



8 March 2007

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IWD HIGHLIGHTS VIOLENCE TOWARDS WOMEN

As women join across the country today to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD), the recent outcome of a second high profile trial on sexual violence resulting in a not-guilty outcome, looms large in women's psyche.

"These recent events have highlighted the chasm between what a woman considers as sexual violence and what some men perceive as consensual sexual connection," said Christine Low, National President of the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ). "It is an absolute priority that the community builds a bridge across this chasm for greater mutual understanding and respect. It is further a priority that faith in the Police, as the guardians of law and order, be restored."

"Our history can not be ignored, the women of New Zealand have been let down by the abysmal record of obtaining convictions for crimes of rape and sexual violence, with less than 10 percent of prosecutions resulting in successful conviction," continued Christine Low. "Particularly when this is considered in the context that sexual violence is under-reported in New Zealand with the reporting only 12%."

The CEDAW Alternative Shadow Report 2006 reported that more women are disadvantaged by violence than by any other factor - legal, financial or political.

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) applauds the Ministry of Women's Affairs recently announced research project: *Strong and safe communities – effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence*, which will provide evidence-based advice to improve the safety and longer term wellbeing of adult victims of sexual violence, and increase offender accountability.

“This initiative, coupled with the soon to be released findings of the Bazley Report (Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct) mean we can start to move forward, learn from our history, and work towards the cultural shift that is long overdue,” said Christine Low.

ENDS

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"Women Influencing Policy"