



Policy of the Women's Rights Party

With amendments voted on at the Annual Conference, 29 June 2024

PRINCIPLES

The Women's Rights Party honours the women of Aotearoa NZ who won the right to vote in 1893, the first self-governing nation in the World to legislate women's suffrage.

The Women's Rights Party has formed 130 years later out of a concern for the erosion of the rights of women and girls.

We combine this history with the imperative to create a society in which women are autonomous, and all women, men and children can live in harmony with each other and the environment to protect the future for our children and their children.

The Women's Rights Party principles are:

To win and protect women's rights, including:

The right to speak freely.

The right to peaceful assembly, association, and movement.

The right to safe single-sex spaces for women and girls.

The right to be free from violence in all its forms.

The right to equitable reward and recognition for women's contributions to society and work, whether paid or unpaid.

The right to have control of our own bodies, including reproductive autonomy.

The right to protect and safeguard our children.

The right for motherhood to be recognised as exclusively female.

The right to fair play in sports.

The right to evidenced-based education and healthcare with informed consent.

The right to use clear and plain language when referring to women in the media, academia, in healthcare, at work and at home.

The right to a clean and safe environment.

Introduction

The Women's Rights Party was formed in 2023 as a voice for women whose interests were being ignored by most sectors of society in the name of "inclusivity". In the same year, the Women's Rights Party contested the General Election with a List of 12 exceptional women from all over the country. As a registered democratic political party that is advocating strongly for the interests of women and children, we are an organised force for change.

The Women's Rights Party is about protecting the rights of women and children. We advocate for women's sex-based rights, so that these rights are respected and extended, and not eroded.

We are campaigning to protect the rights of women and children. We aim to bring greater public awareness to threats that include lifelong harm to children

We focus on issues that directly impact on women and girls. We recognise that such interests are wide ranging, including women's sex-based rights, women's healthcare, our children's education, and recognition of women's contributions to society.

The Women's Rights Party is shining a light on what sex self-ID means for women and girls, and on the relationships and sexuality curriculum that was introduced in our schools by the previous Labour government. These are just two examples of an agenda that has been rolling along at great speed, largely under the radar of ordinary New Zealanders.

While the primary focus of the Women's Rights Party is protecting the rights of women and children and advocating for sex-based rights, we do need to be concerned with issues that affect all New Zealanders and impact on women and our future generations. Issues such as the climate, the environment, conservation, animal welfare, social and economic inequality and poverty, are of particular concern to young people who are needed to continue the struggle for women's rights.

International

The policies of the Women's Rights Party reaffirm women and girls' sex-based rights, and challenge the discrimination we experience from the replacement of the category of sex with that of 'gender identity'. We support the Women's Declaration International. ¹

The Party is committed to ensuring New Zealand legislation reflects our Government's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). ²

The Women's Rights Party stands by women everywhere who are denied access to education and who are denied opportunities to participate in paid work or the political life of their nations; whose freedom of movement is restricted; who have no protection against violence, including sexualised violence; who are forced into marriage as children; and who, as a result of war and conflict, have been subjected to forced relocation and displacement, who are denied access to food, healthcare, or maternity care, and whose homes are destroyed.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

We acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi as Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document.

The Women's Rights Party advocates for economic and social equity, health and wellbeing of wāhine Māori and their whānau.

¹ *Women's Declaration International* <https://www.womensdeclaration.com/en/>

² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx>

Protection of Sex-based Rights

Women's and girls' sex-based rights as biological females, need to be protected in policy and law, and this should be given precedence over any proposed provisions based on concepts of gender.

The Women's Rights Party calls for language in policy, law, health, and education to recognise that women and girls are human females, that being female is based on biology, and that motherhood is exclusively female.

The sex-based rights for women guaranteed in the *Human Rights Act 1993*³ must be respected in law and policy, such as the right to single-sex spaces.

The Women's Rights Party is committed to the rights of lesbians to organise and socialise separately where they wish, recognising that lesbianism is same-sex attraction, not same-gender attraction.

Biological males should not compete in women's and girl's sports, and biological females should not play in men's and boy's sports, where there are issues of fairness and safety.

The language in policy, law, health, and education needs to recognise that sexual orientation is about the attraction that a person can have either to their own sex, the other sex, or both sexes.

Gender

"Gender" is an imprecise concept that refers to sex-based stereotypes and social expectations, e.g. what is considered feminine and masculine. "Gender identity and expression" refer to the identification with, and expression of these stereotypes.

The rights of women and children to reject such stereotypes without discrimination, labelling, or medical intervention to 'fix' them is paramount.

Statistics NZ must have biological sex, for example sex at birth, as a primary and accurate demographic indicator.

The freedom of speech to question the concept of 'gender' and to assert the sex-based rights of females, is a fundamental human right. It is protected in the *Bill of Rights Act 1990*⁴, and must not be removed by any legislation, policy or government practice.

Key legislative issues

A ban on the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones

The Women's Rights Party supports a ban on the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to treat children and adolescents under the age of 18 who are presenting with "sex-related distress", and to restrict Government-funded masculinisation or feminisation cosmetic surgery to those aged over 25 (currently aged over 18).

³ *Human Rights Act 1993* <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/DLM304212.html>

⁴ [New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 No 109 \(as at 30 August 2022\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)

We are also calling for an inquiry into the contracting by Health NZ Te Whatu Ora of PATHA (the Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa) to update its guidelines for “gender-affirming care” for healthcare professionals in New Zealand. The Cass Report assessment of guideline quality put the New Zealand PATHA guidelines second to last - a very low score of 149/600.

Repeal sex self-ID

The Women’s Rights Party calls for the repeal of self-identification for determining sex on the birth certificate in the Births, Deaths and Relationships Act 2021.⁵ The new law encourages a belief that a man can change his sex at will and enter women’s spaces without being challenged.

If birth certificates include provisions for a “nominated sex”, it needs to be clear that this is the individual’s preferred sex and not biological sex. Clear and accessible records must be kept of any changes to the birth certificate, and this information must also be recorded on the certificate itself. Sex is a fundamental democratic and explanatory variable, and a powerful predictor of almost every dimension of social life, economic status, and health outcomes.

No child under 18 should have a “nominated sex” on their birth certificate, and the only permitted changes to a child’s recorded sex on the birth certificate should be if the original sex on the birth certificate was incorrect, for example, in the rare instance of a child born with a difference of sexual development (DSD or commonly known as “intersex”).

Changes to the Human Rights Act 1993

The Women’s Rights Party opposes the inclusion of “gender identity and gender expression” as a protected ground for discrimination in the Human Rights Act 1993.⁶ Adding “gender identity” to the grounds for unlawful discrimination could undermine the exceptions based on sex. The question of whose rights would take precedence (i.e. women’s sex-based rights, or new rights protecting men claiming identity as women) would inevitably have to be decided in a Court of Law.

Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Act 2022

We support the aim of the Conversion Practices legislation to protect lesbians, bisexuals and gay people from conversion practices and to promote open and respectful discussions about sexuality.

We do not support the inclusion of “gender, gender identity and gender expression” in this legislation because “gender” is not a clear or helpful concept to include in law, and promoting “gender identity” to children risks causing them permanent harm.⁷

⁵ [Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Act 2021 No 57 \(as at 05 April 2023\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)

⁶ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1993/0082/latest/DLM304212.html>

⁷ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2022/0001/latest/whole.html#LMS487199>

Prostitution Reform

The Women's Rights Party calls for the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 to be replaced by legislation which supports the Equality Model, also known as the Nordic Model, Abolition Model and Sex Buyer Law.⁸

The Equality Model decriminalises prostitution for the prostituted person and criminalises those who exploit prostitutes, such as the buyer and brothel owner. The model provides exit services for women wishing to leave prostitution, including financial and structural support to help them build new lives and find alternative employment. This may include housing, education, training, legal and welfare services, childcare, and emotional and psychological support.

Whilst the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 still exists, we strongly oppose any proposals to remove Section 19. Section 19 forbids those on temporary visas (such as student visas) from engaging in prostitution in New Zealand. We support Section 19, which helps to prevent international trafficking.

Ban on Rough Sex as a Defence

The Women's Rights Party opposes pornography, which is filmed prostitution, and includes rough sex, strangulation, other forms of violence, and sexual abuse. This sends a message that such violence and abuse of women is acceptable, when it is clearly unacceptable.

The Women's Rights Party will work with other groups in calling for a ban on the use of "rough sex" as a defence in a murder case or a case involving serious harm.

Surrogacy

The Women's Rights Party opposes commercial surrogacy arrangements due to the potential for exploitation of women and we agree this should remain illegal in New Zealand. We oppose any proposed changes to legislation which would remove the birth mother as the first legal parent in the case of surrogacy.

Protecting women's and children's spaces and safety

Women and girls have the right to single-sex gatherings for any purpose. This includes the right to women-only social media groups.

Single-sex spaces preserve women's and girls' safety and dignity. These include, but are not limited to toilets, changing rooms, prisons, refuges, rape crisis centres, saunas, swimming facilities, hospital wards and other facilities.

In particular, school policies should guarantee that all children in schools have the right to privacy from the opposite sex in single-sex spaces, such as toilets and changing rooms.

The Women's Rights Party opposes the housing of biological males in women's prisons. The human rights of all women prisoners must be fully respected.

⁸ <https://nordicmodelnow.org/>

We are committed to increasing resources to help women leave situations where they are experiencing or at risk of domestic violence. We support public funding of refuges providing women-only services, public funding for services to support “detransitioners”, and exit services for women wishing to leave gangs or religious cults, including financial and structural support to help them build new lives.

The Women’s Rights Party promotes changes in the Justice system to protect women and children. For example, protection orders should be enforced and applications for protection orders should be accessible and affordable.

Caring for mothers and children

The Women’s Rights Party is calling for more support for new families, including wrap-around services for vulnerable mothers and their babies. We recognise the links between poverty and child protection, and support action on strategies to alleviate poverty. The number of children being removed from their families must be reduced.

Midwifery and maternity services must retain words such as “mother”, “woman” and “breastfeeding”.

Maternity services should be adequately resourced and funded to ensure quality, affordable provision for all. In particular, we call on Te Whatu Ora to properly recognise and fund continuity of midwifery care, and to provide publicly funded primary maternity services in both rural and urban centres.

We support a review and extension of paid maternity leave from six to 12 months, and entitlement of women’s partners to paid leave at the time of the birth.

The Women’s Rights Party advocates for income support while raising our children or caring for our elders, recognising that mothering and caring is work and contributes to society. The Women’s Rights Party supports the campaign of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to reform the Working for Families (WFF) package, in order to support all lower income families, and to lift the poorest families out of poverty.⁹ In particular discrimination against beneficiary families, many of whom are headed by single mothers, should be removed.

The Party also calls for access to quality, affordable (or free) childcare, with qualified and fairly paid staff available to all who need it. To that end, the Women’s Right’s Party supports a complete review of the current for-profit ECE sector to ensure it meets the needs of women and their children.

Women’s health services, including cervical smears and breast screening, must be free and easily available to all women.

⁹ CPAG 2023 Policy Brief on Working For Families; Fix “Working For Families” income assistance for children in low-income families; Susan St John, Mike O’Brien; June 2023; <https://tinyurl.com/px3rsh2r>

Educating our Young People

The Women's Rights Party calls for the Ministry of Education's Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines¹⁰ to be replaced with guidelines that recognise the reality of biological sex and removes references to the imprecise concept of "gender".

We support age appropriate and scientifically accurate education about sexuality, relationships, and consent.

Schools should provide full disclosure to parents and caregivers of what is being taught in the relationships and sexuality curriculum. Schools should not use resources that conflate the words, "sex" and "gender" or confuse sexual orientation and gender. Outside agencies such as Inside Out and Qtopia should not be providing resources or instruction in schools, especially if the teacher is not present.

Children who don't conform to sex-based stereotypes or who could grow up to be attracted to the same sex, should be supported in this. It needs to be clear that changing sex is not biologically possible.

The Women's Rights Party agrees with Resist Gender Education¹¹ that New Zealand's education system currently reinforces "social transition" (changing appearance to align with stereotypes of the opposite sex (or no sex), using inappropriate pronouns, and allowing use of opposite sex toilets and changing facilities), often without parents' knowledge.

The Women's Rights Party says teachers should not be supporting social transitioning in schools. Supporting social transition is a clinical intervention that often leads to medical transitioning and affects all students.

Teachers can refer concerns about children who show signs of distress about their sex to appropriate professionals in line with the recommendations of the Cass Report, and all such discussions must involve parents.¹²

Women's incomes and well-being

Minimum wages and benefits need to be increased so that all people have living incomes. In particular, women need increased incomes to promote full participation in society and to support our dignity as we age.

More than 50 years ago, union leader and former MP Sonya Davies championed the "Working Women's Charter".¹³ Much has yet to be achieved, including pay equity.

Work typically done by women, particularly Māori and Pasifika women, continues to be undervalued, contributing to an on-going sex-based pay gap and sex/ethnicity pay gap.

The Women's Right Party advocates for effective policies to deliver pay equity in private sector as well as public sector jobs, including a strong onus on employers, publication of

¹⁰ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/new-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidelines-schools> 2020

¹¹ <https://www.resistgendereducation.nz/>

¹² <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/> Recommendation 4, p32.

¹³ [Working Women's Charter – Women's labour organisations – Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand](#)

average hourly pay statistics by occupation, sex and ethnicities, and legislative support for Fair Pay Agreements.

Quality housing is a priority and should be affordable and available for all. Women can be living in poor housing because of a change in circumstance, low incomes and/or little or no savings as a result of a number of issues specific to them. The low levels of home ownership amongst older women is also a reflection of these issues.

Women, [due to](#) low pay in typically female jobs, low income over their lifetime, part-time employment and career breaks to raise children, and disadvantage following relationship breakdowns, are more negatively affected financially as we age.

The Women's Right's Party advocates for accessible and free financial advice and support to be available to all women, as needed.

A major source of the disadvantage women face in retirement is inequity in retirement savings. In New Zealand, the average KiwiSaver balance for women is 25% lower than the average balance for men across all age groups.

The drivers of KiwiSaver inequity are well understood, and it is clear that more can be done by the Government to improve equity in retirement incomes for women. We support the following proposals:

- Require an employer to treat all its employees the same when it comes to the employer KiwiSaver contribution.
- Address pay equity. The "pay gap penalty" on KiwiSaver contributions is equivalent to an additional three or more years of retirement income; a meaningful difference in spending potential as women tend to live longer than men.
- Continue employer contributions to KiwiSaver during maternity leave.
- Address the so-called "motherhood penalty" with a contribution by the State to carers' KiwiSaver funds, that recognises the social value of childcare provided by those who are not in paid employment (usually mothers) and by those who are the primary carers for dependants and other family members who need a high degree of support.

APPENDIX 1

DEFINITIONS

A person's "sex" refers to a person's biological sex (either male or female).

"Sex" is a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Human Rights Act 1993, including in pregnancy and childbirth.

"Women" and "girls" refer to human females, and the words "men" and "boys" refer to human males.

"Human female" denotes the sex with a reproductive system typically organised to bear offspring or produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes (ova) that can be fertilised by male gametes, and includes females whose reproductive system may be disordered in some way and those females who choose not to reproduce.

"Mother" means female parent and "father" means male parent.

"Sexual orientation" is a person's sexual attraction to the same sex, opposite sex, or both.



Policy Amendments and Rationale 2024

ENVIRONMENT

Amended as follows (new addition in italics) (new addition in italics)...

We combine this history with the imperative to create a society in which women are autonomous, and all women, men and children can live in harmony with each other *and the environment* to protect the future for our children and their children.

And a new Principle added as follows: The right to a clean and safe environment

Rationale

The Women's Rights Party has the opportunity to lead the political debate regarding environmental issues and to find genuine strategies towards a more "planet sharing" agenda.

This includes ensuring more **women's** voices and ideas are at *the table* and on panels, seminars, discussions, conferences, papers, etc, of anything to do with the natural environment, for example. The Environmental Defence Society conferences always have a number of Greens MPs and activists on their panels. The Women's Rights Party needs to get those invites too and be staunch about women's rights in this debate.

Many people who vote Green do so believing they are the only political party that will do anything positive for the natural environment. Women's Rights Party members know the Greens take this (mainly women) vote for granted and have let that side of their policy slip in favour of campaigning for gender ideology and other so called social justice issues.

Women have the right to a clean and safe natural environment and the Women's Rights Party will campaign and advocate for this right.

"Planet sharing" vs "planet saving" -

No one can save this planet - changing the rhetoric to a mentality of planet sharing allows individuals to learn how we can all do our share of the work to establish a more equitable and fair society and ensure our descendants will have a safe natural environment to live in.

UPDATE INTRODUCTION

Amended as follows (new addition in italics)...

The Women's Rights Party is shining a light on what *sex self-ID means for women and girls, and on the relationships and sexuality curriculum that was introduced in our schools by the previous Labour government.* These are just two examples of an agenda that has been rolling along at great speed, largely under the radar of ordinary New Zealanders.

Rationale

This amendment updates the statement, given that changes to the Births, Deaths, Marriages and Relationships Act have now become law and that the relationships and sexuality curriculum has been introduced in our schools. It is consistent with the Policy Proposal on Education.

ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN

Previous wording: We have lost our right to speak, we have been cancelled in academia and the mainstream media. We cannot rely on the Police to treat us as citizens worthy of protecting our rights to assemble and to speak.

Replaced with: *The Women's Rights Party was formed in 2023 as a voice for women whose interests were being ignored by most sectors of society in the name of "inclusivity". In the same year, the Women's Rights Party contested the General Election with a List of 12 exceptional women from all over the country. As a registered democratic political party that is advocating strongly for the interests of women and children, we are an organised force for change.*

Rationale

The original words were written when we formed the Women's Rights Party shortly after the mob violence women, and some men, encountered at Albert Park on 25 March 2023 and reflected the failure of Police to protect those who came to speak and to hear from from UK women's rights activist Kellie-Jay Keen.

Since then we have reclaimed our right to assemble. Women are speaking out, despite having been cancelled. There have been public meetings with inspirational speakers. The huge counter-protests in Auckland and Wellington have dwindled, and the experience with the Police at the "Let Women Speak" event on 20 September 2023 was far more positive than six months earlier.

The Women's Rights Party contested the 2023 General Election with a List of 12 exceptional women from all over the country. We are a registered democratic political party that is advocating strongly for the interests of women and children. Our members are active in saving women's sports, challenging gender education in schools, and a range of subversive actions (e.g. stickering, chalking, questioning and challenging those in authority).

Our current Policy in relation to [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) states that the Women's Rights Party "advocates for the economic and social equity, health and wellbeing of wāhine Māori and their whānau". By singling out wāhine Māori in terms of economic and social equity, health and well-being, it could seem as if we are excluding other women from these goals.*

Members have raised issues facing women with disabilities. Other members have raised issues facing refugee and migrant women who may feel isolated for cultural and language reasons.

As our name suggests, we are for women's rights. And that benefits all of humanity.

*It should be noted that the original statement was under the [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) section so it is appropriate in that context.

ADDING OUR VOICE TO ISSUES OF CONCERN

Added as last paragraph in the Introduction:

While the primary focus of the Women's Rights Party is protecting the rights of women and children and advocating for sex-based rights, we do need to be concerned with issues that affect all New Zealanders and impact on women and our future generations. Issues such as the climate, the environment, conservation, animal welfare, social and economic inequality and poverty, are of particular concern to young people who are needed to continue struggle for women's rights.

Rationale

"Adding our voice" may mean we support positions raised by other political parties or organisations. It becomes significant if and when the Women's Rights Party has a presence in Parliament, especially if we are in a position to negotiate a Coalition agreement with one or more other political parties.

The need to have the ability to respond to broader current issues is important for candidates during Election campaigns. Where candidates are given questions in advance, it is useful for them to seek guidance from the co-Leaders on appropriate responses.

NGOs like Forest and Bird will seek our position on issues like the environment, conservation and animal welfare. Others like Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) or the Coalition for Equal Value, Equal Pay (CEVEP) will be more interested in our positions in relation to economic inequity and poverty. Such organisations typically publish tables of policies that align with the interests of their constituents. This can broaden our appeal at the ballot box.

The Council is responsible for making statements on behalf of the Party and works to ensure that any such statements preserve our unity.

INTERNATIONAL

Previous wording: The Women’s Rights Party stands by women everywhere who are denied access to education; whose freedom of movement is restricted; who have no protection against violence, including sexualised violence; who are forced into marriage as children; and who are denied opportunities to participate in paid work or the political life of their nations.

Amended as follows (new addition in italics): The Women’s Rights Party stands by women everywhere who are denied access to education and who are denied opportunities to participate in paid work or the political life of their nations; whose freedom of movement is restricted; who have no protection against violence, including sexualised violence; who are forced into marriage as children; *and who, as a result of war and conflict, have been subjected to forced relocation and displacement, who are denied access to food, healthcare, or maternity care, and whose homes are destroyed.*

Rationale

Women, children and the elderly suffer disproportionately in times of armed conflict. Women struggle to survive the loss of housing, food, water and fuel, along with forced relocation and displacement, disruption to children’s schooling, and to health services. Millions of women and children are suffering starvation and famine in refugee camps as a result of wars and conflict.

While atrocities committed in war affect both women and men, their impact is gendered and disproportionately affects women. The destruction of health services particularly affects pregnant women and mothers who have seen their babies and children gravely injured or dying of hunger and disease with minimal medical treatment available.

Our Policy Platform states that as a Women’s Rights Party we “are campaigning to protect the rights of women and children” and “to bring greater public awareness to threats that include lifelong harm to children”. This is consistent with the wording as amended.

PUBERTY BLOCKERS, HORMONES, SURGERY

Previous wording: Children under 18 should not be given puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, or gender reassignment surgery in order to change the appearance of their biological sex. We will oppose any legislative changes that do not contain age restrictions.

Amended as follows....

The Women's Rights Party supports a ban on the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones to treat children and adolescents under the age of 18 who are presenting with "sex-related distress", and to restrict Government-funded masculinisation or feminisation cosmetic surgery to those aged over 25 (currently aged over 18).

We are also calling for an inquiry into the contracting by Health NZ Te Whatu Ora of PATHA (the Professional Association for Transgender Health Aotearoa) to update its guidelines for "gender-affirming care" for healthcare professionals in New Zealand. The Cass Report assessment of guideline quality put the New Zealand PATHA guidelines second to last - a very low score of 149/600.

Rationale

The NHS England has banned the use of puberty blockers as part of clinical practice for children experiencing gender confusion. This follows release of the Cass Report, an independent review of published evidence on the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones on children and young people.

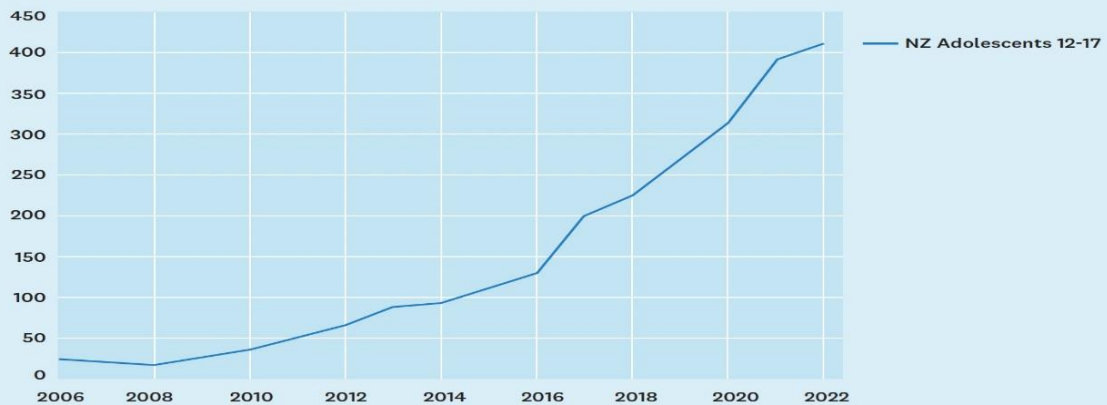
Increasingly European countries are choosing a more cautious approach to the use of puberty blockers after finding the evidence base underpinning such treatments to be wanting.

We are urging our own health authorities to take on board the findings of the Cass Report. The Ministry of Health has so far remained hostage to a vocal minority that has put our children's health at risk of lifelong irreversible damage.

The Cass Report found that that existing studies were of poor quality and lacked evidence on the long-term impact of taking hormones from an early age. Side effects include menopausal symptoms, weaker bone density and the potential impact on fertility, sexual function and brain development.

Cass concluded that the research has let all those involved down, and most importantly children and young people. Far from giving children "time to think", the Cass Report found that puberty blockers effectively locked them into a medical pathway leading to cross-sex hormones and surgeries that are irreversible.

The Women's Rights Party already has policy opposing the use of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones with children under 18. New Zealand is becoming more of an outlier in our increasing use of puberty blocking hormones. In 2022, 416 young people aged 12-17 were taking puberty blocking hormones, compared to 48 in 2011, the first year of use for gender dysphoria. We have 11 times the rate of use as England: 110 per 100,000 versus 9 per 100,000. We also have no minimum age for prescribing. If puberty starts at 10 or 11, these children are eligible for blockers.



NUMBER OF PEOPLE AGED 12-17 PRESCRIBED PUBERTY BLOCKING HORMONES BY YEAR, 2006-2022.
Data from Pharmac.

It is already the case that those seeking publicly funded gender reassignment (genital) surgery must be aged 18+ and meet other criteria to assess medical fitness for anaesthesia and “complex surgery”. The Cass Report has recommended waiting for such surgery until after the age of 25 as there is concern about vulnerable young people between the ages of 17 and 25.

The number of new referrals to the Health NZ Te Whatu Ora Gender Affirming (Genital) Service has increased dramatically since 2019 when the previous Government committed \$3 million to make the service delivered through Health NZ Te Whatu Ora more accessible. Notably 77% of those seeking genital surgery are men. Genital surgery for women is more risky with the potential for serious post-surgery complications.

Number of referrals for assessment for Gender Affirming (Genital) Surgery by quarter to 31 December 2023



Source: Te Whatu Ora Gender Affirming (Genital) Surgery Service

We think 18 is too young to appreciate the implications of potential sterility, lack of sexual function, and serious post-surgery complications from genital surgery. We are also concerned that young women are making decisions about double mastectomies (euphemistically called “top surgery”) without appreciating the impact on breastfeeding. Such surgery is not included in the data above.

We are seeking support from members to prioritise a campaign demanding that an urgent inquiry is made into the Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora contracting of its guidelines for “gender affirming” health care. The low-quality assessment of the PATHA guidelines in the Cass Report must surely make Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora reconsider its decision to commission PATHA to update their guidelines.

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

In Key legislative issues, the following policy has been added:

The Women's Rights Party opposes the inclusion of "gender identity and gender expression" as a protected ground for discrimination in the Human Rights Act 1993.¹⁴

Adding "gender identity" to the grounds for unlawful discrimination could undermine the exceptions based on sex. The question of whose rights would take precedence (i.e. women's sex-based rights, or new rights protecting men claiming identity as women) would have to be decided in a Court of Law.

Rationale

The Human Rights Act defines the grounds for unlawful discrimination. The prohibited grounds for discrimination include sex (including pregnancy and childbirth); marital status; religious and ethical beliefs; race, colour, ethnic or national origins (includes citizenship); disability; age; political opinion; employment status; family status; and sexual orientation.

The Act also provides for exceptions in employment matters; public access to places; provision of goods and services; access to land, housing or accommodation; and access to educational institutions.

These exceptions are important as they include the provision of separate facilities or services for each sex on the ground of public decency or public safety. It is also not a breach of the Act to exclude persons of one sex from participating in any competitive sporting activity in which the strength, stamina, or physique of competitors is relevant.

Employees can be treated differently on the basis of sex to "preserve reasonable standards of privacy", and where the position is that of a counsellor on highly personal matters such as sexual matters or the prevention of violence.

Adding "gender identity" to the grounds for unlawful discrimination could undermine the exceptions based on sex. The question of whose rights would take precedence would have to be decided in a Court of Law.

The Australian "Tickle v Giggle" case is testing the legal implication of changes made in 2013 to the Australian Sex Discrimination Act which added "gender identity" defined as "the gender related identity, appearance or mannerisms, or other gender related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not) with or without regard to the person's designated sex at birth."¹⁵ This is the same wording as that proposed in the New Zealand Bill.

¹⁴ <https://www.parliament.nz/media/7834/human-rights-prohibition-of-discrimination-on-grounds-of-gender-identity-or-expression-and-variations-of-sex-characteristics-amendment-bill.pdf>

¹⁵ *Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013*

CONVERSION PRACTICES PROHIBITION

In Key legislative issues, the following policy has been added:

We call for the removal of all references to “gender, gender identity and gender expression” from the Conversion Practices Prohibition Legislation Act 2022.¹⁶

We support the aim of the Conversion Practices legislation to protect lesbians, bisexuals and gay people from conversion practices and to promote open and respectful discussions about sexuality.

We do not support the inclusion of “gender, gender identity and gender expression” in this legislation because “gender” is not a clear or helpful concept to include in law, and because promoting “gender identity” to children risks causing them permanent harm.

Rationale

The inclusion of “gender” in the legislation is likely to pressure therapists and medical professionals to practice “gender affirmative” treatment and to contribute to a culture of encouraging children to socially and medically transition. Puberty blockers prevent children from experiencing puberty, which is the very thing that could resolve their identity issues. Medical transition can cause permanent harm and lifelong medical dependency.

Social and medical gender transition, encouraged by this legislation, effectively promotes gay conversion therapy; because children who are likely to grow up to be lesbian, bisexual or gay are converted into appearing to be heterosexual members of the opposite sex.

The Cass Review recommends holistic psychological intervention to work with young people to explore their concerns and to alleviate their distress. Such an approach should not be equated with conversion therapy as it may prevent young people from getting the emotional support they deserve.

Furthermore, the current legislation protects the health professionals whose so-called “gender affirmative care” is doing this harm.

¹⁶ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2022/0001/latest/whole.html#LMS487199>

PROSTITUTION REFORM

In Key Legislative Issues, the previous policy has been amended:

The Women's Rights Party will advocate for a review of the Prostitution Reform Act¹⁷ to strengthen protections for women, and advocate for increased powers of prosecution.

The Women's Rights Party would also advocate for funding to help women who want to leave prostitution and require financial and structural support to find alternative employment.

Replace with the following:

The Women's Rights Party calls for the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 to be replaced by legislation which supports the Equality Model, also known as the Nordic Model, Abolition Model and Sex Buyer Law.¹⁸

The Equality Model decriminalises prostitution for the prostituted person and criminalises those who exploit prostitutes, such as the buyer and brothel owner. The model provides exit services for women wishing to leave prostitution, including financial and structural support to help them build new lives and find alternative employment. This may include housing, education, training, legal and welfare services, childcare, and emotional and psychological support.

Whilst the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 still exists, we strongly oppose any proposals to remove Section 19. Section 19 forbids those on temporary visas (such as student visas) from engaging in prostitution in New Zealand. We support Section 19, which helps to prevent international trafficking.

Rationale

The Equality model promotes the dignity and equality of women in society and views women as full human beings, not objects to be used sexually by men. This model views prostitution as inherently harmful towards women.

The Prostitution Reform Act 2003 (which is sometimes known as the New Zealand Model) stopped the prosecution of women in prostitution, which may be why it was seen as progressive at the time, and was passed by an extremely slim majority. However, by decriminalising the buyers, pimps and brothel owners as well, it has created an environment where prostitution is being normalised, and has increased. This is reinforced by the widespread use of pornography.

The Equality Model fully decriminalises women in prostitution, so there is no need to keep the current legislation in order to protect women from prosecution. Instead, the Equality Model prosecutes the buyers, pimps and brothel owners who exploit women in prostitution.

Surveys have shown that the majority of women in prostitution want to leave.¹⁹ This model supports women to leave, with financial and structural support.

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2003/0028/latest/DLM197815.html>

¹⁸ <https://nordicmodelnow.org/>

¹⁹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228535864_Prostitution_in_Five_Countries_Violence_and_Post-Traumatic_Stress_Disorder#:~:text=On%20average%2C%2092%2

The model aims to reduce demand, in order to reduce or abolish prostitution; and to support women's equality in society. If women want to stay in prostitution, they can do that under this model, without fear of prosecution.

The 2003 legislation has not reduced violence towards women in prostitution, nor stopped brutal murders of women in prostitution. Brothel inspections to detect instances of violence, trafficking, rape of those under 18, or other illegal activities, are hard to implement; and regular inspections are not happening.

Women prostitution survivors have testified that decriminalisation has increased the buyers' sense of entitlement, and has reduced women's ability to refuse a buyer's demands.²⁰

Whilst the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 only permits prostitution of those over 18; prostitution survivors give accounts of being raped and exploited in prostitution from around age 13- 14 onwards.

It is better to support women's equality with good wages, living benefits, and effective exit services than to support a situation where women are forced to enter prostitution in order to survive economically.

The Equality, Nordic, or Abolitionist model, or Buyer Law, has been adopted in Sweden, Norway, France, Ireland, Iceland, Israel and other countries. The European Parliament has recognised prostitution as a form of violence against women.²¹

Where it has been adopted, demand has reduced, and the amount of prostitution, trafficking and serious violence against women has substantially decreased. Whilst the Equality model is not perfect, it is the best model to promote women's rights.

We support Section 19 of the Prostitution Reform Act (whilst this Act exists) because it helps to reduce and prevent international trafficking. We do not agree with the argument that decriminalising the prostitution of those on temporary visas would reduce exploitation. We think it would increase exploitation, because increased numbers of visitors on temporary visas would be engaged in prostitution, which is inherently exploitative. Furthermore, as with prostitution in New Zealand now, it would be harder to investigate and prosecute illegal exploitation or violence, when the sexual exploitation itself was legal.

In a country with a very high rate of violence towards women, criminalising the exploitation of women and girls in prostitution would be a good step towards raising women's status and reducing this violence.

²⁰ <https://womensrightsparty.nz/the-new-zealand-model-for-prostitution-liberalisation-doesnt-work/>

²¹ <https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/2023/09/14/elementor-10440/>

“ROUGH SEX” MURDER DEFENCE

Amended as follows (new addition in italics)...

Moved from Protecting Women’s and Children’s Spaces and Safety to Key Legislative Issues as new policy priority:

The Women’s Rights Party opposes pornography, which includes filmed prostitution, rough sex, strangulation, other forms of violence, and sexual abuse. This sends a message that such violence and abuse of women is acceptable. *The Women’s Rights Party will work with other groups in calling for a ban on the use of “rough sex” as a defence in a murder case or a case involving serious harm.*

Rationale

The UK law on domestic abuse now rules out "consent for sexual gratification" as a defence for causing serious harm to a person. The so-called “rough sex” defence was increasingly used in UK courts in cases of sexual violence – that either end in murder or serious harm – to explain why the violence occurred.

This was highlighted in the case of the killer of British backpacker Grace Millane where lawyers for her killer Jesse Kempson argued that Grace Millane had died accidentally in a “sex game gone wrong” after she had consented to “rough sex” (BDSM-style sex).

During the trial, family and friends heard details of Millane's sexual preferences – claims she was unable to challenge. Grace Millane’s parents have called for the New Zealand Government to follow the UK example and ban “rough sex” as a defence in murder cases.²²

Kempson was eventually sentenced to life in prison but the UK group We Can’t Consent To This, has data showing that often this defence results in reduced sentencing.²³

We Can’t Consent To This was founded in 2018 in response to the increased use of the “rough sex” defence, particularly in the Natalie Connolly case in December 2018. Connolly was killed by her partner at their home in Worcestershire, England in 2016. She died of vaginal arterial bleeding and suffered 40 separate injuries including serious internal trauma, a fractured eye socket, and facial wounds. Her partner who claimed it was a result of sex games “gone wrong”, was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to three years and eight months in prison.

Reasons behind the increase in rough sex include more liberal attitudes towards violence in the bedroom, and pornography that is easily accessible on-line at an early age with algorithms that push users into a rabbit hole that is more and more extreme.

In four of the most recent killings recorded by We Can’t Consent To This, the men had viewed “extreme porn” featuring violence including strangulation and killing of women before or after the killing of the women.

²² <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/grace-millanes-family-calls-for-nz-to-end-rough-sex-defence-as-uk-law-passes/43SDM47BF7B3GRQG6COFND4GAM/>

²³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/women/rough-sex-defence-ban-domestic-abuse-bill-government-2020-a9374386.html>

EXIT SERVICES FOR WOMEN LEAVING GANGS, RELIGIOUS CULTS, AND SERVICES TO SUPPORT “DETRANSITIONERS”

Under Protecting Women’s and Children’s Spaces and Safety, add to 5th paragraph as follows (new addition in italics):

Current: We are committed to increasing resources to help women leave situations where they are experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence. We support public funding for refuges providing women-only services.

ADD: *We support public funding to provide exit services for women wishing to leave gangs or religious cults, including financial and structural support to help them build new lives. We also support resources, including public funding of specific services to support “detransitioners”.*

Rationale

Women in gangs

Speaking at the Wai 2700 Mana Wāhine Kaupapa Inquiry in 2021, Paula Ormsby, leader of the female-only chapter of the Mongrel Mob, said women in gangs were “forgotten mothers, daughters and sisters who deserve support and protection like anybody else”. She said women were often asked why they stayed in violent relationships, but “gang-affiliated women often had nowhere to turn”.²⁴

Nelson social worker and former gang associate Glennis Dennehy has researched and written about the experiences and roles of women in gangs. She left her husband and his gang after a savage beating and says that while some women shift from gangs easily with support from family and community connections, others do not. Some women come under threat and the process of change is complex and can be dangerous.²⁵

The Police are charged with responsibility to “fix” the gang problem in what has become highly politicised. We believe resources need to be provided by the State to support initiatives to break the cycle of offending and violence against women, as well as protecting those women who make the difficult decision to exit gang life.

Women in religious cults

As we have seen in the Gloriavale “leavers” Employment Relations Authority case, movies and documentaries about Gloriavale²⁶, the cult’s leaders used many of the same tactics of control as seen in domestic violence cases.

The leaders gain control over every element of the women’s lives and cut the women off from outside relationships, portraying the cult as the women’s “safe haven”. This results in a “trauma bond” through which everything outside of the group feels threatening, and the women are no longer able to think clearly about their own survival needs and those of their children. This creates a dangerous situation in which the women and their children become vulnerable to sexual and physical abuse, and human rights violations.

²⁴ “Head of Female Mongrel Mob Chapter Addresses Waitangi Tribunal Claim”; stuff.co.nz/national/124372436/

²⁵ “Working with Women from Gangs: Complexity and Challenge”, Dennehy G.; hma.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Chapter-4-Women-from-gangs.pdf

²⁶ <https://www.employmentcourt.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Decisions/2023-NZEmpC-105-Pilgrim-Ors-v-Attorney-General-Ors-Media-Release.pdf>; <https://www.nzfilm.co.nz/films/gloriavale>; <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/escaping-utopia>

The Gloriavale Leavers Support Trust is funded by individuals, businesses and other charitable organisations to provide practical, financial, emotional support. We believe the State should take a more active role in supporting and protecting women and children to exit cults such as Gloriavale.

Detransitioners

The situation for those adolescents and young people captured by “gender ideology” has many of the same elements as those of a cult.²⁷ These include:

1. Control communication (e.g. “Transwomen are women”, “TERFs must die”)
2. Mystical manipulation (e.g. “being born in the wrong body”)
3. Demand for purity (e.g. “black and white thinking”, ignoring reality)
4. Confessional (e.g. calling out non-believers or cancel culture)
5. Loading the language (e.g. “misgendering”, “dead naming”, ‘using the wrong pronouns”, women as “cervix havers”, “birthing people”, “menstruators”, etc)
6. Truth lies in the doctrine (e.g. being “saved”, “finding their authentic self”)
7. Any criticism of the doctrine is interpreted as an act of violence on the believers’ very existence (e.g. “TERFs are denying we exist”, not using pronouns is “literal violence”)
8. Emotional control (e.g. telling parents “do you want a live child or a dead one?”; shunning detransitioners, piling on anyone who questions trans cult on social media)
9. Separation from other support (e.g. parents who don’t along with this)

Many detransitioners report that “transitioning” did not improve their mental health problems. They also report a lack of understanding by medical professionals and on-line abuse from the “trans” community.²⁸

We see a gap in Aotearoa NZ in support for detransitioners who are likely to become more in number as young people caught up in the current trend of social transitioning and medicalisation of gender-related distress.

Guidelines for professionals need to ensure that detransitioners receive the same supportive care given to young people presenting with gender-related distress. This should include professional education.

Detransitioners should also receive practical and emotional support as others leaving a cult. The Cass Report recommended provision for those considering transition, recognising they may not wish to re-engage with the services whose care they were previously under.²⁹ There is a need for public funding of specific services to support detransitioners and professional education for those providing such services.

²⁷ Is Transgenderism a Cult?"; <https://ourduty.group/education/is-it-a-cult/>

²⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-transyouth-outcomes/>

²⁹ <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/>, Recommendation 25, p43.

EDUCATION

Amended as follows...

A new section has been added that is titled Educating our Young People. Amend the policy currently in the section, Caring for Mothers and Children and include in the new Section.

Educating our Young People

The Women's Rights Party calls for the Ministry of Education's Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines to be replaced with guidelines that recognise the reality of biological sex and removes references to the imprecise concept of "gender". We support age appropriate and scientifically accurate education about sexuality, relationships, and consent.

Schools should provide full disclosure to parents and caregivers of what is being taught in the relationships and sexuality curriculum. Schools should not use resources that conflate the words, "sex" and "gender" or confuse sexual orientation and gender. Outside agencies such as Inside Out and Qtopia should not be providing resources or instruction in schools, especially if the teacher is not present.

Children who don't conform to sex-based stereotypes or who could grow up to be attracted to the same sex, should be supported in this. It needs to be clear that changing sex is not biologically possible.

The Women's Rights Party agrees with Resist Gender Education³⁰ that New Zealand's education system currently reinforces "social transition" (changing appearance to align with stereotypes of the opposite sex (or no sex), using inappropriate pronouns, and allowing use of opposite sex toilets and changing facilities), often without parents' knowledge.

The Women's Rights Party says teachers should not be supporting social transitioning in schools. Supporting social transition is a clinical intervention that often leads to medical transitioning and affects all students.

Teachers can refer concerns about children who show signs of distress about their sex to appropriate professionals in line with the recommendations of the Cass Report, and all such discussions must involve parents.³¹

Rationale

The Coalition Government has promised to remove and replace the Ministry of Education's Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidelines. Although we agree with this, it is important that age appropriate and truthful sex education is provided, so that children and young people understand biological facts.

Relationship education is important to promote healthy respectful relationships.

³⁰ Resist Gender Education, Independent New Zealand Guidelines on Sex and Gender in Schools, pp42-47; https://37cb5b24-1f23-47e7-9fb4-da93b8e03532.usrfiles.com/ugd/37cb5b_a262b3ea38d748438c453870127493da.pdf

³¹ <https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/> Recommendation 4, p32.

Consent education is important to promote an understanding in both sexes about the importance of consent, and of what it is. This will help reduce the sexual exploitation and/or violation of girls, women and young people, which occurs in our society and is linked to increased access to pornography from an early age.

Sexuality education is important to understand what sexuality involves, and to promote respect for all sexual orientations.

The Cass Report acknowledged the role of social influences on young people, including on-line pornography, social media, and peer pressure. The Report points out that "social contagion" may explain, at least in part, the exponential rise in the number of teenage girls being referred to gender services. This phenomenon has also been reported in New Zealand.³²

We support the Resist Gender Education's recommendations for school policies pp42-47, in their "Independent New Zealand Guidelines on Sex and Gender in Schools".

³² Paul, C. A Terrible Trap, <https://northandsouth.co.nz/2023/12/24/puberty-blockers-new-zealand/>

REFORM WORKING FOR FAMILIES

In the section Caring for Mothers and Children, a new policy has been added to the current policy (moved from Women's Incomes and Well-being):

Current Policy: The Women's Rights Party advocates for income support while raising our children or caring for our elders, recognising that mothering and caring is work and contributes to society.

Add: *The Women's Rights Party supports the campaign of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to reform the Working for Families (WFF) package, in order to support all lower income families, and to lift the poorest families out of poverty.³³ In particular discrimination against beneficiary families, many of whom are headed by single mothers, should be removed.*

Rationale

Many of the poorest members of our society are women and children, often in families headed by single mothers. The denial of critical parts of the *Working for Families* package to anyone who receives a benefit, entrenches this poverty, and divides some of the poorest women and children in society from the rest of society.

Nearly a fifth of all children in New Zealand, 220,000 children, live in poverty,

More than 200,000 children live in families for whom a benefit is the main source of income, and they are four times more likely than other children to live in poverty (material hardship). These figures reflect the fact that many mothers are also living in poverty.

Women and children who are Māori, Pacifica or disabled are especially likely to be locked into material hardship.

Discrimination against beneficiaries contravenes our obligations under the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

A package aimed at supporting the financial needs of families, should value and support all women's mothering. It should not attempt to pressure the poorest of mothers, including those with young children, into paid work; by depriving them of essential support if they are not in paid work.

A key proposal of the CPAG is to fold the In Work Tax Credit (IWTC) into the Family Tax Credit (FTC), which is available for all low to middle income families.

This would be an effective first step towards greater social equity for mothers and children. It would help to quickly lift some of the poorest mothers and children out of poverty.

The following proposals from the CPAG are also worthy of consideration:

³³ CPAG 2023 Policy Brief on Working For Families

Fix "Working For Families" income assistance for children in low-income families Susan St John, Mike O'Brien June 2023 <https://tinyurl.com/px3rsh2r>

- Index annual increases of WFF with annual wage increases. This will help maintain social equity.
- Raise abatement thresholds and reduce abatement rates for those in paid work, which will facilitate mothers to undertake paid work and raise their incomes.
- Change the name, WFF, to make it clear that this income support is available for all families who need it, not only those in paid work.

PAY EQUITY

Amended as follows....

Under Women's Incomes and Well Being, add to 2nd paragraph as follows:

Current policy: More than 50 years ago, union leader and former MP Sonya Davies championed the "Working Women's Charter". Much has yet to be achieved, including pay equity.

Add: *Work typically done by women, particularly Māori, Pasifika and Asian women, continues to be undervalued, contributing to an on-going sex-based pay gap and sex/ethnicity pay gap.*

The Women's Right Party advocates for effective policies to deliver pay equity in private sector as well as public sector jobs, including a strong onus on employers, publication of average hourly pay statistics by occupation, sex and ethnicities, and legislative support for Fair Pay Agreements.

Rationale

Pay equity is about equal pay for work of equal value. In 2020 the Equal Pay Act was amended after the Court of Appeal found that the Equal Pay Act 1972 not only provided for equal pay for men and women doing the same work, but also for women and men doing different work deemed to be of the same or similar value.

The so-called "gender pay gap" measures the difference between women's and men's earnings across different industries and organisations, including the Public Sector. In fact, the Equal Pay Act 1972 does not use the word "gender" but instead refers to "sex" so we refer to the pay gap as being "sex-based".

The sex-based pay gap in Aotearoa New Zealand has reduced steadily from 16.3% in 1998, but has fluctuated over the past decade. It is currently [8.6%](#).³⁴ The pay gap for wāhine Māori, Pacific and Asian women is significantly higher than the overall gap.

Median hourly earnings for all women are currently \$30.15 compared to \$33.00 for all men (as at September 2023). European women had median hourly earnings of \$31.50, but by comparison, Asian women earned \$29.00, wāhine Māori earned \$28.29, and Pacific women earned \$28.00.

What causes the sex-based pay gap?

The causes of pay inequity are complex. A significant proportion of the pay gap is due to factors such as differences in education, the occupations and industries in which men and women worked, or the fact that women are more likely than men to work part-time.

Much of the sex-based pay gap is considered to be due to harder to measure factors, like conscious and unconscious bias and differences in men's and women's choices and behaviours.

Behaviour, attitudes, and biases

There remain deeply held societal attitudes and beliefs about the types of work that are appropriate for men and for women, the relative importance of occupations where

³⁴ Ministry for Women, <https://www.women.govt.nz/women-and-work/gender-pay-gap>

men or women dominate, and who does unpaid work. These attitudes affect not only the choices men and women make around paid and unpaid work, but also the behaviours of others toward those who make choices that are not consistent with these traditional beliefs.

Bias makes it difficult for women to adapt and succeed in workplaces. It is difficult to detect, both by those who benefit and those who are disadvantaged. It influences small day-to-day behaviours (like who is called on to offer an opinion or undertake challenging tasks, and whose contributions are positively acknowledged in meetings), as well as decisions on hiring, promotions and setting salaries. While discrimination is against the law, bias can affect decisions people make in ways they're not aware of.

Occupational segregation

["Occupational segregation"](#) refers to the clustering of men and women workers in particular occupations, like cleaning, nursing, clerical work, and caring roles in the aged care and disability sectors.

Occupational segregation can widen the sex-based pay gap, as women-dominated occupations tend to be lower paid than those dominated by men and there is a higher proportion of men in senior positions.

Pay equity claims use factors such as "problem-solving", "interpersonal skills", "responsibility for services for people" and "emotional demands" when comparing work typically performed by women with work typically performed by men or historically performed by men. The factors have been designed to be free of assumptions based on sex roles and stereotypes.

Unpaid and caring work

Women and men have different patterns of participation in the paid workforce, principally because women spend a greater proportion of their time on unpaid and caring work than men. When women return to the paid workforce from career breaks, they often have trouble getting their careers back on track.

Although unpaid work makes an important contribution to the economy and plays a pivotal role in society and to individuals and communities, it is not visible, widely understood, or recognised, as 'real' work. All of this has a significant impact on women's lifetime earnings and financial security.

Reducing inequitable pay

The solution to the sex-based pay gap requires effective policies to deliver pay equity in private sector as well as public sector jobs, including a strong onus on employers, publication of average hourly pay statistics by occupation, sex and ethnicities, and legislative support for Fair Pay Agreements.

WOMEN'S RETIREMENT INCOME

In the section Women's Incomes and Well-being, a new policy has expanded on the current policy:

Current policy: Women, due to low pay in typically female jobs, low income over their lifetime, part-time employment and career breaks to raise children, and disadvantage following relationship breakdowns, are more negatively affected financially as we age.

The Women's Right's Party advocates for accessible and free financial advice and support to be available to all women, as needed.

Add: A major source of the disadvantage women face in retirement is inequity in retirement savings. In New Zealand, the average KiwiSaver balance for women is 25% lower than the average balance for men across all age groups.

The drivers of KiwiSaver inequity are well understood, and it is clear that more can be done by the Government to improve equity in retirement incomes for women. We support the following proposals:

- Require an employer to treat all its employees the same when it comes to the employer KiwiSaver contribution.
- Address pay equity. The "pay gap penalty" on KiwiSaver contributions is equivalent to an additional three or more years of retirement income; a meaningful difference in spending potential as women tend to live longer than men.
- Continue employer contributions to KiwiSaver during maternity leave.
- Address the so-called "motherhood penalty" with a contribution by the State to carers' KiwiSaver funds, that recognises the social value of childcare provided by those who are not in paid employment (usually mothers) and by those who are the primary carers for dependants and other family members who need a high degree of support.

Rationale

Sex-based discrimination in employer contributions

One of New Zealand's largest employers of women, Health NZ Te Whatu Ora, contributes the minimum statutory 3% KiwiSaver employer contribution to its women-dominated workforces - nurses, midwives, clerical workers, cleaners and food services workers. But the historically male-dominated doctors and dentists are paid a 6% employer contribution on much higher salaries. Such arguably sex-based discrimination by the same employer is lawful under the Human Rights Act.

Requiring an employer to treat all its employees the same when it comes to the employer KiwiSaver contribution would address this issue.

Pay Equity

Addressing pay equity would increase contributions for a woman working full-time on the median wage by around 9.0%, according to the NZIER. For a woman working full-time and earning the median wage, the pay gap penalty on

KiwiSaver contributions at 65 years old is between \$35,000 and \$56,000. The difference is equivalent to at least three years of retirement income; a meaningful difference as women tend to live longer than men.

Maternity Leave payments

The NZIER has estimated the effect of motherhood on KiwiSaver balances at age 65 to be between \$58,000 and \$318,000 if motherhood leads to part-time work or leaving the labour force, compared to full-time employment.

Continuation of payments during maternity leave would make a huge difference to women. The cost to employers would be around \$4000 a year. For business, such an investment in staff wellbeing and loyalty should be weighed against the cost of recruiting new employees and getting them up to speed. Many large businesses in New Zealand already offer women this employee benefit.

State contributions to carers' KiwiSaver funds

The NZIER has recommended that the State contributes to carer's KiwiSaver funds as a way to close the retirement savings gap for those who are the primary carer for dependants and other family members in need of a high degree of support, such as people with severe disabilities, or age-related care needs.³⁵

The NZIER Report provided evidence that carer roles are more often filled by women in the family than men. They quoted recent survey results showing that women were most likely to report that they did most or all of the childcare and homeschooling during the COVID-19 lockdowns in New Zealand.

Unlike professional carers, family members and mothers do not receive compensation for the service they provide to society. Women are far more likely to provide informal care to elderly parents and to reduce their hours or to retire early to do so. Women are also more likely than men to retire early to help care for grandchildren.

Carer payment approaches are used in a number of countries. In Luxembourg, contributions to pension funds are made for the first four years of a child's life. Estonia pays employer contributions during childcare periods (limited to three years per child). These examples support the primary carer to parent before the child starts school.

In New Zealand, the State could contribute 3% of the national median wage to KiwiSaver accounts of those primary carers of children or adults who are not participating in the labour force. This could be adjusted for part-time or full-time departures from the labour force. This would make a positive material contribution to mitigating the "motherhood penalty", especially for women who do not return to work between children and cannot access the benefits of maternity leave for subsequent children.

³⁵ <https://www.nzier.org.nz/news/kiwisaver-equity-for-women-building-long-term-financial-wellbeing>