

**Submission to the Science and Education Select Committee on the Education
(Establishment of Universities of Technology) Amendment Bill**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 46 nationally organised societies. NCWNZ has 28 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies and some 150 other societies. The Council's function is to serve women, families and the community through research, study, discussion and action.

In 2007 thirteen NCWNZ branches and four Nationally Organised Societies responded to this Bill. More than 200 women, who are representatives of affiliated societies at a local level, took part in the response. The majority response was opposed to the establishment of Universities of Technologies. Twelve of the branches or Nationally Organised Societies voted against the Bill, three were unsure and two supported the Bill. This response is in line with the NCWNZ submission to the Education (Establishment of Universities) Amendment Bill in 2004.

The reasons for opposition were as follows:

- Universities of Technology would require more of the limited tertiary education funding allocation than polytechnics and technical institutes. This expectation is based on the assumption that research-based higher degrees would involve greater costs in lower staff/student ratios, more highly qualified, high-salaried staff and specialist plant. In addition higher costs for institutions could mean higher costs for students.
- At the moment New Zealand does not have the population to sustain more than the current number of universities.
- Competition for students, especially international students, will increase exponentially in relation to the increase in the number of universities. While competition among providers can have benefits for students, it is generally a very costly enterprise for which students and communities pay in the long run.
- Universities of Technology provide qualifications to 'raise workplace skills and knowledge' as their 'primary mission' but 'will demonstrate the same essential characteristics as any other university' (p.2 of the Bill). To add the essential university requirement for high level, pure research could be a distraction from this primary emphasis.
- World class international institutes of technology do not require the name of university to establish their reputation as educational institutions where applied vocational courses are soundly based on relevant research. All vocational training should have a basis of research plus practicum to forge the links with industry and vocation and develop new and better ways of operating in the workplace.
- Currently, flexibility exists where some polytechnics and universities collaborate in providing pathways from lower level to more advanced, postgraduate study using cross-crediting. This is to be encouraged as an enrichment of practice and theory for staff and students.
- High quality universities are essential for New Zealand's standing in the world. New Zealand should concentrate on improving existing universities, without establishing a

situation where most polytechnics and institutes of technology feel obliged to concentrate on becoming universities in order to compete for students.

- Some members commented on the current role of polytechnics and technical institutes in granting degrees; for example, the Bachelor of Nursing. Such degrees are important as qualification benchmarks for these institutions and should not imply that these institutions require university status.

In summary, most NCWNZ members opposed the establishment of Universities of Technology as not being in the best interests of high quality, focused, co-ordinated tertiary education in New Zealand. NCWNZ appreciates having the opportunity to respond to this Bill.

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