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S21.10 oral

Oral submission to the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee on the Inquiry into Congestion Pricing in Auckland

Presenters:

Barbara Myers, Auckland Branch, and Bernice Williams, PWC

Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee

Greg O'Connor, Labour (Chair), Julie-Anne Genter, Greens (Deputy Chair), Paul Eagle (Labour), Dr James McDowall (ACT), Helen White (Labour)

Shanan Halbert (Labour), Christopher Luxon (National), Mark Mitchell (National), Teresa Ngobi (Labour) may have been present but could not be seen via Zoom.

Introduction

Tēnā koutou

I am Barbara Myers, and I am a member of the Auckland Branch and Executive of National Council of Women (NCWNZ). I have consulted with members of the Auckland Branch NCWNZ and the Parliamentary Watch Committee to research and write this oral submission on the Inquiry to Congestion Pricing in Auckland. With me, on Zoom, is Bernice Williams of the Parliamentary Watch Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our written submission on this very important issue.

The National Council of Women represents over 200 organisations and individual members, affiliated at either a national or branch. Collectively, we represent over 450,000 members.

General comment

Our submission was based on long-standing NCWNZ policy reflecting our strong commitment to the wellbeing of women, children and families, the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

The focus of this submission is to provide feedback on the Inquiry into Congestion pricing in Auckland, and in particular, to consider the impact on women, especially wāhine Māori and women experiencing additional discrimination and disadvantage because of their ethnicity, disability, non-binary, sexuality or socio-economic status.

We (NCWNZ Auckland Branch) believe the Report on the Inquiry into Congestion Pricing (CQ) as it stands focusses primarily on economic and environmental outcomes. We further believe that social outcomes and related modelling are less evident in the report(s), which lack any in-depth understanding of the reality of people's lives including the critical role transport and personal mobility play in those lives.

The following submission focusses on the CQ Findings report (July 2020), identifies a range of equity and mitigation issues and suggests six broad recommendations to address these concerns.

Issues

Mana Whenua. The current level of analysis and reporting on the impact on Mana Whenua groups is superficial, and at times contradictory. The CQ Findings and Technical reports speak to a commitment to partnership with Mana Whenua, but the actual reports do not explicitly reflect this to the extent required of a thorough analysis.) In addition, actions and recommendations for the way forward as presented in the CQ Technical report are still broad and somewhat tenuous.

Women and Children. The CG Findings and Technical Reports do not reflect any in-depth understanding and modelling of the lives of real people, especially women's lives and their families. There is no examination or exploration of or what these may look like and how they play out in the time frame of the proposed implementation.

Older People (Older Women). Older people, and more specifically older women, are absent from the CQ reports. Implementation of congestion pricing has implications for this older age group especially in light of government policy outlined in A Better Later Life.

Disabled People. While disabled people are acknowledged in the CQ Findings and Technical report, current research carried out for the CQ project does not appear to provide an in-depth understanding of the daily lives of disabled people and how they might negotiate their way through the CQ. In addition, we argue that current public transport options as an alternative to road usage are problematical and indeed create further accessibility barriers for disabled people. While discussion around mitigations for the disabled population are present in the CQ Findings and Technical reports, they do not yet reflect an in-depth understanding of the diversity of the disabled population and their varying needs. More effective engagement with disabled people and their representative agencies is required.

Public Transport. Lessons drawn from international experiences of introducing traffic congestion pricing indicate that a successful congestion scheme requires public transport to be incentivised so that it is frequent, affordable, safe, comfortable, handy and reasonably fast. (Wilson, 2021). A

congestion pricing scheme requires a robust public transport system for all population groups in the community. It is the view of NCWNZ Auckland that population groups identified in this submission do not currently perceive public transport as a safe, affordable and accessible option to car usage. Future projections on public transport spending (ATAP) do not augur well for the development of a comprehensive and inclusive public transport system that will incentivise the population groups identified in this submission to choose public transport over private car usage.

Mitigations. Considerable thought on mitigations has gone into the CQ Technical report. However, price point and community services criteria alone do not meet the diverse needs of these population groups. Affordability, safety and accessibility are key areas for consideration. It is suggested that a wider range of factors is required for consideration in terms of mitigations.

Recommendations

- **Mana Whenua.** Actions and recommendations for the way forward need to be more explicit rather than aspirational. They must ensure that Mana Whenua are actively engaged and present at all stages, and not during the implementation phase only.
- **Women and Children.** Extensive social modelling, time-use and other relevant research tools are required to capture real information, to better understand the complexity of the daily lives of women and children, and how congestion pricing will impact this group.
- **Older People (Older Women).** Extensive social modelling, time-use and other relevant in-depth research tools are required to capture real information to better understand the heterogeneous pathways of older people, particularly older women, and how congestion pricing will impact on the five key areas that are integral to A Better Later Life.
- **Disabled People.** More effective engagement with disabled people and their representative agencies is required. Additional in-depth research is required across all disability groups to understand and address the unique and multiple challenges that disabled people face. Current proposals under the CQ plan are inconsistent with, and challenge, the eight key areas of the NZ Strategy for Disabled people.

As with other groups identified in this report, research must also focus on public transport accessibility and affordability along with security and safety issues in our streets and locales especially around public transport hubs.

- **Public Transport.** While the CQ project aims to disincentivise driving, there needs to be extensive research and commitment to incentivising public transport usage specifically for population groups identified in this report. A number of challenges around public transport have been identified across this submission and future research must be cognisant of, and further investigate, these concerns.

- **Mitigations.** Affordability, safety and accessibility are key areas for consideration in the development of mitigations policies. While the CQ Findings and Technical reports recognise mitigation as an essential part of the CQ, a broader range of factors around mitigations are required for consideration.

More in-depth research of specific population groups is recommended in this concluding section of the submission. In-depth research will make visible the diverse needs of these groups which can then be included in formulating an appropriate mitigations plan. NCWNZ Auckland Branch envisages that a mitigations policy will address social and economic needs.

We further recommend that any mitigation policy integrate both road user and public transport user options. A congestion pricing scheme goes hand in hand in with an inclusive, effective, efficient and public transport scheme.

Conclusion

This submission identifies numerous barriers and challenges for specific population groups. While economic considerations are very important, so too are other issues. It is the view of NCWNZ Auckland Branch that economic and environmental measures are emphasised at the expense of social measures, resulting in a number of population groups within the greater Auckland regions being excluded to varying degrees from the CQ project plans. NCWNZ (Auckland Branch) suggest a range of recommendations in this oral submission to address the numerous social issues identified.

Questions

Q: Helen White (Labour). I am interested in the equity issues you raise, but I am also conscious of the air quality issues in Auckland central. This affects the children and older people, it is quite dangerous, and I see it (Congestion Pricing) making the city more liveable for these groups. If money from this was going towards making public transport cheaper and more accessible for these groups, would that help? What do you think of that?

A: Financially, yes, that may well address it, but looking at the five options available, the two options chosen have less equity analysis compared to the other options. My first point is that it is difficult to comment on that when research has not been done with those groups. My second point is that the second option chosen is the 'across the motorway' option that goes way beyond the central city area, and many in lower socio-economic groups from these areas are those forced to travel to the city centre for their work. They won't have options.

In principle, for what is aimed for environmentally, we acknowledge, but we also acknowledge that public transport in Auckland has to do a lot better in those five areas for

people to be convinced. We certainly look forward to better air quality and other health issues/benefits.

Conclusion: Thank you from Greg O'Connor. The submission articulates well and draws together a number of common themes that have been presented by a number of other submitters during this submission process.