



## Add “sure to rise” to “shovel ready” for the best COVID recovery for women and the planet



*The government needs to provide more support for not-for-profit initiatives that create employment like the [Wise Collective](#) seen here.*

Unsurprisingly, Covid-19 has hit women’s jobs hard and fast – over 90% of those who lost their jobs in the first three months of Covid-19 were women. In tourism – one of the hardest-hit industries – the number of women workers dropped 8 per cent in the June quarter, compared to the year before. For [Māori women in tourism](#), StatsNZ data show the drop was twice as steep: a whopping 20.5 per cent, or 4000 people.

Yet disappointingly, “shovel ready” projects fast-tracked by government to provide employment are drawn mostly from sexist and male-dominated industries – and we know employers are often actively hostile to employing women, and/or have family-unfriendly conditions (which are not good for men either). So women are faced with a COVID double whammy: more likely to be fired, less likely to be hired.

This unequal and intersectional burden on women was predicted by [Auckland Women’s Centre](#) and many others. It’s not acceptable to allow women to bear the brunt of the recession. Wāhine Māori and women of colour should not be used as “[shock absorbers](#)” for the economy. But this is our [default setting](#) and it gets entrenched in our thinking when [Treasury directly refuses](#) to analyse the

effects of government policy on women. This is the white patriarchy at work, folks.

Here at Auckland Women's Centre, we think the answer is two-fold: first, use this opportunity to pressure (and support) shovel-ready sectors to shed their patriarchal ethos and hire women. We are pleased Warwick Quinn, head of the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation [agrees](#) this recession is a "golden opportunity to fast-track diversity in the sector." Any culture change is a long-term challenge, but this means decision-makers shouldn't put ingrained sexism in the "too hard" basket; they should start work on it *now*. A follow-up pandemic response needs to protect *all* women, and only fund those projects and businesses which contribute to collective, long-term well-being, including [looking after Papatūānuku, and increasing gender and ethnic equity](#).

Second, the pandemic response should invest in people as well as in their built environment – investing in health, education and community development also creates jobs. As [one commentator](#) puts it: "Aotearoa can make different productivity gains by investing in healthy kids and thriving communities." This would not only be better for women's paid employment, but it would also be better for women overall – better for everyone.



*Investing in education, health and community development creates jobs for women and benefits the community*

Let's support community-based, not-for-profit, job-creating initiatives with social goals for women, such as The [Wise Collective](#) of women with refugee backgrounds. Let's address the critical shortage of mental health workers – and ensure that kaupapa Māori and culturally appropriate services are the key goal and destination of those workforce increases.

On twitter, [teachers recommend](#) increasing teacher aides, and expanding the school meals programme even further to create jobs; E Tu unionist [Sam Huggard](#) calls for a full “green new deal for working women”: accelerate pay equity; fully fund social service NGOs (yes please!); fix funding disparity between Māori and state services; ensure government contractors pay a living wage via the procurement process; ensure safe staffing ratios in aged-care – the list of great ideas goes on.

Many of Sam's recommendations are already prepped and ready to roll: implement the disability employment action plan; carry out Whakamana Tāngata – the Welfare Expert Advisory Group recommendations. And happily, a few of them have become campaign promises for some of the parties.

The Ministry for Women now has a COVID-19 response unit. Although we're waiting for their first move, it's pleasing that Minister Genter [acknowledges](#) “Over the past decade we've underestimated the importance of work in the public sector as well as unpaid work that's often undertaken by women.”

But actions speak louder than words. In the same [Spinoff article](#), public policy expert Jennifer Curtin notes “They've just come out to invest in material stuff while ignoring the social world. They didn't envision an economy that looks different.”

For every policy and project, Auckland Women Centre would like the next government to ask: how will this assist with the long-term wellbeing of [Papatūānuku](#) and all her people?

That will ensure all initiatives, whether shovel-ready or not, are “sure to rise” into a thousand blooms of promise and potential for future generations.



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