



**National Council of
Women of New Zealand**

Te Kaunihera
Wahine O Aotearoa

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**Submission to the Ministry of Social Policy on the
Volunteers Policy Project**

INTRODUCTION

The National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ) is an umbrella organisation representing 43 nationally organised societies. It has 35 branches spread throughout the country to which women from some 150 societies are affiliated.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The majority of NCWNZ members are volunteers, not only to NCWNZ but also to many other organisations, so NCWNZ welcomes the opportunity to comment on this very important issue. While pleased to comment, NCWNZ wishes to record its concerns at the time frame permitted for their comments. It is noted that the initial document is dated September, yet NCWNZ received the document on 12th November from a secondary source thus allowing one week to prepare comments and no time to consult our wider membership.

The Nucleus committee of the Consumer Affairs Standing Committee considered the questions. NCWNZ standing committees consist of a nucleus committee with corresponding members who represent organisations nationally. We would have preferred to have consulted all members for their views.

NCWNZ has policy on different aspects of voluntary service dating from 1933. In 1978 (2.13.2) we requested 'that the Government be asked to examine the best means of assisting all aspects of voluntary organisations involved in social, community and recreational services'. In 1993 (6.7.1) we urged 'the Government to formally recognise the value of unpaid work as an essential ingredient for policy development'. Other policy raises the need for the reimbursement of childcare (1988 2.12.3) and tax deductions for expenses incurred by people in voluntary work (1984 4.7.10)

BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

Volunteer expectations

Volunteering tasks should be "transparent" with clear guidelines of the commitment expected of the volunteer before commencement.

Organisations now have to meet much higher legislative requirements particularly in terms of health and safety when volunteers are working for them.

Fund Raising

Time spent in fund raising, rather than providing the skills the volunteer initially agreed to donate, e.g. sports coaching was sited as an example, where skilled sports persons often become





disillusioned with organisations they want to assist because they find they spend more time “fund raising” than coaching sport.

Time spent completing very lengthy funding grant application forms is also identified as a barrier.

Seminars and Documents

Many seminars are now too expensive for voluntary organisations to attend. Some seminars that in the past were free now have admission fees. This means voluntary organisations are being excluded, and the participants consist of professionals paid by their employers to attend.

Documents are now often too expensive for organisations to obtain, e.g.. Safe Playground Standards documents, resulting in interested consumer organisations such as NCWNZ being excluded from commenting.

The timing of seminars and meetings often precludes participation by volunteers because the volunteer is in paid employment that has precedence over their voluntary activities.

For those volunteers not in paid work – and even for some who are – the costs of attending the meeting such as parking affects their ability to participate. Voluntary organisations are generally not able to assist with such fees.

The response times provided to comment on documents often precludes a voluntary organisation undertaking a consultation process within their organisation.

Who is volunteering

The Ministry is no doubt aware that there have been concerns raised in many sectors about the age of volunteers. NCWNZ has been told of one research paper for a masters that says many voluntary organisations will not exist in 15 years time unless they can begin to recruit members under the age of 60.

Certainly within NCWNZ we are conscious that the volunteers are of the older age group. Different mechanisms are needed to involve a diversity of people in volunteering. This issue is of importance and requires consideration if a balanced representation is to be achieved.

Policy changes or action by government to enable people to volunteer.

- Better funding to voluntary organisation.
- More training seminars for volunteers, to develop skills to assist them to become self-supporting. It was noted that many Local Authorities have developed training courses for volunteers; this initiative is commended.
- Review the charges for seminars and meetings to encourage participation from the voluntary sector.
- Government documents for discussion, and particularly where submissions are sought, should be available freely in hard copy as well as electronic format.
- Consider the time that meetings and seminars are held.
- Provide adequate notice of meetings.
- Provide a reasonable timeframe for the submission process. It was considered that most volunteers were busy people with other commitments, and that often a six-week timeframe is not adequate.



CONCLUSION

It was considered that due to population changes in New Zealand, we are in danger of developing a different volunteer ethic. There are segments of the population with no background of volunteer ethic or commitment to New Zealand.

Many volunteers are “willing and able” but are unable to accept the financial burden that volunteering entails.

The National Council of Women New Zealand thanks you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Barbara Glenie
National President

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Convener
Consumer Affairs Standing Committee.