

# STANDING COMMITTEE

## Convenor Reports 2018-19



National Council of  
Women of New Zealand  
Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa

*These reports cover activity from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019; and where noted, to 1 June 2019.*

Completed submissions are available either at <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/what-we-do/ncwnzarchive/submissions/> (public access) or <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/members/submissions/> (members only, typically submissions to Parliament which have not yet been published on their website).

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### *Economics*

**Convenor: Lynley Hutton**

**Current overview:** The re-organisation of the standing committee portfolios and appointment of convenor to this particular committee coincided with slower activity in the first half of 2019. The submission on the Credit Contracts Amendment Bill elicited thoughtful contributions from members, considering long-standing equity issues on the impact of financial transactions.

**Upcoming Sector Issues:** The recent Wellbeing Budget and promise of more legislative changes signal a busy time ahead. The impact of climate change initiatives, infrastructure needs and the economic consequences of these are an immediate focus, with work commencing on a submission on the draft report on Local Government Funding and Financing.

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### *Environment & Climate Change*

**Convenor: Christine Caughey**

**Current Overview:** The work of the standing committee is more important than ever before as the impacts of climate change are increasing locally and globally, creating arguably the biggest risk to the lives of our children and grandchildren and to the survival of life as we know it today. The cause is the increase of carbon emissions from almost every human activity. As a Pacific IPCC scientist asserts, we must rid carbon from economic activity. We must win the “carbon war”.<sup>1</sup>

Climate change creates a significant impact on human rights and gender equality. NCWNZ has an essential role to play in supporting leadership by women for women, in addressing climate action. Women and children are more significantly affected by the impacts of climate change. This includes mental and physical health, increased family violence, economic, social and physical consequences exacerbated by the systemic lack of equal representation in decision-making. As an organisation we must grow our understanding and our actions, individually and collectively to address these pressing concerns.

**Remit and Submissions:** There was considerable research into the preparation of the Remit passed at the 2018 conference that advocates for a net zero carbon future for New Zealand and supports the imperative of building resilience to the effects of climate change, disaster risk and environmental challenges. This resolution provides the foundation for the comprehensive submission that was lodged with the Environment Select Committee on the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon)

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<sup>1</sup> Rovoi, C. 2019. Climate expert warns of 'losing the carbon war'. Climate expert warns of 'losing the carbon war'

Amendment Bill, in the current year. Committee members have also worked with other groups to support their submissions.

**Representing:** The Committee has represented NCWNZ at public forums including consultation meetings with the Minister for Climate Change. Participation in grass roots groups to build collaborations has also been a focus to share the journey as effectively as possible.

**Participating:** The committee convenor spoke at a workshop on Climate Change and Gender as part of the PSA Women's Network Biennial Conference last August.

**Researching, Informing and Educating:** The committee circulates current research on climate change, human rights and gender equality to interested members and is keen to grow the list of recipients.

The committee has made a monthly contribution to the Circular on aspects of climate change and building resilience, to support the growth of member knowledge on climate change and tools to address it.

Upcoming issues: This includes a watch on local authority approaches to climate change, ensuing policy directions and action in relation to declarations of "climate emergency," and will further its work to address the reduction of carbon emissions and effects on human rights and gender equality,

The standing committee of five from across the country met monthly by skype during the reporting year. Each has contributed her time, experience and wisdom to the work of NCWNZ.

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## ***Parliamentary Watch***

**Convenor: Beryl Anderson**

***Note: This report is for the period to 1 June 2019***

**Current Overview:** Parliamentary Watch Committee (PWC) continues to identify the material on which submissions could be written. There are still some challenges around having people available to respond in the timeframe available.

**Representing and Acting:** 57 items were researched with 43 recommended for action. Twenty-two submissions were written by convenors with two oral presentations to Parliamentary select committees.

**Researching, Informing and Educating:** Training sessions were provided over Skype for new convenors. The training was split into two sessions of about 1.5 hours each. The honours presented at New Year and Queen's Birthday were analysed. Both showed more women than men receiving honours.

**Participation:** PWC members represented NCWNZ at 14 meetings.

**Upcoming sector issues:** The government is undertaking a number of reviews and new legislation is expected. Topics for NCWNZ members to keep a watch for include:

- Family and sexual violence – national strategy and action plan being designed
- Free speech – law review, possibly Human Rights Act, Harmful Digital Communications Act, defamation laws.
- Disability – Disability Action Plan 2019-2022

- Wellbeing.

The CEDAW midterm report is due mid 2020 on the steps taken on resourcing of the Human Rights Commission, repeal of s392 of the Immigration Act 2009 (complaints from migrants), cross-party on combating gender-based violence against women, removing abortion from the Crimes Act 1961 and incorporating treatment of abortion into health services legislation, a royal commission of inquiry into the family court system.

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## ***Public Issues***

**Convenor: Raewyn Stone**

**Current overview:** The Public Issues portfolio is a very broad brief, ranging from very specific topics to generic/cross cutting themes and issues. These include: biculturalism, driver education and licensing, ethics, legislative processes, election costs, election processes, local government, multiculturalism, parliament, privacy, public transport, referenda, roading, road safety, transport regulation, Treaty of Waitangi, Waitangi Tribunal, women in decision making.

Although there are obviously strong links between the issues on themes like gender equity, there is a case for review of this portfolio, amalgamation of some issues and some areas requiring a specific portfolio and committee; in particular

- Transport, broadband, utilities and social infrastructure which are of critical importance to women, the environment, health, employment and social connectedness
- The Treaty, bi-culturalism, diversity and human rights – these are a “lens” which should be applied to all submissions and it is the responsibility of each convenor to do so, but a specific expert convenor/committee may also be needed.

More joint submissions between convenors would strengthen submissions and more clearly demonstrate the integration of the major challenges of our time-gender equity, climate change, human rights, social justice and technological change.

**Representing and Acting:** So far this year I have completed submissions on: New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute Vesting Bill, consultation on whether there should be a review of the Official Information Act, the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission/Te Waihanga Bill and consultation on a review and draft new code for standards for Advertising and Promotion of Alcohol- an action item in progress.

Common themes in submissions have been the need for gender balance on boards and commissions, gender specific provisions not gender neutral legislation, and often the lack of data on use/impact on women of issues being reviewed or legislation being proposed.

**Research, Informing and Educating:** An important role for convenors is to provide context and a framework for members’ responses to legislation and other consultations, in the form of “facts and figures”, current research and thinking and identifying gender equity issues.

**Participation:** Given the wide range covered under the Public Issues portfolio, it is a challenge to establish a single committee. Identifying members to work with will be a priority for me during the Conference. Legal expertise would be especially welcome.

None of my submissions to date have had an Action Item due to short time frames and this is not ideal.

Convenors are exploring ways to be “smarter” in engagement with members, for example gathering member views on broad issues and themes, so that there is a body of opinion, if not policy, for convenors to draw on for specific submissions. One example of this is, despite the uncertainties of Brexit, it is likely NZ will be negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the United Kingdom. Such agreements raise generic issues for women, and I would like to have a “discussion” with members about this and be ready to give an NCW perspective on any specific agreement proposed.

**Upcoming Sector Issues:** The current Government has a full and bold legislative and consultative agenda, including issues that are priorities for NCW. This increases opportunities for NCW to influence but also the risk of overload and diluting impact. Currently there are 62 bills at various stages of the Parliamentary process and with election year in 2020 there is likely to be more legislation and consultation and opportunities, for NCW to have an impact. The election itself and accompanying referenda themselves provide opportunities to comment on the importance of participation, measures to engage young people and underrepresented communities and equal representation of women as candidates.

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## ***Social Issues***

**Convenor: Venus Sood Guy**

**Current Overview:** Social Issues Standing Committee was formed in March - April 2019 with growing membership of eight at this stage. Most of our members are from this region and we meet monthly face to face. Our committee is full of experience and knowledge.

**Representing and Acting:** We have participated only in one submission so far, Better Later Life.

**Participation:** I am very proud of my enthusiastic committee who are willing to make a difference in the society.

I much appreciate the support and training I have received from the national board and Beryl in particular. And I look forward to contribute more and have our voices heard.