

MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS

**Briefing to the Incoming
Minister of Women's Affairs**
He whakamōhiotanga ki te Minita Hōu

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Attachments

1. *Indicators for Change: Tracking the progress of New Zealand Women, October 2008*
2. *Annual Report 2008*
3. *Statement of Intent 2008-2011*
4. *Action Plan for New Zealand Women, March 2004*

1. Introduction

Realising women's potential is one of the keys to New Zealand's future success. Working towards this goal will improve our competitive advantage as a nation and will contribute to social cohesion. It is also the right thing to do: fairness is a core New Zealand value, and barriers that prevent groups of people from achieving their full potential are inherently unfair.

This briefing provides you with an overview of what we consider to be the crucial issues for women in New Zealand. It outlines the current work priorities of the Ministry and identifies some of the future challenges. We look forward to discussing these with you and hearing about how you would like to see your priorities addressed. Finally we briefly describe the Ministry, its current strategy, and introduce you to the senior staff.

The briefing aims to meet your immediate needs for information. It is the beginning of a process of ongoing discussion to make sure we are providing you with the support you need in your new role. We will provide further, more detailed oral and written briefings over the coming weeks. The timing and sequence of these will be discussed with you at an early opportunity.

2. The Women's Affairs portfolio

As Minister you have broad responsibility for issues that impact on New Zealand women as a whole, and groups of women. You are therefore in a position to provide leadership on behalf of women.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has a budget of \$4.737 million¹ for the 2008/09 financial year, to deliver three broad outputs:

- policy advice on improving outcomes for women in New Zealand
- providing suitable women nominees for appointment to state sector boards and committees
- managing New Zealand's international obligations in relation to the status of women.

The vote has no provision for delivery of services to the public or funding of non-government organisations (NGOs). Your main leverage point is therefore in bringing a gender perspective to the Cabinet table.

3. The status of women in 2008

Women have made huge progress in the past 50 years as successive governments have removed the legal barriers to equality, and society's attitudes and expectations have changed. On some counts, women have indeed 'made it' in New Zealand.

¹ Includes \$400,000 from the Cross Departmental Research Pool for the second and final year of research on adult victims of sexual violence

In 2008, women are doing well in some important areas:

- health – women’s life expectancy continues to increase (from 2005 to 2007, women’s life expectancy at birth was 82 years)
- education – the number of young women graduating at tertiary level has increased significantly in the last decade
- labour force participation – women’s participation in the labour force was at a record level of over 62 percent in the Household Labour Force Survey, September 2008 quarter.

Progress in other areas, however, is proving more difficult and there are factors that may be holding back individual women, and New Zealand as a whole. While interest groups will point to specific issues, such as childcare and access to health services, we see the main challenges for women as including:

- leadership – women’s skills and experience remain under-utilised in leadership and management roles, especially in the private sector
- pay – while women’s incomes are increasing, the gender pay gap has remained ‘stuck’ at around 12 percent since 2001
- violence – women are more likely than men to be victims of family violence and sexual violence.

Simple comparisons between men and women do not paint the full picture. Not only do many women continue to have poorer outcomes in many areas than men, some groups of women continue to have poorer outcomes relative to each other. For example: Māori women have poorer outcomes in many key areas, even after adjusting for socio-economic status; and migrant and refugee women often face cultural and language barriers in addition to those faced by other New Zealand women.

We have attached a two-page summary of key statistics to give you a snapshot of the status of women today (Appendix 1).

4. Current work programme and priorities

Some of the remaining obstacles to women achieving their full potential are complex and require co-ordinated responses across a number of fronts. While you will be taking a lead in some areas, you will also be addressing important issues for women by contributing to work led by other Ministers.

The Ministry has a role to play in helping you tackle these issues, and women to achieve their potential, through:

- being the government’s primary provider of gender-based advice
- helping you take a lead role in setting the agenda for women
- working as a catalyst across a range of government objectives, advising on ways to advance the well-being of women

- operating purposefully as a population agency by honing in on the few main priorities at any given time (improving outcomes for all women and groups of women).

The Ministry's current policy priorities

In response to the issues for women outlined above, the Ministry's work programme is currently focused on the following:

- **Improving economic opportunities, choice, and outcomes for women**, including advice on:
 - the impacts of occupational segregation (i.e. the tendency for men and women to work in different occupations)
 - ways to assist women and men to better balance and share their work and caring responsibilities
 - how to ensure women's skills are fairly valued and rewarded
 - how to improve access to affordable, high-quality childcare, particularly for low-income families
 - how to ensure that all women are able to live longer, work longer, and retire better.
- **Improving women's quality of life and well-being**, in particular for groups of women facing disadvantage, for example:
 - supporting victims and holding offenders to account: reducing the incidence and impact of violence against women, including a major piece of research on effective interventions for adult victims of sexual violence
 - taking a lead role on the taskforces for action on violence within families and sexual violence (the Chief Executive is deputy chair of both taskforces)
 - understanding the policy implications of the changing demographics of women (e.g. fertility, ageing, diversity).

Nominations Service: promoting women in leadership

Having a diverse range of views at board level is good for business. Research on Fortune 500 companies in the United States shows that there is a strong correlation between companies with good representation of women at board level and stronger financial performance. Other research suggests that this is because organisations with a diverse range of relevant skills and perspectives at board and senior management level make better decisions.

New Zealand's public and private sector boards are still not making full use of women with appropriate skills:

- since 2004, women have held around 41 percent of positions on state sector boards and committees, with representation skewed towards those boards in traditionally female areas such as health
- women occupy only 8.7 percent of board positions in the NZSX Top 100 listed companies.

Successive governments have sought to ensure that women are fully participating on, and contributing their skills to, state sector boards and committees. The Ministry assists this aim by operating a Nominations Service that:

- identifies suitably qualified women for appointment to state sector boards and committees (we currently have more than 2,700 highly qualified women registered on the Service's database, and new women are continuously recruited to meet forecasted requirements across government)
- works closely with officials across government to find candidates who meet the needs specified by their Ministers
- publishes an annual Gender Stocktake of State Sector Boards and Committees to measure women's participation, and to identify sectors where more effort to find suitably qualified women candidates is needed (stocktake results are widely circulated to Ministers, government departments and the public)
- has begun work to influence the private sector to boost the participation of women in leadership and governance in this area.

You have one governance appointment responsibility in this portfolio. In conjunction with the Minister of Labour, you appoint the public sector members of the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust.

New Zealand in international forums

New Zealand is a credible voice on women's rights issues at international forums. The government's commitment to enabling NGOs to participate fully (e.g. by involving NGO representatives in some official delegations) also sets us apart and adds to the credibility of our views.

The Ministry is responsible for managing New Zealand's international obligations on the status of women. We support your attendance at international meetings, including:

- the United Nations Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

- the (Australian) Commonwealth, State, Territory and New Zealand Ministers' Conference on the Status of Women (MINCO)
- the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (WAMM), held every four years
- the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which meets in New York each February.

The Ministry convenes an international caucus of NGOs and individuals to share information and inform our international work. The caucus meets twice a year, and is chaired by the Ministry's Chief Executive.

Working with stakeholders

Maintaining strong relationships with organisations that have an interest in the progress of women is an important aspect of this portfolio. You bring some strong networks of your own, which we will value and support. We can also support you in this part of your leadership role through our existing relationships with a wide range of groups and organisations.

Recent Ministers of Women's Affairs have maintained a semi-formal relationship with three national women's groups (the Māori Women's Welfare League, the National Council of Women of New Zealand, and PACIFICA). These organisations serve important groups of New Zealand women, but the increasing diversity of our population, and the very different world view of younger women in particular, suggests a need to reach beyond traditional bodies.

5. Future challenges and opportunities

As mentioned above, some of the remaining obstacles to unlocking women's full potential can appear intractable. As such, they are only partially amenable to traditional responses and there is a case for some new and different approaches and some fresh thinking. Some of our follow-up briefings will explore this in more detail. A high-level summary of future challenges and opportunities is outlined below.

Changing attitudes

While women continue to make gains (and even lead) in many areas, some barriers are proving hard to shift. Some of these are issues that require significant changes in attitudes and behaviour across society. These include the attitudes that have allowed us to tolerate family violence and sexual violence, and the attitudes that inhibit young women's and young men's career choices by reinforcing the idea of 'men's work' or 'women's work'.

Legislation is not the answer

These are issues, such as the gender pay gap, that will not necessarily respond to further legislation or other forms of direct government action (such

as requiring gender implications statements on some Cabinet Committee papers). Removing these last barriers that prevent women – and men – from achieving their full potential will require a much more co-operative and lateral thinking approach.

For the Ministry it will mean working more closely with other government agencies, with NGOs, with communities and with individuals. It will also mean engaging more with men because men will also benefit from a society that makes the best use of everyone's talents.

There is scope for you to exercise leadership on these issues.

Changing society = different approaches

How we think about issues for women also has to reflect changing social attitudes and changes in the make-up of the New Zealand population. The rapid increase in the over-65 population in the next two decades, for instance, will mean a greater focus on older people and on issues associated with ageing (e.g. caring responsibilities, disability, elder abuse). This elderly population will also be supported by a proportionally smaller working-age population. This will make more urgent the need to ensure that all New Zealanders are able to maximise their contribution, socially and economically.

Similarly, the frameworks shaping policy for women are evolving in step with the changing values of New Zealand women. The feminist approach of the past has given way to a more inclusive set of values recognising the important role that family/whānau and men play in improving outcomes for women. It is also important for us to recognise that young women today are more likely to shape their thinking in terms of individual rights and entitlements than in terms of social movements.

So we have to think differently

We need to consider these changes in society and approach issues in new ways. For instance, when thinking about improving women's economic opportunities we may need to consider:

- how to reduce the level and gendered impact of occupational segregation (for example, by thinking about how to influence the career and training choices made by young people)
- how to create an environment that allows women and men to better balance their work and caring responsibilities
- how to ensure that women's work is valued fairly, so that they can choose what works best for them and their families.

The same goes for issues that contribute to social well-being. We need to find new approaches for:

- how to change attitudes towards family violence and sexual violence as a step towards reducing and ultimately eliminating its toll on New Zealand

families and communities (increasing prosecution and conviction rates, and providing support for victims)

- how to ensure that women who head sole parent families can get skills, education and jobs, as well as the support that they need to enable them to thrive
- how to improve the accessibility of quality childcare services (including early childhood education and out of school services), particularly for those families whose choices to work may be restricted by the availability of appropriate services.

Opportunities

The Action Plan for New Zealand Women is about to expire

Since 2004 the Ministry's work programme has been guided by the five-year *Action Plan for New Zealand Women* (the *Action Plan*). The plan focuses on three areas for action:

- economic independence
- work-life balance
- well-being.

The *Action Plan* expires in 2009. There is considerable scope for you to establish a strong and clear platform to improve outcomes for women.

A new tool for monitoring progress

In October 2008 the Ministry released *Indicators for Change: Tracking the progress of New Zealand Women*. The report, like the Ministry of Social Development's *Social Report*, uses indicators to show how women are tracking over a range of important social and economic outcome areas. The Ministry intends to regularly update the report and to use it to help guide the Ministry's priorities.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is in a strong position to support your leadership

With fewer than 40 staff, the Ministry is the smallest government department. Small size can be an advantage:

- it enables us to be agile, quickly taking up opportunities as they arise
- it forces us to be strategic in everything we do – because we have no unallocated resources
- and it drives us to work across government, to influence other, larger government agencies, and to connect with community organisations – because we cannot achieve progress for women on our own.

But it also creates demands:

- prioritising our policy work rigorously to ministerial priorities and areas that will have the maximum impact on outcomes for women (and to ensure we do not duplicate work being carried out by other agencies)
- actively collaborating and engaging with public sector agencies, NGOs and community groups
- maintaining consistently high-quality standards for all our work, because producing quality, relevant work is the only way we can influence other departments that lead policy development in areas that impact women.

The Ministry will fully support you to provide leadership in the portfolio, by being responsive to your priorities and by delivering consistently high-quality work. Recent reviews and research show that we are in a strong position to do this:

- Independent reviews of the quality of the Ministry’s policy advice over the last two years have rated it amongst the top of the agencies reviewed.² This reputation helps us to make effective contributions to policy projects led by other agencies.
- This year the Ministry won the managerial leadership award in the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand (IPANZ) Public Sector Excellence Awards, and a Gallup survey showed a high level of positive engagement by staff. This reputation helps us to recruit and retain good staff and work efficiently and effectively.

We look forward to briefing you more fully on the issues and engaging with you to set the agenda for New Zealand women.

6. Introducing the senior management team at the Ministry of Women’s Affairs



² New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (2007, 2008) *Review of the quality of Ministry of Women’s Affairs policy advice*

Appendix 1

A Profile of New Zealand Women in 2008

This fact sheet lists key statistics relating to the Ministry of Women's Affairs' *Briefing to the Incoming Minister* 2008.

Population structure

- There will be significant changes in the ethnic composition of the New Zealand population over the next two decades. While the total population is projected to increase by 18 percent between 2006 and 2026:
 - the Asian population is projected to nearly double over this period – from 400,000 (9.7 percent) in 2006, to 790,000 (16.0 percent) in 2026
 - the proportion of the population that is Māori is projected to increase from 14.9 percent in 2006, to 16.6 percent in 2026
 - the proportion of the population that is Pacific is projected to increase from 7.2 percent in 2006, to 9.8 percent in 2026.

Birth rate and life expectancy

- In 2006, 13.2 percent of New Zealand women were aged 65 years or over, compared with 12.2 percent in 1986. There were 123 women per 100 men aged 65 years or over in 2006. Nearly one in four women in New Zealand will be aged 65 years or over in 2031.¹
- Women's life expectancy was 82.2 years in 2005-07 compared with 78.0 years for men. While women continue to live longer than men, the gap has been closing for the last 30 years.²
- Māori women have a shorter life expectancy than non-Māori women (75.1 years and 83.0 years respectively), but the gap has closed slightly in the last five years.³
- There was an average of 2.17 births per woman in 2007 – the highest rate since 1990.⁴ The birth rate for Māori women was considerably higher at 2.94 births per woman in 2007.⁵

Employment and income

- Women's labour force participation was at its highest in the September 2008 quarter at 62.6 percent – an increase of 0.4 percentage points from the previous quarter. This compares with a labour force participation rate for men of 75.0 percent – a decrease of 0.4 percentage points from the previous quarter.⁶
- In the June 2008 quarter, women's median hourly earnings were \$17.50, compared to \$20.00 for men. The gender pay gap has remained at around 12 percent since 2001.⁷
- Pākehā women's median hourly earnings (\$18.22) were significantly higher than both Māori and Pacific women's (\$15.15 and \$14.75 respectively).⁸

Tertiary education

- In 2007, women accounted for 54 percent (241,000) of domestic students enrolled in tertiary education.⁹ However, between 2006 and 2007, 78 percent of the decline in tertiary enrolment numbers was due to a drop in women's enrolments.¹⁰
- Sixty-one percent of students who completed a tertiary qualification in 2006 were women.¹¹ An estimated 50 percent of female students complete their qualification within five years, compared with 40 percent of men.¹²

Sexual violence

- Almost one in five New Zealand women (19.3 percent) and one in twenty men (4.9 percent) have experienced sexual interference or assault in their lifetime.¹³
- Lifetime prevalence rates for sexual violence are highest for young women (25.6 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds) and for Māori women (23.4 percent).¹⁴

Domestic violence

- Just over 26 percent of New Zealand women have experienced violence by a male partner in their lifetime, compared to just over 18 percent of men who have experienced violence by a female partner in their lifetime.¹⁵
- The lifetime prevalence rate for violence by a male partner is highest for Māori women (49.3 percent). The rate for Pacific women is 23.3 percent.¹⁶

Leadership and governance roles

- Women's representation on state sector and district health boards was relatively high in 2007 at 41.5 percent. This represented a slight decrease from 2006.¹⁷
- Only 23 percent of public service department chief executives were women in 2007.¹⁸
- Women leaders remain scarce in the private sector with women making up 8.7 percent of board member of NZSX Top 100 companies in 2007.¹⁹

Early childhood education (ECE)

- Overall participation continues to increase with 64.7 percent of children aged under five enrolled in ECE in 2007, compared with 60.3 percent in 2002.²⁰
- In 2006, 17 percent of licensed ECE services had a waiting time of at least six months for one- and two-year-old children – an increase of 46 percent from 2002. For three- and four-year-old children, 14 percent of licensed ECE services had waiting times of at least six months. This was an increase of 27 percent from 2002.²¹

¹ Statistics New Zealand (2007) *New Zealand's 65+ Population: A statistical volume*.

² Statistics New Zealand (2008) *New Zealand Period Life Tables: 2005-07*.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ Statistics New Zealand (2008) *Age-specific Fertility Rates for the Total and Māori Populations*.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Statistics New Zealand. *Household Labour Force Survey: September 2008*.

⁷ Statistics New Zealand. *New Zealand Income Survey: June 2008*.

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- ⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁹ Ministry of Education (2008) *Provider-based enrolments*, table ENR.1.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, table ENR.4.
- ¹¹ Ministry of Education (2007) *Gaining qualifications*, table COM.1.
- ¹² *ibid.*, table COM.29.
- ¹³ Allison Morris et al (2003) *New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001*.
- ¹⁴ *ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Allison Morris et al (2003) *New Zealand National Survey of Crime Victims 2001*.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Ministry of Women's Affairs (2007) *Gender Stocktake of State Sector Boards and Committees*.
- ¹⁸ Human Rights Commission (2008) *New Zealand Census of Women's Participation: 2008*.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*
- ²⁰ Ministry of Education (2008) *Participation in Early Childhood Education*, table 3.
- ²¹ Ministry of Education (2008) *State of Education in New Zealand 2007*.

