



National Council of Women of New Zealand

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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Submission to the Ministry of Health on “Healthy Action - Healthy Eating”

Introduction

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organization representing 43 nationally organized societies. It has 35 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated. It also represents a number of individual women.

Members of NCWNZ Consumer Affairs and Health standing committees have studied the draft consultation documents and wish to submit the following comments.

NCWNZ has over the years maintained an active interest in the health and lifestyles of New Zealanders, especially women and children. As part of that interest the Consumer Affairs standing committee has been actively involved in the ANZFA discussions and research into developing healthy safe food. They consider the *Healthy Action - Healthy Eating* documents are well researched and that when implemented should improve the health of the nation. We applaud this approach to health issues.

The Conveners of both standing committees circulated copies of the draft consultation document to their members. A number of members attended the consultation meetings held in various centres with some members also providing individual submissions.

Disappointment has been expressed by some of our corresponding members that consultation meetings were not held in smaller cities. As a solution to this complaint NCWNZ branch meetings where possible have discussed the document and comments have been incorporated into this submission.

Comments on specific Questions in Draft Consultation document

1 Goals

While acknowledging all goals are important, members consider:

Goal 2 = Improved Nutrition. The most important goal to be achieved by the Ministry. Members considered cereal, meat, fruit and vegetables to be the stable important foods essential to New Zealanders.

Goal 1 = Increased physical activity. Members considered this the second most important goal to be achieved for healthy living.

2 Guiding Principles

NCWNZ agrees with all proposals and considers a strong consistent message is necessary and can only be achieved through an integrated collaboration and life style approach to the issue.





3 Approach for Action

NCWNZ agrees with all approaches planned and endorse extra emphasis being placed on nutritional/food issues.

4 Priorities for Action

NCWNZ agrees that disadvantaged groups should be a targeted priority group. It was noted that there exist large groups or sections of the NZ population who, due to financial restraints, disabilities or isolation, are unable to access health services. New immigrants are also a group NCWNZ would consider should be targeted for assessment and assistance.

5 Children

Families/Whanau were considered the starting point for the programme, followed by school programmes that emphasise Healthy eating - healthy life style.

A suggested "Healthy Tick School" approach similar to the Heart Foundation tick for approved foods could be considered.

A closer liaison of Ministries e.g. Health, Education, WINZ, Women's Affairs is suggested.

6 Environment

Members raised concerns about using references to body size when discussing Healthy eating – healthy life style. Caution was expressed that over emphasis may result in bulimia, anorexia, dietary imbalances, low birth weights, and yet further reduction in breast-feeding.

7 Communication

(a) NCWNZ considers that communications should be clear, accurate and consumer friendly. It was considered that this is not the case at present as much nutritional information presently available is inaccurate. It was considered that food advertising generally placed emphasis on the unhealthy aspects of eating.

(b) NCWNZ considers greater effort should be made to educate consumers, eg via educational institutes, and health professionals.

8 Priorities

NCWNZ commends the priorities included in the document.

Conclusion

New Zealand has an excellent national Plan for Nutrition. NCWNZ considers it is essential for the nation that more emphasis is placed on educating the general population of the importance of healthy eating choices combined with good life style that includes regular exercise.

Good role models of healthy life styles could be considered as part of the education programme used by health educators. Some members considered that top professional sports people did not necessarily present attainable goals for the "average" consumer.

NCWNZ appreciates the opportunity to comment on this document which is of great importance for present and future New Zealanders. It presents a positive cross cultural message and attainable goals that may be achieved in a supportive environment.

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National President

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Convener, Consumer Affairs Standing Committee