



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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25 October 2002

S02.44

**Submission to the National Health Committee
on the Discussion Document: Screening Appraisal Criteria**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 34 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated.

General Comments

Thank you for giving NCWNZ the opportunity to comment on this document. It is disappointing, however, that we have not been able to consult with the wider membership of NCWNZ on this document. With the unacceptably short time frame given for a response, we have not even been able to receive comment from the corresponding members of our Health Standing Committee. Our membership and our corresponding members are located throughout the country and a reasonable amount of time is necessary and should be allowed for, if considered and representative comments are to be made.

As it happens NCWNZ had maintained a policy on breast and cervical screening since these programmes were established we have supported both the programmes and the reviews that have been done of them.

Specific Comments

Page 19 - The Condition

This is agreed, This must be what is a pre-condition for screening.

Page 20 - The Test

Bullet point 2 - Many women feel that the breast screening from 50 to 64 is not sufficiently wide, although the detection of breast cancer is best done early. While the best age group to detect early breast cancers is the 50 - 64 yrs group, a wider age range could be more effective. It is generally felt that the cut off point for screening is more to do with cost than effectiveness when research shows that the group 50 - 70 is the most appropriate group.

Bullet point 4 - There must be agreed policy for further diagnostic investigation but NCW suggests that there must also be enough qualified staff to carry out these tests.

Page 20 - The Treatment

Generally this is accepted but it is a given that there must be sufficient staff to provide treatment in a timely manner.

Page 20 - The Screening Programme

It is agreed that all screening programmes must be constantly reviewed to include adjustments based on the most recent available evidence.





Bullet point 4 - Opportunity cost is a frequent topic of discussion which suggests that screening programmes take too much time, money, and staff resources to the detriment of other procedures. Education must continue for health professionals on this matter.

It is essential to include all criteria in this section.

Page 22 - Recommended NZ screening appraisal criteria

NCWNZ accepts that the appraisal criteria are based on those used in the United Kingdom. But we recommend that they will need to be recast in a New Zealand context in all aspects to be appropriately effective.

Page 23 NHC recommended NZ Screening appraisal criteria

Page 23 The Condition

Agreed.

Page 23 - The Test, and Page 24 - The Treatment

NCWNZ would expect that staff be fully trained in those aspects of the programme in which they are involved, and ideally be trained in the overall scope and purpose of the programmes. Training programmes need sufficient staff to carry out effective training and those staff ought also to be properly and effectively trained.

Page 25 - Public pressure for increased eligibility criteria would be supported and NCWNZ agrees overall with these criteria. In order that a true picture is gained there must be some provision for access to both public and private statistics of those who access these services.

General Comments

NCWNZ agrees that all screening programmes must be evaluated on a regular basis and criteria upon which they operate be updated. Improvements based on new evidence available must be included and a result of these evaluations.

Page 7 - 2.3.2 - Opportunity Screening

NCW agrees that opportunities must be taken as they arise especially in rural areas and the areas where the lower socio-economic groups are located. Maori women who are not able to attend for various reasons require appropriate consideration as well.

Page 7 - Current Screening Activities in New Zealand

This table is clear and helpful.

Page 13. - (Last paragraph)

We support and encourage agreed appraisal criteria and urge that they be used to inform decisions for existing and new programmes.

Page 14 - 3 Screening assessment and history of screening

This section is clear and gives a good overview of screening programmes in New Zealand.

Page 17 - 4 Historical Use and basic principles

This section and the tables are helpful and explain how screening programmes began and the need for them.

Page 29 - Consideration of Maori Views



This section is helpful and covers the needs of Maori well. Often documents suggest that more Maori staff be involved in such programmes, in practise achieving this would be extremely difficult at the professional level. Nevertheless it is an ideal to which attention should be paid.

Conclusion

NCWNZ continues to maintain policy on screening issues and members fully support quality screening programmes and population health initiatives which prevent untimely deaths. Members have shown concern about the problems in the Cervical Screening Programme, the Gisborne Inquiry Recommendations must be implemented and all screening programmes require screening appraisal criteria.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important document and look forward to the final version.

Beryl Anderson
National President