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COMMITTEE QUESTION DECLINE IN WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The recent decline of women participating in local government was one of the questions asked by the UN's Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) monitoring committee to the National Council of Women NZ (NCWNZ) NGO delegation in New York.

Anne Todd Lambie from Nelson, on of the NCWNZ NGO delegation confirmed that more family friendly structures would make it easier for women trying to juggle their council roles with family responsibilities and paid work. She also pointed out to the Committee that women from minority cultures faced an even greater challenge to stand for election.

Local government is often the nursery for national politics and any further decline in women's participation at the local level will have national implications.

The NGO CEDAW report documented that in 1998, 26 percent of mayors were women, which has declined in 2004 to only 17 percent.

The Committee which has a strong interest in the issue of trafficking of women, also queried the situation in New Zealand.

The NGO CEDAW report documented that the Human Rights Commission had signalled that resources constraints were limiting the ability of the NZ Police to deal with the matter, including the extent to which they could liaise with other law enforcement agencies. Also, the ethnic diversity of the population is still not reflected in the police force, which may hamper efforts to engage with potential victims of trafficking.

The Committee were also interested in the Maori Women's Welfare League's recommendation for a Ministry of Maori Women's Affairs to draw resources into one pool for the better use by Maori women.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs currently has a division within the Ministry dedicated to Maori women's issues.

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