



1 November 2023

S23.17

Submission to the Environment Committee's Inquiry into Climate Adaptation

Introduction

1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing around 60 affiliated organisations and 200 individual members. Collectively our reach is over 200,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ has 13 branches across the country.
2. 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.¹
3. This submission has been prepared by NCWNZ through the Parliamentary Watch Committee and Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Hub with consultation with the membership of NCWNZ. It draws from several decades of NCWNZ policy² and submissions³ on issues endorsed by the membership.
4. The NCWNZ submission shares findings from research and reports on the inequitable impacts of climate change on distinct populations, and disproportionately on Māori communities and on women. NCWNZ asserts the importance of the role of Wāhine Māori/women in any process for community-led retreat

¹ [Resolutions - National Council of Women of New Zealand \(ncwnz.org.nz\)](https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/resolutions)

² <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/submissions>

³ S21.17, S21.17 Oral Inquiry on the Natural and Built Environments Bill

The current approach to community-led retreat and adaptation funding: its strengths, risks and costs

1. The Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat⁴ has identified that community relocation should contribute to eight essential outcomes, including physical and psychological safety, adequate and affordable housing, enhanced resilience and wellbeing, and reducing hazard risks while protecting environmental standards and ecological values. The report emphasises that socio-economic inequalities must not be exacerbated, and the rights and interests of Māori must be respected and given effect.
2. The report recognises the particular significance of retreat for low-income and vulnerable households which are disproportionately affected following natural disasters. It also acknowledges the impacts of colonisation and dispossession and regulation of Māori land on Māori communities, including their location in high-risk areas.
3. Recommendations include the recognition of Māori rights and interests, community centred and nationally enabled processes, and the need for funding and financing to ensure fairness and equity among communities and generations.
4. NCWNZ is supportive of these findings and recommendations but note an omission of the recognition of the importance of the role of women in any process for community-led retreat.
5. A new UNFPA report⁵ finds sexual and reproductive health omitted from most national climate plans. The report identifies that globally there is inadequate understanding of or inclusion of the rights of women in climate plans. “.. climate change is well known to act as a risk multiplier for women and girls. Climate-related displacement can disrupt access to family planning facilities and gender-based violence protection services, while increased food insecurity as a result of extreme weather can exacerbate the risk of stillbirth and severely impact maternal and newborn health.” As the study quotes, “Giving birth to another child is not in my plans anymore.”
6. The wellbeing of women and children is more adversely affected by poor urban environments. Conversely, women’s leadership in the design of housing and urban areas will help ensure outcomes that are fit for purpose and increase wellbeing and resilience for the whole community.

⁴ Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat. 2023. *Report of the Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat: A Proposed System for Te Hekenga Rauora/Planned Relocation*. Wellington: Expert Working Group on Managed Retreat.

⁵ [Taking Stock: Sexual and Reproductive and Health and Rights in Climate Commitments: A Global Review Summary \(unfpa.org\)](https://www.unfpa.org/taking-stock)

7. Women in formal and informal leadership roles are key to increasing the necessary adaptation, resilience, risk reduction and recovery at all levels. Women are involved in ensuring their families and communities have food, and fuel, and they will play a significant role in any community-led retreat process, including policy and planning. Women's participation at the political level locally and nationally has resulted in greater responsiveness to citizens' needs. At the local level, women's inclusion in leadership has led to improved outcomes of climate related projects and policies. On the contrary, policies or projects implemented without women's meaningful participation will increase existing inequalities and decrease effectiveness.
8. Much of the education and thinking of young people and children, the citizens and decision makers of tomorrow, about climate change and adaptation takes place in the home and in schools, where women play a key role, and their knowledge and understanding is critical.

Lessons learned from severe weather events and natural disasters in Aotearoa New Zealand for community-led retreat and funding climate adaptation

9. Lessons learned from the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle include the need for improved access and facilities, emergency food supplies, and health and safety measures and plans at home and in schools, and increased consultation and planning by governance bodies, relevant agencies, local bodies, iwi and businesses at the local level and nationally.
10. The importance of community-led responses is evident post-Gabrielle. There are multiple examples of grassroots community groups deploying disaster response efforts which are effective because of their deep understanding of the communities and their needs. Many women operate at grass roots level and their leadership and energy can be very powerful in local communities and beyond. During Cyclone Gabrielle, Te Whāriki Manawāhine o Hauraki (Women's Refuge in Hauraki), helped five rurally isolated Māori communities stand up emergency centres in their communities because there was no response from the district councils or civil defence. Women should be actively engaged with designing and implementing strategy

11. We also know that family harm increases after a natural disaster, and this was documented after Cyclone Gabrielle⁶ and after the Christchurch earthquake.⁷ Strong community-led responses to adaptation and managed retreat with women central to planning and decision-making are essential to ensure vulnerable sectors of the community are protected.⁸ Preparation for establishing emergency camps is needed, recognising women's specific needs including addressing safety issues. Internationally, there is documented evidence of violence against women increasing in camps and homes as a result of stress and displacement resulting from climate change. Preparation and adaptation requirements need to be included in the school curriculum, church and women's groups, and regional and local councils' plans and budgets.

Effective mechanisms for community-led decision making

12. International research⁹ has found that natural resource dependency shapes the ways different individuals and communities experience climate risk. Research demonstrates that managed retreat can exacerbate historical inequalities and perpetuate class, gender and racial disparities. Their findings showed that approaches that paid attention to equity and justice improved community wellbeing, rootedness, and access to livelihoods.
13. Case studies of effective community-led decision making in Aotearoa include the Common Unity Project Aotearoa (CUPA).¹⁰ This study demonstrates the benefits of including community input into adaptation and mitigation initiatives from those who have traditionally had limited participation in formal planning processes. The CUPA study shows that local government engagement with people around climate change cannot be separated from broader community development and wellbeing initiatives, and needs to be understood as longer term processes, rather than one-off project consultations.
14. Experts in Natural Hazard management in Aotearoa emphasise that for effective community-led decision making all voices need to be heard, including tangata whenua, women, youth, minority groups, future generations, our awa, and the species who share our future.¹¹ The Gender Action Plan¹⁵ adopted at COP25 stresses the importance of

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<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2023/02/women-s-refuge-says-no-surprise-family-harm-up-60pct-since-cyclone-gabrielle.html>

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<https://thespinoff.co.nz/the-bulletin/21-02-2023/why-women-are-especially-vulnerable-after-a-disaster>

⁸ <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/ideasroom/strong-communities-are-essential-when-disaster-strikes>

⁹ Ajibade, I., Sullivan, M., Lower, C., Yarina, L., & Reilly, A. (2022). Are managed retreat programs successful and just? A global mapping of success typologies, justice dimensions, and trade-offs. *Global Environmental Change*, 76, 102576.

¹⁰ Simon, K., Diprose, G., & Thomas, A. C. (2020). Community-led initiatives for climate adaptation and mitigation. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 15(1), 93-105.

¹¹ Glavovic, B (2023) Opinon: Managed Retreat in the Aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. Massey News. <https://www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/opinion-managed-retreat-in-the-aftermath-of-cyclone-gabrielle/>

women's inclusion and gender equality in the processes for discussions and decision-making on climate change. For women's interests to be appropriately considered in climate change policy responses, women need to be involved in strategic planning and decision-making.

15. Research also highlights the importance of attention to the needs of older adults who are particularly vulnerable to the stressors of climate change.¹² Over the next 30 years, Aotearoa New Zealand's population of seniors will grow from around 850,000 (17 percent of the population) to around 1.5 million (24 percent of the population).¹³ The older population is also increasing in proportion to the younger population. Seniors will be disproportionately impacted by heat, financial insecurity and ability to pay for electricity to cool or heat homes, access healthy housing, public transport, and live in areas that are not vulnerable to climate change weather. Planning for relocated communities that centre the needs of the most vulnerable sectors of our communities will benefit the community as a whole.
16. Wāhine Māori are vital in the response to climate change with their governance and stewardship, knowledge and lived experiences of te ao Māori for all Aotearoa New Zealand, together with Pasifika women, who are 25% more likely to be impacted. Their indigenous knowledge is vital as they draw on their lived environmental and climate change experiences; inclusiveness in promoting the wellbeing and safeguarding all communities is fundamental.

The role of the private sector in managing climate risk

17. Collaborations within private sector organisations such as the Climate Leaders Coalition and the Sustainable Business Network offer scope for collaborations across government on new ways forward. These networks could be leveraged to determine appropriate collaboration and support working alongside communities to determine options for adaption and managed retreat.
18. There is much to be learned from the experience of the Pacific region and Pacific nations' relationships to problem solving and preparation and adaptation linked to location. Pacific government and non-state actors have collaborated to develop The Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility.¹⁴ The framework aims to guide governments in addressing legal, policy and practical issues associated with climate change related displacement, migration, evacuations and planned relocation. The

¹² Gamble, J. L., Hurley, B. J., Schultz, P. A., Jaglom, W. S., Krishnan, N., & Harris, M. (2013). Climate change and older Americans: state of the science. *Environmental health perspectives*, 121(1), 15-22.

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<https://www.hud.govt.nz/news/the-long-term-implications-of-our-ageing-population-for-our-housing-and-urban-futures/>

¹⁴ https://www.ilo.org/suva/public-information/WCMS_850454/lang--en/index.htm

framework has been developed by and for the Pacific to allow space for complete self-determination. These principles are also now reflected in the Blue Pacific regional strategy which notes the importance of protecting cultural values, heritage and traditional knowledge in protocols for climate change related relocation.¹⁵

Potential institutional arrangements, including roles and responsibilities of central and local government agencies, iwi and hapu

19. Institutional arrangements, including roles and responsibilities of central and local government agencies must put Crown obligations into effect.

Māori participation, Crown obligations, and how to best give effect to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and integrate mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori across the adaptation system

20. Any discussions on relocation must give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi through partnership and participation with iwi, hapū, and whānau to integrate mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori principles across adaptive system changes.

21. Manaaki Whenua's 2021 report on observed and projected climate change impacts on whānau/hapū/iwi and Māori business in Aotearoa-New Zealand highlights the specific vulnerabilities of Māori to losing traditional knowledge and cultural practices as marae are threatened by rising sea levels and floods. This in turn risks increasing existing health inequities for Māori, as extreme weather events such as heatwaves and storms may increase the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.¹⁶ Māori and Pacific people are also over-represented in drowning statistics, leading to calls for swimming lessons.¹⁷

22. Recent research suggests that 80 percent of marae are built on low-lying coastal land or flood prone rivers. Māori are therefore disproportionately impacted, but also play a critical role in times of crisis. Marae are community hubs/evacuation centres and provide kai and shelter after a natural disaster. It is therefore imperative that Māori are at the decision-making table. The advantage of a localised response is clear from the response to Cyclone Gabrielle. It also means enabling a different approach to thinking about adaptation and managed retreat with the 'ethos of Papatūānuku coming first, rather than being about extracting resources as much as possible.'¹⁸

¹⁵ 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent / Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Suva, Fiji: Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2022.

¹⁶ Awatere, S., King, D. N., Reid, J., Williams, L., Masters-Awatere, B., Harris, P., ... & Jackson, A. M. (2021). He huringa āhuarangi, he huringa ao: A changing climate, a changing world. A report prepared for Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga.

¹⁷ Webber, J., Moran, K., French, C., Fozard, F., & Pearless, O. (2020). Fatal coastal drowning incidents: A 10-year review of body recovery times in New Zealand. *Forensic science international*, 317, 110573.

¹⁸ Stewart, E (2023). 'Our tīpuna knew when to move' - The difficult conversations about managed retreat for Māori, RNZ

Alignment and integration with existing legislation and regulatory framework, including the reformed resource management system and any changes needed to regulatory powers and potential economic or other incentives needed to support adaptation actions (both before and after extreme events)

23. Expert Working Group findings note that constraints in the government's current institutions limit its ability to support communities to relocate, including current and proposed land-use planning.
24. Research into the inequitable impacts of climate change on distinct populations clearly shows that pro-equity policy changes are needed in the health and disability sector to avoid exacerbating health inequities for Māori.¹⁹ Pro-equity policies and institutional arrangements must be the foundation of any relocation planning.

Funding sources, access to them and principles and criteria for cost sharing

25. The Ministry for the Environment's report on community-led retreat and adaptation funding²⁰ stresses the importance of ensuring equity between and within communities and generations. Any relocation options should also consider that women are disproportionately impacted by the economic impacts of climate change. The UN notes that women often do not have sufficient access to funds aimed at covering weather-related losses, nor do they have funds to service adaptation and mitigation technologies.²¹
26. It has been stressed elsewhere²² that managed retreat is more than 'who pays'; it is a human-centred, inter-generational challenge.

Conclusion

27. The key message of this NCWNZ submission is that the impacts of climate change on the most vulnerable communities must be central to policy decisions.

¹⁹ Awatere, S., King, D. N., Reid, J., Williams, L., Masters-Awatere, B., Harris, P., ... & Jackson, A. M. (2021). He huringa āhuarangi, he huringa ao: A changing climate, a changing world.

²⁰ Ministry for the Environment. 2023. *Community-led retreat and adaptation funding: Issues and options*. Wellington: Ministry for the Environment.

²¹ UN Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change Factsheet.
https://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/downloads/Women_and_Climate_Change_Factsheet.pdf

²² Glavovic, B (2023) Opinion: Managed Retreat in the Aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle. Massey News.
<https://www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/opinion-managed-retreat-in-the-aftermath-of-cyclone-gabrielle/>

28. Wāhine Māori/women in formal and informal leadership roles are key to ensuring any community-led retreat and adaptation responses result in equity, justice and community wellbeing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Manning'.

Suzanne Manning
NCWNZ Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Hughes'.

Emma Hughes
NCWNZ Climate Change & Environmental
Sustainability Hub