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### **Women swing votes: Paid Parental Leave**

At a time when political parties are indicating ‘their respective bottom-line’ to establish a new Government, the political parties may have forgotten one critical component to the Election – namely the voters.

Voters also have bottom-lines, the current failure of both major parties to take a firm public position on extension and expansion of Paid Parental Leave; this leaves women swinging, believes the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ).

NCWNZ believes that Paid Parental Leave is one mechanism that satisfies both major parties’ ambitions to invest in “infrastructure”, as well as the “economic benefit” during a time when the financial markets of the world are spiking.

“Expansion of Paid Parental Leave up to a 12-month period, ring-fencing a fund for fathers to remain at home co-parenting, or being the primary carer without having to use the mother’s entitlement, increasing the amount paid to reflect ILO recommendations, and opening the entitlement system up so that casual and temporary employees qualify; this is what is needed for a ‘whole-of-country’ approach to the current problems and those in the foreseeable future,” said Elizabeth Bang, NCWNZ National President.

“Members of the National Council of Women have traditionally counted highly in the ‘undecided vote’ category,” said Elizabeth Bang. “This Election has women thoroughly split, and for many, ‘undecided’ when it comes to casting that critical vote on Saturday. Women prefer to scrutinise the policy fully in advance, make the comparisons, and consider how the policies meet their needs and the needs of their families. In the mix, women are also contemplating what is best for New Zealand as a nation, during a time of global instability.”

NGOs are happy that both major parties acknowledge that the funding for the sector is guaranteed secure. However, Paid Parental Leave is one area that needs public assurances from the two major parties on where they stand and when there will be future movement on it.

ENDS

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*"Women Influencing Policy"*