



Date

S23.03 oral

Oral submission to the Environment Select Committee on the Natural and Built Environments Bill

Presenters:

Christine Caughey and Julie Thomas.

Environment Select Committee

Members present included: Eugenie Sage (Chair, Green), Rachel Brooking (Deputy Chair, Labour), Chris Bishop (National), Tracey McLellan (Labour), Aupito William Sio (Labour), Angie Warren Clark (Labour)

Introduction

1. Kia ora koutou katoa, greetings from the National Council of Women of New Zealand (NCWNZ). My name is Christine Caughey and I convene the National Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Hub. I am joined by Julie Thomas of the Parliamentary Watch Hub.
2. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our written submission on the Natural and Built Environments Bill (NBE) that is underpinned by our written and oral submission on the National and Built Environment Exposure Draft Bill.
3. NCWNZ advocates healthy, natural and built environments that includes the health and wellbeing of all women and children, tāngata and iwi Māori, diverse communities and those with disabilities.
4. We confirm our support for the Purpose of the Act in that it recognises and upholds Te Oranga o Taiao. We support the strengthening in the Act in giving effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Summary of submission

Definition of the Environment

5. We submit that the definition of the *Environment* does not adequately provide for the wellbeing of the natural environment and the built environment and its communities. Ecological integrity, mana and mauri of air, water, soils and connected landscapes should be central to enable a systems approach that supports healthy outcomes including human health and wellbeing. This approach should be informed not only by a partnership with Māori but in partnership with the science. Where there is imbalance between the natural and built environments, it is the health and wellbeing of communities and equality that suffer most, in particular of women and children.

Amenity values

6. NCWNZ recommends the inclusion of amenity values defined as 'the natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreational attributes.'¹
7. Giving effect to amenity values provides for an environmental outcome that enables health and wellbeing, not only for the environment but also for communities including women and children. This is consistent with Te Oranga o te Taiao.

Climate change

8. The Act should be strengthened to give effect to key criteria that support the building of resilience to the rapidly advancing effects of the climate crisis and to developing techniques that will mitigate the advance.
9. The quality of life-giving resources such as air, water, indigenous biodiversity require protection as a matter of national importance. This provides for the living green lungs for our natural and built environments that support and maintain air cooling (in a heating planet) clean water and outcomes that support human health and wellbeing including for women and children.
10. Careful management of these resources and land activity must be designed to mitigate and avert the effects of the advancing climate crisis. The recent intense and multiple cyclonic weather events that have brought severe adverse effects is a wakeup call.
11. Urban centres are a significant generator of greenhouse gas emissions and Climate Change Minister James Shaw said every part of Government would need to take "urgent action" to turn the picture around.

¹ <https://www.nzaia.org.nz/stephen-brown.html>

12. A report covering all human-generated emissions between 1990 and 2019, showed gross emissions leapt by 26 per cent.² All aspects of development under this Act should be required to reduce carbon emission as a matter of national importance.
13. The design and implementation of effective low carbon infrastructure to handle a range of climatic circumstances should be an essential outcome of all consent applications. This should include urban heat, water, retreat from an advancing coastline, resilient infrastructure and more. As our urban areas are densified and expanded this must become a matter of national importance.
14. If this Act does not include provision for the health and wellbeing of natural and built environments and including women and children, the ongoing cost to the nation will be unquantifiable. The Act should be regarded as the enabler in leading change in the planning for and mitigation of the climate crisis across the motu. The Act should be strengthened, and its processes simplified to support essential outcomes.

National Planning Framework (NPF)

15. The purpose as stated is limited by the exclusion of reference to human health including women and community wellbeing. Human wellbeing is critically dependent on the quality of the natural and built environment. The national planning framework should remove silos to integrate human and environmental health and wellbeing, without which the purpose of the NPF and the Act cannot be achieved.
16. Taken together, the NPF, the Natural and Built Environment Bill and with the Spatial Planning Bill, will increase the centralisation of power in government, and bring bureaucratic and standardised decision-making processes and outcomes. This is not supported and appears contradictory to the intent of the Act. There is a significant reduction in opportunity for community engagement and litigation costs will be unaffordable. This reduces equality and in particular opportunity for women to engage.
17. NCWNZ submits that further review is required to address these serious issues.

Extraordinary Clause 19 (2) (c)

18. We draw your attention to this extraordinary clause. In assessing an application, the Act prescribes that the board must not have regard to adverse effects arising from the use of land by people on low income ... and others.

² <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/climate-change-why-are-nzs-emissions-still-rising/LRAOLGXTE6DFH2FHYF7H4NMWY/>

19. This subclause is regressive, and we recommend it be deleted. It is discriminatory and in some circumstances a violation of equality and human rights.

Gender balance in appointments

20. The provision for gender balance in appointments to regional planning committees and boards of Inquiry has been ignored. In order to provide for the diversity of knowledge and thinking that women contribute, the Act should require gender equality in all appointments.

Why women and children and wellbeing

21. Aotearoa New Zealand is reported to have some of the worst statistics on family violence in the OECD.³ The effects of stresses, many of which are avoidable is a key cause of family violence. Healthy living environments is a contributor to wellbeing of women and children. Evidence shows higher levels of family violence after a disaster⁴. This is why it is essential to ensure the wellbeing in our natural and our built environments. This enables the wellbeing of communities and supports the health and wellbeing of women and children. In brief, this is also why it is essential to have women appointed to decision-making roles.

Conclusion and recommendations

22. NCWNZ submits there are significant issues in the Act that require major reworking to enable outcomes that actively provide for healthier natural and built environments and for equality.

23. Our recommendations are:

- i. *Environment* be redefined to enable natural and human health and wellbeing.
- ii. *Amenity values* be included by definition to be applied in giving effect to outcomes to provide for human and environmental health and wellbeing.
- iii. An integrated framework and systems approach be included in the Act to support public and private action outcomes in addressing the climate crisis.
- iv. It is essential to prioritise and deliver improved outcomes, for the well-being of all women and children who are disproportionately affected, including by climate change.
- v. The setting of targets for both human and environmental health to include the health and wellbeing of women and children and community as an outcome.

³https://www.google.com/search?q=NZ+family+violence+stats+OECD&client=safari&rls=en&sxsrf=AJOqlzUdq6Bs24k7vNvsXyWyTzcRoj0NW%3A1676505290173&ei=ynDtY_ikCqGG4-EP_7iW2AE&ved=0ahUKEwj4saPy3Jj9AhUh wzgGHX-cBRsQ4dUDCA4&uact=5&oq=NZ+family+violence+stats+OECD&gs_lcp=Cgxnd3Mtd2l6LXNlc nAQAZIKCAAQRxDWB BCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwAzIKCAAQRxDWBBCwA0oECEEFYAFAAWABg7StoAXAAeACAAQCIAQCSAQCYAQDIAQjAAQE& client=gws-wiz-serp

⁴ <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-apr-2013-the-hidden-disaster-domestic-violence-in-the-aftermath-of-natural-disaster/>

- vi. The statistics showing family violence where women and children are victims, be monitored and considered in the planning for wellbeing outcomes, as a requirement of the Act.
- vii. The Act provides for gender balance in all appointments.
- viii. The processes within the Act, should be accessible and affordable to reduce the centralisation of decision-making and power and consequential discrimination.

Conclusion

The Committee doesn't interpret Extraordinary Clause 19 (2) (c) to mean what was presented in the submission.

No questions were asked.

The Chair requested that we provide the speaking notes to the Secretariat.

Tracey McLellan was heard to say "Good points well made".