



30 March 2021

S21.03 oral

Oral submission to the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the Budget Policy Statement, 9 February 2021

Presenters: Beryl Anderson and Bernice Williams at 11.20 am on 31 March 2021

Finance and Expenditure Committee Members Present: Chairperson, Duncan Webb (Lab); Deputy – Chairperson, Barbara Edmonds (Lab); Andrew Bayly (Nat), Ingrid Leary (Lab); Anna Lorck (Lab), Greg O'Connor (Lab), Ibrahim Omer (Lab), Damien Smith (ACT), Chloe Swarbrick (Gre), Simon Watts (Nat), Nicola Willis (Nat), Michael Woodhouse (Nat)

Members Not Present: Helen White (Lab)

Introduction

Kia Ora, Good morning, my name is Beryl Anderson and my colleague is Bernice Williams. We are both members of the Parliamentary Watch Committee of the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ).

The pandemic is exacerbating and highlighting existing gender inequalities across the board and the impacts on women are the culmination of decades of a whole range of deficits. NCWNZ's concerns include:

- The disproportionate impact of Covid on women.
- The need for continuing and expanding initiatives around work/skills and related education and employment initiatives.
- Continued support for a living wage., given that women are the majority in lower paid occupations.

The overriding concern behind our submission is the lack of gender analysis of the proposals.

Human capital

Through COVID-19 women have been disproportionately affected in job loss statistics. There do not appear to be any strategies to prioritise employment opportunities for women who have been adversely affected.

Investment is needed in social infrastructure projects as an economic stimulus would provide employment in female-dominated areas. "Shovel ready" projects which can be fast tracked to

provide employment and needed physical infrastructure may be emphasising male dominated work opportunities at the expense of social infrastructure projects which would more likely provide employment for women. Such projects could invest in improving mental health, extending home and community support, education and training opportunities and restoring our environment.

Caring must be seen as central to the paid economy. Any basic income or new systems of income support must include recognition of the true values of caring and all who do it, as employment or informally. They should receive an income that reflects this.

Natural capital

What is essential for a healthy planet is also essential for a healthy society. Rethinking social, ecological and economic change together gives a unique opportunity to rebuild a society that addresses long-standing issues of gender, social and economic inequalities, as well as supporting ecological systems and reducing environmental degradation.

There is a close relationship between climate change impact and gender inequality. Effective climate action should be strengthened by ensuring a gender lens on national planning, policies and strategies for climate change and disaster risk reduction.

There should be a focus on human rights, safe housing and secure incomes, Māori knowledge (Mātauranga Māori), renewable energy, regenerative agriculture, low carbon transport and a circular economy. Add to this a focus on gender equality and we have the potential to generate a sustainable future for current and future generations.

Social capital

Health, safety, and wellbeing are areas where the different and multiple impacts of ethnicity, disability, gender identity, age and socio-economic status have resulted in stark and unacceptable disparities between New Zealand women in access to treatment and outcomes of health care.

The pandemic has highlighted chronic and systemic health inequalities. One third of NZ women but 47% of Māori women have unmet health needs. Only real partnerships based on Te Tiriti and human rights will effectively address health and other inequalities.

Social goals, including increasing social connections, should be incorporated into the design of infrastructure, town centres, neighbourhoods, and housing developments. Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing is a budget priority area. Addressing child poverty must be done by focusing on the family's situation.

Financial and physical capital

There needs to be greater investment in social housing. The affordability, accessibility and quality of housing involves significant issues for women, especially those reaching retirement.

Addressing pay inequity, increasing financial stability, and recognising the true values of caring and carers are necessary response to improving the socio-economic status of New Zealanders.

Questions

Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki on behalf of Ingrid Leary.

Q. One of the issues that perpetuates inequality is the gender neutralisation of issues that impact more on women than on men. We know that women feature predominantly in the low-paid work sector – ironically all the ‘essential services’, women feature overwhelmingly in single-parent households where children are known, who are vulnerable, and overwhelmingly women in the criminal justice system are survivors of violent crime. How do we start having an honest conversation about the structural inequalities that negatively impact women, and especially on those women who are further marginalised by ethnicity and disability? How do we get this reflected in our policies and our budget? What is happening internationally? What examples are there of best practice from other countries that we could draw on?

A. That is a huge question, but to begin with New Zealand needs to ensure full gender analysis is carried out on all policy proposals before they are released for debate. The Ministry for Women has guidelines available for this purpose, but it is not used sufficiently often enough to give us confidence that gender inequalities are considered in every piece of legislation that is issued.

In terms of international examples of best practice, the Scandinavian countries and Iceland provide good models.

Anahila Kanongata'a-Suisuiki on behalf of Ingrid Leary.

Q. As an organisation how does NCW ensure its voice is a reflection of all women, including Māori and Pasifika women, and those from the minority, disability sector?

A. This is an area of concern for us but we try to collaborate with a number of organisations that represent these people such as Māori Women’s Welfare League, Pasifika groups, Disabled Persons Assembly.

Barbara Edmonds.

Q. I understand that gender analysis on Cabinet papers is already occurring and that agencies are obliged to include this in their regulatory impact assessment. Are you saying that we need to beef up this process?

A. My understanding is that Cabinet instruction applies only to certain legislation and not to all legislation e.g. economic-related legislation. Often there is a one-line reference in a regulatory impact statement but there is no evidence of gender analysis happening across the board.

Conclusion

Thank you from Duncan Webb to NCWNZ for its comprehensive written submission and thoughtful oral submission.