework [NZQF] even if they are not obviously or immediately linked to vocational goals or current industry needs. However, almost all education at these levels is labelled 'vocational education' within these proposals, with the implication that investment in these will be subject to the same funding priorities.
- 1.3. This has important consequences for study programmes taken over the longer term and for study which might be paused and then resumed which is particularly relevant for part-time students, of which women are overrepresented. From the 2013 Census: "Women were more likely to study part-time – at 28.9 percent of all women studying, compared with 22.9 percent of men who were studying. For people studying part-time, the difference between men and women was most marked for those aged 40–59 years. In these age groups, twice as many women as men were studying part-time".²
- 1.4. Measuring return on investment only in terms of achieving the greatest short to medium outcome for employers and industry limits the transformational and longer-term (including inter-generational) impact education can have on women and their whanau, communities, iwis and broader society.

Q2. What do you think the Government needs to understand about the current system to inform its work on changes?

- 1.5. The proposals place a strong emphasis on young people and school leavers and ensuring they have the skills and exposure to technology to carve out flexible and productive employment prospects over a lifetime. While the document does also acknowledge, to a lesser extent, the needs of 'older people' in the workplace and their need to upskill, reskill and retrain, it is not apparent how these new models will meet the different needs of all genders and ages.
- 1.6. The breaking down of gender segregation in different types of studies and subsequent employment is a necessary part of addressing the large and persistent gender pay gap in Aotearoa New Zealand. NCWNZ's vision of a gender equal New Zealand requires elimination of the gender pay gap.³
- 1.7. As employment outcomes for women are not mentioned in these documents, it is not clear that consideration has been given to how these vocational education proposals will advance gender equality in the workforce. This is particularly critical for Māori and Pasifika women. For example, as

² Statistics New Zealand. 2013 Census QuickStats about Education and Training.

<http://archive.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/qstats-education-training/study-participation.aspx>

³ NCWNZ, 2018, Resolution 6.2.3.27; NCWNZ, 2015, *Enabling Women's Potential*.

highlighted by our recently released *Gender Dashboard*, “the massive gap [in earnings] between Pākehā men and Pasifika women hasn’t changed in ten years”.⁴

- 1.8. Women are more likely to be engaged in part-time study and part-time employment following children. To ensure women equally reap the benefits of a reformed vocational education sector, access to adequate high-quality childcare and supportive employer conditions would seem to be a necessary accompaniment.
- 1.9. Within these documents, variations *within* training types and *across* industry groups appear to have received little attention at this stage. Specifically, there is no mention of aims to increase and support women in specific forms of vocational training (like apprenticeships) and in employment in male-dominated industries (like ICT), or to support men in female-dominated industries such as caregiving; nor how the reform proposals might address any of these issues.
- 1.10. Dating back to 1896, the policies of NCWNZ support the rights of women to enter trades and to receive equal pay for equal work. However, the concerns noted by our members over the years remain the same today: women’s participation in trades is limited and there needs to be greater encouragement of women to take up apprenticeships, especially in non-traditional trades.
- 1.11. With regard to fees, NCWNZ supports the provision of on-going free education for 16 – 19-year-old New Zealand students according to the Education Act 1989, not just in state secondary schools, but also in approved tertiary institutions, in apprenticeships or in other approved forms of training.⁵

2. Summary

- 2.1. Our members are supportive of the value of vocational education and have consistently supported growing women’s involvement in trades, including non-traditional trade areas.
- 2.2. NCWNZ urge the Government to ensure that gender impact assessments be undertaken before planning changes to the tertiary education sector, to secure all genders from disadvantage.



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⁴ NCWNZ, 2019. *Gender Dashboard*. <https://genderequal.nz/datastories/not-just-gender-pay-gap/> Household Labour Force Survey 2018 (based on median hourly earnings from wages and salaries).

⁵ NCWNZ, 2008, Resolution 5.5.12