

Background Information, June 2019

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is a not for profit membership organisation that makes a difference through its work to increase gender equality.

We have a proud history emerging in 1896 with Kate Sheppard as the founding president, after the successful campaign for women's suffrage three years earlier. Since that time, NCWNZ has been associated with New Zealand's social and economic reform focused on women, family and community. It has been instrumental in securing free education for children, women joining the law, police and defence forces, improvements in maternal health and matrimonial property, for example.

NCWNZ envisions a gender equal New Zealand where our communities are connected, informed and resourced to reap the benefits of gender equality. By building understanding and driving action for gender equality, we hope to enable New Zealanders to have the freedom and opportunity to determine their own future. The greatest impact of gender equality is stronger more resilient communities – where people have a sense of belonging and value, no matter what their gender.

If we are to successfully achieve our vision of a gender equal New Zealand the potential impact is huge. Our white paper, published in November 2015, [Enabling women's potential: the social, economic and ethical imperative](#) outlines the economic, social and moral case for investing in gender equality.

Gender equality builds communities that are:

- Inclusive and accepting of all people no matter what their gender. Gender equality is a basic human right and includes all genders, female, male and transgender. It is unacceptable that for many people, from the day they are born, their life choices are limited. Inclusive, involved communities are more resilient in the face of adversity and external shocks.
- A building block for an innovative and flourishing economy. Achieving gender equality is not only the right thing to do – it is the smart thing to do. For example, a 2011 New Zealand study by Goldman Sachs [Closing The Gender Gap: Plenty Of Potential Economic Upside](#) estimated that closing the gap between male and female employment rates would boost New Zealand's GDP by 10 percent.
- Self-determining and resilient. Gender equality creates cohesive communities that are more likely to find effective solutions to local issues and problems. Stronger, non-violent, resilient people build stronger, non-violent, resilient communities.
- Supportive of intergenerational gains for all but particularly for groups that experience disadvantage. Statistics in our white paper show the groups who experience this the most in our society include solo mothers, women living with disabilities and women of particular ethnicities. Helping the women who face the greatest inequality will reap benefits for their children, families and communities, and lead to intergenerational gains.

We believe the problem of gender inequality is too large and complex to solve unilaterally. It requires mass collaboration by local communities, government, business and not for profit organisations. It takes a mega community – a collaborative network of organisations and individuals working together for the shared vision of gender equality. NCWNZ has the depth, reach and reputation needed to lead such a community and take gender equality to the next level.

We represent many, not one – with a shared identity and kaupapa drawing upon by a collaborative network covering membership, public, private and not for profit organisations. As an umbrella organisation, we provide leadership and are a compelling voice for women, families and the community.

Our total membership is 290,000 drawn from our 43 national organised members and 240 local organisations who are members of our 16 branches around the country. Many of our member organisations represent all genders. Among the wide range of national organised members are UN Women Aotearoa, E tū, Zonta, Plunket, CTU, College of Midwives, P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A., Business and Professional Women, Rural Women, St John, Women's March New Zealand, Graduate Women New Zealand and the Salvation Army.

Our values are:

- **Open** - We welcome all cultures and genders. We support all people and groups working for gender equality. Our work is intersectional. We embrace new ideas, viewpoints, and ways of doing things
- **Constructive** - We are positive and bring ideas to the table. We are focused on what will make a difference. We will identify the problems and work with others to find solutions
- **Passionate** - We bring our passion and energy for gender equality to everything we do. We celebrate and acknowledge those who contribute to the cause
- **Determined** - We are determined and confident to keep going when times are tough. We have the courage to speak up and have the perseverance to get results
- **Generous** - We help by sharing our knowledge, experiences and creativity to improve the lives of all new Zealanders

Scale of operations

Our national office is small. Our volunteer network around the country is member driven, and support the development of our reactive advocacy and submissions processes.