



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

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Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management on the National
Civil Defence Emergency Management Strategy**

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 42 nationally organised societies. It has 33 branches throughout the country attended by representatives of those societies. The Council's function is to serve women, the family and the community at local, national and international levels through research, study, discussion and action.

NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to comment on this strategy as Civil Defence has been a subject of keen interest over the last thirty-five years. In 1968 the NCWNZ Conference "urged that all members of NCW give a lead to the community by becoming members of Civil Defence themselves".

It is realised that Civil Defence has moved on from being a largely volunteer based organisation. Today there is the need for very efficient management structures in both Central and Local Government to work to reduce the occurrence of man-made disasters, and to be prepared to manage natural disasters.

GOAL 1:

One major difficulty in increasing community awareness and understanding is one of language. Any literature on 'What to do in an emergency' or 'Awareness of the hazards' would need to be translated so all the community would know what is expected of them.

From time to time exercises are carried out in the community in preparation for a disaster occurring, but mostly the exercises do not impinge on the bulk of the population. NCWNZ suggests that when such an exercise takes place maybe the power or phones could be switched off to cause everyone to think about the consequences of a disaster.

Most households would receive a community newspaper and this could be used to inform the public of Civil Defence personnel in their area and what they need to be aware of as a member of the public. This should include a reminder of the instruction in the back of the phone book and also where they would find an assembly point if that was required.

Information from one City Council revealed the Civil Defence programme that is going into the schools. This would be very helpful for new immigrants as the children are often the only English speakers in the family.

GOAL 2:

NCWNZ would endorse the need for a comprehensive understanding by all citizens of New Zealand's hazardscape. There are laws pertaining to commercial use and management of hazardous materials, but safe use by private individuals needs to be promoted regularly.





There are a number of different Acts of Parliament that need to be considered. NCWNZ would like to see Civil Defence Emergency Planning and planning under the other Acts (such as Resource Management Act 1991) integrated at local government level so that where possible natural hazards are anticipated and avoided. NCWNZ seeks assurance that the environment will not be damaged by the development of potential hazards of human origin, hazards that by careful and appropriate planning could be avoided.

Determining the acceptable levels of risk will always be subjective. The cost of a one-in 100 years flood may be more costly than say a one in 50 years flood, but both could also occur in the same decade.

GOAL 3:

Members feel we need to study how other countries manage disasters and learn from both the good outcomes and the bad so that the best possible structures can be in place in case of an emergency.

NCWNZ agrees that continuing and co-ordinated professional development is needed in CDEM, and that the public should be constantly brought up to date as to what is happening in their area.

NCWNZ felt that the words 'enhance the ability' in the objectives should be replaced with 'improve the ability', as this gives a definite action.

GOAL 4:

NCWNZ membership was very concerned about funding necessary to allow Government and Local Bodies to manage, prepare and carry out this strategy, especially for the recovery of the physical, social and economic impacts of disasters. Emergency Management is seen as potentially big business for Local Bodies and Utilities. Costs will be in terms of staff time, training, salaries as well as engineers working out scenarios, research involved in predicting earthquakes, volcanic eruptions. NCWNZ asks whether this is yet another burden being imposed by Central Government upon territorial authorities without the appropriate funding resources. Members also ask what level of risk is acceptable within any such plan.

GENERAL COMMENT:

In the development of this Strategy NCWNZ would ask that recognition of local knowledge be included in any generic national plan. Members recalled accidents where faster use of local knowledge and resources could have minimised tragedies, e.g. the sinking of the Oamaru fishing boat and the plane crash in Foveaux Strait.

Thank you again for the opportunity to take part in this proposal. We look forward to the National Civil Defence Emergency Management Strategy.

Through our networks we will advise our membership to be aware of the CDEM in their area and encourage them to become involved in any way possible in their community.

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National President

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Social Issues Standing Committee Convener