



15 October 2008

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NCWNZ Urges Gender Analysis on all Government legislation

At the recent National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) National Conference policy was passed recommending that there be gender analysis done on everything that goes through Parliament.

“NCWNZ believes that gender analysis is critical to determine the impact that certain legislation could have on women’s lives and those around them. Two examples that demonstrate the need for gender analysis are student loans and the Kiwisaver scheme, which NCWNZ has voiced concerns on in the past,” says NCWNZ National President, Elizabeth Bang.

In its 2007 submission on the Student Loans Amendment Bill No 2 NCWNZ voiced concern: “New Zealand can be proud of the fact that most girls now reach four to five years of secondary education and that tertiary enrolments see 50 percent as female. But society is not experiencing the full value of such a progress if women are at a disadvantage when the burden of loan repayments, with or without the interest component, prevents or delays career advancement because of the comparatively lower incomes than men and because of time out for child rearing.”

With regard to the Kiwisaver scheme, NCWNZ also expressed a number of concerns about the scheme and the impact on women:

- Pay equity has not been achieved.
- Women have broken periods of employment due to social and family responsibilities. Women frequently choose part-time or lower-paid positions in order to have the time and energy to provide support to children, partners or older family members.
- Today’s society has a variety of relationships e.g. solo mothers, several partners (women are as ‘at risk’ with property division as men when partnership break-ups occur). Many women will experience a part of their lives when they are the sole or principal financial support for the family.
- Women live longer and therefore require more money to finance retirement.

In the formation of New Zealand legislation, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) committee highlighted the lack of gender analysis.

The following recommendation was made on the New Zealand report:

“The Committee urges the State party to put in place an effective strategy for mainstreaming gender perspectives into all national plans and institutions and to strengthen the linkages between the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights and the Action Plan for New Zealand Women, with a view to ensuring that the promotion and protection of women’s human rights as enshrined in the Convention are integrated into all national human rights plans, programmes and actions. The Committee also recommends that the State party require gender impact statements for all policy papers submitted to the Cabinet and to all Cabinet committees”.

“The CEDAW committee concluded last year, that we as a country which prides itself on leading in many areas, are now lagging behind the rest of the western world when it comes to gender analysis. NCWNZ also feels that the gender analysis policy links in very well with one of the Council’s new target focus areas which is financial sustainability,” says Mrs Bang.

ENDS

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