

WOMEN EXPERIENCING DISCRIMINATION

This Report facilitated by the National Council of Women of New Zealand, represents the input of 138 groups encompassing a diverse range of women's NGOs. **(Page 99)**

Comparatively, internationally New Zealand women are lucky. Currently the Government is supportive and the Women's Action Plan is applauded.

Violence (Article 5, Page 34)

With the deepest sorrow we report in our population of 4.1 million, 8 women have been the subject of a partner or ex-partner homicide this year– **one murder every five weeks.**

In final preparations for this presentation, the overwhelming concern of New Zealand women is **all** violence including bullying in schools and workplaces, and text bullying.

New Zealand's shocking record of familial violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women.

It has significant physical and mental health impacts on victims, and costs the community through the health, justice and social systems.

Affected Children present with anti social behaviours and other psychological effects; it affects their learning.

Our summarised recommendation is commitment to long term funding to address violence.

Recommendations

- All Government and NGO agencies working with violence and its aftermath need long-term guaranteed funding.
- The Government and NGO agencies should have and apply consistent protocols.
- Governments must firmly commit to adequately resourcing and promptly implementing the Recommendations of current initiatives and studies being undertaken. The next CEDAW Report must cover their impact on society.
- Refuges must be guaranteed sustainable funding without reliance on volunteer fundraising. Volunteer time is best focussed on supporting victims.
- All Government Agencies working with violence should be required to work consultatively with Refuges.
- Mandatory Parenting courses
- Prevention of bail to violent offenders

Question

- What is the Government doing to ensure that women are able to urgently access a legal aid lawyer?
- Can the government demonstrate how the recommendations from the Women's access to Legal Services report have been implemented, and how they have improved women's access to justice

Exploitation of Female Sexuality (Article 5, Page 33)

New Zealand tolerates an unacceptably high level of stereotyping, especially through advertising and the media such as the internet and television. Girls are being sexualised too young. Criticism is scorned as political correctness.

Question

Page numbers refer to the relevant section in *Women experiencing discrimination: Aotearoa New Zealand Non-Governmental Organisations report. 2007.*

- What steps is the Government taking to address gender stereotypes about women and girls, especially as portrayed in the mainstream media?

Pay Equity (Article 11, Page 61)

Since New Zealand's last Report the gender pay gap continues to be a major cause of economic discrimination.

Women's participation in the paid workforce has increased, but is still characterised by low pay, occupational segregation and part-time work. It is also undervalued, especially in the health sector which is dependent on low paid support workers, the majority of whom are women. Their vital contribution is not recognised by Government or society.

Women continue to receive unequal pay for work of equal value; the average income one year after leaving study is 6% higher for males, and after five years, 20%.

Given the glaring policy gap in addressing pay equity in the private sector it is recommended that The Pay and Employment Equity Action Plan should be extended beyond the Public Service by 2008.

Recommendation

- The Pay and Employment Equity Action Plan should be extended outside the Public Service by 2008.

Question

- How does the Government plan to reduce the gender pay gap in all sectors so that women with equivalent skills and experience receive the same pay as men for the same or similar work?
- What has been the impact of changes in employment legislation on addressing the structural issues that affect women in casual, temporary and part-time work?
- What action is being taken to address the chronic shortage of nurses and nurse assistants?

Women as Decision Makers (Article 7, Page 46)

Concern is growing that the forthcoming local and national elections will see a further decrease in women as civic leaders.

Despite improvements in government and quasi-government entities, in the private sector women's representation on boards is abysmal.

Women must be part of all decision making processes.

Recommendation

- That an equivalent organisation to the Crown Company Monitoring Advisory Unit (CCMAU) be formed to monitor public companies.

Question

- What family friendly workplace policies and practices are included in the parliamentary and local body structures to enable women to participate in elected roles?

Work Life Integration (Article 11, Page 61)

Women want a balance between work and life, rather than constantly juggling the roles of paid employee, mother, wife and caregiver. Motherhood and caregiving are not valued and supported by society.

Paid parental leave is for 14 weeks. Women are now advocating 12 months to ensure:

Page numbers refer to the relevant section in *Women experiencing discrimination: Aotearoa New Zealand Non-Governmental Organisations report. 2007.*

- o more women can afford to have children and care for them;
- o society invests in the costs of raising children for its future benefit

A decision has to be made about returning to work 11 weeks after their paid parental leave commences. In many cases the baby may be only seven weeks old.

The maximum paid parental leave payment would approximate \$5,000 per child before tax. In contrast, the family benefit scheme abolished nearly 30 years ago was approximately \$5,000 tax paid, payable to every child. With inflation, that package would be worth around \$40,000 today.

For all mothers who return to the workforce, access to a comfortable breastfeeding environment and affordable childcare is essential at all hours.

Recommendation

- o Extension of PPPL to 12 months.

Questions

- o When will the Government introduce legislation such as the Employment Relations (Flexible Working Hours) Amendment Bill that will provide employees with young and dependent children the statutory right to request part-time and flexible hours, and a framework in which they can negotiate reduced working hours?
- o What is the true value of the approximately \$5,000 worth of paid parental leave and how generous or, supportive is this compared to the previous family benefit.
- o Does paid parental leave ensure a minimum of financial security for children in the first weeks of their life or is it an incentive/pressure for mothers to return to paid work as soon as possible?
- o Given the only 60% uptake, what will the Government be doing to ensure that all 3 and 4 year olds will receive the 20 free hours under the new early childhood education policy without incurring 'optional charges' or increased rates for 'non-free' hours?

Finance (Article 13, Page 88)

Women face increasing financial pressures often with lower incomes and fewer assts and are likely to be caring for dependents. As they generally live longer, women's earnings need to stretch further. In this area Government policy continues to fall short.

There is concern that the recent introduction of a portable workplace superannuation scheme (KiwiSaver) will not assist women as much because they:

- o lack pay equity
- o have broken periods of employment
- o choose part-time or lower-paid positions in order to support children, partners or older family
- o live longer and therefore require more money

After relationship breakdowns the outcome of the economic disparity changes in the Property (Relationships) Act have been very disappointing and the serious deficiencies in the Child Support Act 1991 have worsened.

Despite changes to the student loan scheme women still take longer to repay their loans and therefore pay more in interest. This appears to impact on their childbearing and home ownership.

Recommendations

Page numbers refer to the relevant section in *Women experiencing discrimination: Aotearoa New Zealand Non-Governmental Organisations report. 2007.*

- All economic and social policy put before Cabinet should have a Gender Implications Statement
- All Bills should have Gender Impact Statements (as the Ministry of Justice provides an analysis against the New Zealand Bill of Rights).
- Government needs to enforce outstanding payments under the Child Support Act 1991 for women raising children alone.

Question

- What was the advice on any gender implication for the Kiwisaver legislation and what changes were made as a result of that advice?
- What steps is the government taking to collect the over \$1 billion outstanding child support payments?
- With respect to Child Support what has been the Government's response to women seeking investigation of the financial circumstances of their former partner?
- Where is the Government's promised review of the changes to the Property (Relationships) Act 1976?

Conclusion

There needs to be adequate recognition for the important work done by women; it is a matter of human justice.