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S19.13

Submission to New Zealand Productivity Commission on Technological change and the future of work

Introduction

- 0.1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 15 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Employment Standing Committee.

1. Summary

- 1.1. We know from history that periods of change and disruption offer exciting opportunities as well as threats. Currently women and particularly Māori women are disadvantaged in the NZ workplace. Women's work is less valued than men's work as is evidenced by the gender pay gap (currently 9.2%) and the disproportionately low number of women in senior management and leadership positions in the public and private sectors.
- 1.2. AUT academic Gail Pacheco argues in Empirical evidence of the gender pay gap in New Zealand¹ that the majority of this pay gap stems from bias and discrimination. Margaret Retter, Acting CE Ministry for Women, notes in the foreword that "around 80 percent of the gender pay gap is now due to 'unexplained' factors, which the Ministry views primarily as behaviour, attitudes, and assumptions about women in work, including unconscious bias".
- 1.3. This undervaluing of the skills and talents of half the population is a pull on national productivity and the under-payment impacts negatively on the economy and GDP. Unless New Zealand urgently acknowledges and addresses the current behaviours, attitudes and assumptions causing the gender pay gap it will continue into the future along with technological advances that may exacerbate

¹ Pacheco G, Li C, Cochrane B. 2017. Empirical evidence of the gender pay gap in NZ.
https://women.govt.nz/sites/public_files/Empirical%20evidence%20of%20GPG%20in%20NZ%20-%20Mar2017_0.pdf

gender bias. NCWNZ believes these new technologies could in fact be used to promote the empowerment of women.

- 1.4. NCWNZ has submitted in support of workplace legislation currently in process and is hopeful the government's stated commitment to valuing women's work will result in true gender equality in the workplace. We believe women's voices must be heard equally with men's voices for this to happen.
- 1.5. In 1977² NCWNZ made a resolution for the Executive to stress to the Commission for the Future and the New Zealand Planning Council that "despite many technological changes, a society's survival will always depend on the provision of love, security, a sense of worth and responsibility and of group identity, for every member of society from birth onwards". It is NCWNZ's belief that this still holds in 2019 and will continue into the future.
- 1.6. The following are responses from NCWNZ members to a selection of the Commission's questions.

2. Q1 Are the developed scenarios useful and how could they be improved?

- 2.1. The scenarios all use the concept of low skills e.g. in the first scenario low skilled labour may attract low or stagnant wages. NCWNZ believes there are very few low skilled jobs in New Zealand these days; even minimum wage jobs can be complex and require high levels of life skills. A good example is the *Kristine Bartlett v Terranova*³ case where Kristine had worked for a number of years as a care worker at the minimum wage. Her successful case in the Court of Appeal argued the work was considered low skill because it was carried out by predominantly female workers. The skills required in "female" occupations are often not acknowledged, are underestimated and are considered inherent rather than acquired and as a result are not rewarded equitably.
- 2.2. **Recommendation 1:** Employers and policy makers use equitable job assessment tools such as Spotlight and the Equitable Job Evaluation tool to accurately assess work which requires skills not recognised by formal qualifications.

3. Q4 How should the government monitor the impacts of technological change?

- 3.1. **Recommendation 2:** That the government monitor the impacts of technological change on women workers, particularly Māori, Pacific Island and disabled women. This would involve measuring any gaps in pay, appointments, promotions or access to digital upskilling.

² NCWNZ. 2012. 115 years of resolution. 2.10.3 <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything-2.pdf>

³ In the Supreme Court of New Zealand between Terra Nova Homes and Care Limited applicant and Service and Foodworkers Union Ngaringa Tota Incorporated First Respondent, Kristine Bartlett Second Respondent, SC127/2014 [2014] NZSC196 https://www.courtsofnz.govt.nz/cases/terrano-homes-and-care-limited-v-service-and-foodworkers-union-nga-ringa-tota-incorporated-and-kristine-bartlett/@_images/fileDecision

- 3.2. **Recommendation 3:** That the government monitor work carried out predominantly by women in the service sector which may require less technology skills to ensure that this work is valued and paid equitably.
4. **Q9 What types of worker protections might be required where technology provides employers with a growing ability to monitor staff or discriminate against some people?**
- 4.1. A growing number of employees work from home due to developments in monitoring software e.g. admin workers and call centre operators for Ministry of Justice and Auckland Council. There are advantages and disadvantages for employer and employee but some home-based staff find they are paying for costs such as heating, tea and coffee which formerly were covered by the employer. Health and safety and provision of a suitable room and equipment must also remain the responsibility of the employer.
- 4.2. **Recommendation 4:** That where employees are home-based costs and responsibilities of the employer are not transferred to the employee.
5. **Q17 How well do the current outcomes from the education and skills system position New Zealand to respond to changing technology and different future scenarios.**
- 5.1. The recent Concluding Observations from CEDAW⁴ recommended that New Zealand “Continue eliminating stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, provide girls with career counselling, scholarships and other incentives to orient them to science and technology subjects, including meteorological studies, disaster risk reduction and climate change, and ensure that stereotypes are addressed in the teacher-training curriculum”.
- 5.2. **Recommendation 5:** We need to continue eliminating stereotypes and structural barriers that may deter girls from enrolling in traditionally male-dominated fields of study, provide girls with career counselling, scholarships and other incentives to orient them to science and technology subjects, including meteorological studies, disaster risk reduction and climate change, and ensure that stereotypes are addressed in the teacher-training curriculum.
- 5.3. **Recommendation 6:** Education and upskilling to give the workforce the new skills required be equally accessible to women and men, Māori and pākehā, rural and urban as well as to disabled workers and those from minority communities.

⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. 2018. Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of New Zealand. CEDAW/C/NZL/CO/8. Recommendation 32(e). https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2fC%2fNZL%2fCO%2f8&Lang=en

6. Q 21 What, if any, further measures are needed to address any digital divides in New Zealand?

- 6.1. The same Concluding Observations⁵ recommended that New Zealand “Ensure expanded use of modern technologies and adequate broadband internet services in rural areas”.
- 6.2. **Recommendation 7:** That rural people will in no way be deprived of, or disadvantaged by, technological advances as applied to New Zealand, particularly in communications.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. NCWNZ welcomes this review of the impact of technology on the future of work and encourages a forward plan to be developed to ensure that no marginalized groups are disadvantaged as the impact of technology evolve. A number of recommendations have been identified and outlined in this submission, which NCWNZ believes could assist in ensuring New Zealand has a productive and equitable labour market where all can benefit.



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⁵ Ibid. Recommendation 42(c).