



The Future We Want: Equity For All

Our Recommendations for a Post-COVID World



Women – particularly Wāhine Māori and women in marginalised communities – should not be used as ‘[shock absorbers](#)’ for the economy. The gendered nature of paid and unpaid work in our society means this is likely to happen unless specific policy attention and measures are taken.

We urge that all women be protected by a pandemic response package that uses an intersectional approach and prioritises caring, community and all contributions to collective well-being.

The term “women” includes all women including trans women and cis women.

“What kind of future do we want for women, particularly Wāhine Māori, after Covid-19?”

Join us for our online kōrero with Laura O’Connell Rapira

(Te Ātiawa, Ngāpuhi, Te Rarawa, Ngāti Whakaeu; Director, Action Station)

in conversation with Stacey Morrison (Ngāi Tahu, Te Arawa)

7:30pm – 9pm. Tuesday May 26. [Click here to register.](#)

Background: Our Assumptions

- The country as a whole will be feeling unsteady for several months at least: feeling unfocussed, anxious, raw, upset and/or otherwise fragile, dealing with unprecedented uncertainty on all levels.
- Many communities and individuals who were under significant pressure pre-COVID19 are now nearer crisis or already in crisis, in terms of financial need and mental distress. Without significant intervention, mental distress is likely to increase as is material hardship.

- Domestic violence will have already increased under lockdown, and still be increasing.
- Immigration is likely to be extremely low for some time, with the possible exception of temporary tertiary students.
- Unemployment will rise considerably in the short term ([Treasury forecasts](#)). Unlike other recessions, this one is likely to hit some industries in which large numbers of women are employed ([Alon et al, 2020](#)) eg hospitality, media. Related loss of income and self-worth lead to physical and psychological challenges.
- International tourism is likely to be low until there is a vaccine (women ~55% of the tourism workforce according to [ServiceIQ, 2014](#)). This may include tertiary education tourism.
- Other industries where women are employed (health, older age care and compulsory education) are robust and some may expand.
- Many women are employed in personal service jobs, including cleaning, which carry most health risk or, alternatively, risk of unemployment.
- The Government wishes to focus on greater diversification of our export sectors (eg manufacturing, digital tech and primary industries), retraining and increasing productivity ([Robertson, 2020](#))
- Climate change remains a threat to the economic and social wellbeing of New Zealanders. The effects of climate change disproportionately impact on [women](#) and indigenous people: the climate crisis is a looming humanitarian disaster for women.

Recommended principles and policies

Below are our initial 16 recommendations in the areas of Te Tiriti, Safety, Caring and Employment.

1. Te Tiriti

Principles

Through convention, the Articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi have been interpreted and expressed through a set of principles. Importantly, the principles that we consider relevant here are premised on the Waitangi Tribunal's Wai 2575: Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry stage one report:

- **Self-Determination / Tino Rangatiratanga:** This provides for Māori self-determination and mana motuhake.
- **Partnership / Pātuitanga**
- **Equity / Mana Taurite**
- **Active Protection / Whakamarumarutia**
- **Options / Kōwhiringa**

Policy recommendations:

1. **Ensure there are clear and robust mechanisms to put Te Tiriti principles above into practice for all decisions and activities.**
2. **Prioritise the voice of Wāhine Māori in the development of initiatives to enable equitable gender and ethnic outcomes**
3. **Ensure women, as well as Māori, comprise at least 50% of every central and local government-appointed COVID19 taskforce/ advisory group/ decision-making body.**
4. **Consider how funding mechanisms, such as Whānau Ora (or similar), which support kaupapa Māori approaches to health, could be used to devolve decision-making power to Māori communities/ hapū/ iwi.**
5. **Initiate informal and formal consultations with Kaupapa Māori researchers and other Wāhine Māori about how to best ensure intersectional equity for Wāhine Māori within both Māori and mainstream contexts, including Wāhine Māori who identify as Rainbow (LGBTQIA+) and/or as having disability.**
6. **Consult with wāhine Māori about interest in the possibility of increasing Government funding and opportunities to support te reo me ona tikanga for wāhine, including offering equivalent opportunities for karanga as for whaikōrero in organisational events such as pōwhiri and poroporoaki.**

2. Safety

Principles

- i. **Physical and psychological safety is the right of all women in Aotearoa and is vital if women both individually and collectively are going to experience good health and wellbeing, and reach their potential.**

- ii. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure this right for all women in Aotearoa.

Policy recommendations:

7. Domestic, family and sexual violence support and prevention, including Kaupapa Māori services, must be fully resourced and their approaches informed by gender and equity analyses.

Rationale: This is a highly important area of social support, and one which was already inadequately resourced pre-lockdown. Lockdown and its aftermath of uncertainties provide ample opportunity for abusers and predators to push their advantage. We call for expansion of current services, and also an expedited timetable for changes to the justice system which the Government has already signalled are on their way.

Domestic and sexual violence is so prevalent in Aotearoa New Zealand that reducing it requires a multi-pronged approach and sustained engagement with multiple stakeholders.

Prevention needs to be at all levels, from identifying and intervening with those at the bottom of the cliff, as the strangulation law does, to preventing families falling off the cliff in the first place. The most effective prevention strategies are to: prioritise gender equality; address the impact of colonisation; and promote social norms that value women and children

8. Ensure all families and older people are housed in stable, adequate, appropriate housing

Rationale: The tourism-related economic downturn does include a possible silver lining for society as a whole – more accommodation may be made available as people turn Air BnB houses into long-term rentals or seek to sell them. The Government should take advantage of this to ensure all housing-insecure families and older people are given housing security, including housing appropriate to extended-families where live-in caring carries across multiple generations. This includes families after a parental or caregiver separation, particularly (but not only) where violence has been a factor.

9. Early Childhood Education to be accessible and free, with a commitment to a highly-trained workforce.

Rationale: There are many reasons for this policy; from a safety point of view, it's much easier for primary caregivers (usually women) to leave violent or otherwise problematic relationships if they have time away from their children

in order to organise logistics; for this to happen, they need to trust their children are being well cared for.

10. Individualise benefit entitlements to ensure that everyone can retain their financial independence, no matter their relationship status

Rationale: The welfare system currently forces people to be financially reliant on their partners, which (1.) offers scope for economic abuse, and (2.) leaves women without the financial independence to get out of problematic and violent relationships, and unhappy, dangerous and stressful living situations. Individualising income support entitlements would help to alleviate this issue.

3. Caring

Principles

- i. Caring for children and other vulnerable whānau members is a key responsibility for society.
- ii. In uncertain and troubled times, it is more important than ever that carers are properly supported.

Caring for children and other vulnerable whānau is a key responsibility that courageous and loving individuals take on, on behalf of society as a whole. It is more important than ever that carers are properly supported when both they and their charges have the emotional burden of dealing with uncertain and troubled times.

Caring can take a toll, particularly in a limited resource setting, and on carers who feel isolated and unsupported. In 2010, around 2 out of every 5 sole parents (43%) in NZ met the criteria for a diagnosable mental disorder in the 12 months prior, and 1 of every 5 partnered parents (19%). Anxiety disorder was the most common type of disorder among both groups ([MSD, 2010](#)).

Policy recommendations:

11. Lift all [part-time work and work preparedness obligations](#) from sole parents receiving benefits, and increase benefits to adequate levels

In a time of rapidly rising unemployment, parents should not be obliged to turn from their key responsibility of caring in order to apply for jobs that do not exist. This is an additional stress and source of anxiety, and is setting up people to fail. Those that do have the capability and desire to work should be

supported to do so (with training, for example), but there should be no obligation on all sole parents to do so.

Currently MSD describes Sole Parent Support (SPS) as “a weekly payment that helps single parents find part-time work or get ready for future work.” We believe this is an inappropriate aim, and that it should be a payment that supports single caregivers in order to care for their children.

Rationale: An estimated 73 percent of sole parents were in receipt of a benefit in 2009 (MSD, 2010), and Māori children have more than double the likelihood of growing up at least in part in a sole parent family than Pākehā children do ([Taonui, 2020](#)). Dealing with inadequate income is a major unnecessary anxiety for all family and whānau carers.

12. Implement paternal leave of 12 weeks for the child's father or second parent to be taken within two years, either as a block or at regular intervals (eg a day a week). This would be an additional measure to the current provisions under the Parental Leave Act.

Rationale: to enable shared childcare and domestic care, and to set up the expectation of shared care between genders and co-parents. In the case of children with only one parent named on the birth certificate, the named parent can nominate another caregiver to be entitled to the parental leave.

13. Establish funding that generates a variety of initiatives that encourage men who share households and/or co-parenting with women to share domestic responsibilities and labour.

Opportunity: The rāhui opened many men's eyes to the amount of emotional and physical labour and responsibility women have in the domestic sphere. Initiatives such as a public campaign would support this learning.

4. Paid Employment

Principles

- i. Paid employment must be secure with good working conditions. It must enable all people – men and women – to prioritise family responsibilities as desirable.
- ii. Workers must be appropriately trained and resourced in order to do their jobs properly
- iii. Fulfilling work assists with overall wellbeing
- iv. Pay Equity – equal pay for work of equal value.

Policy recommendations

14. The Government must increase the minimum wage rate to match the Living Wage by 2021

Rationale: Guaranteed living wages are vital in order to ensure that low-paid workers are not made to act as economic “shock absorbers” in this recession, particularly as it may be that a higher proportion of low-wage earners become their whānau’s, family’s and/or household’s primary breadwinner over the next few months as some partners on higher salaries lose their jobs. The Government’s plan to increase minimum wage, announced 2019, and was made in order to “catch up” a minimum wage that was already too low – not to keep up with inflation. For essential industries that are struggling, government subsidies could be considered, rather than making minimum wage too low.

15. Increase the amount people can earn before their benefit abates

Rationale: Apart from an inflation adjustment this year, abatement rates for benefits have not changed since 1986. The weekly threshold in 1986 (\$80) was the equivalent of 15 hours work on minimum wage; it is now \$90, or 5 hours work on minimum wage. ([Lifewise submission to the Welfare Expert Advisory Group, 2018](#)) Good quality, part-time work should be a genuine option for parents and others; it can assist with self-confidence and wellbeing, and can alleviate some of the stress of needing to look for nonexistent fulltime jobs.

16. Implement a procurement strategy that incorporates social goals and equity for women, especially Māori women

Social procurement is an opportunity to train and employ women, and drive the growth of businesses owned by women. When making decisions about awarding businesses government contracts, points are given for businesses which have good representation for women and Māori, and those businesses which incorporate social goals, for example by paying a Living Wage. Cleaning is an industry where women are overrepresented on low pay across government facilities: we call for the Government to investigate how social procurement strategies can improve the pay and wellbeing of these women.



Auckland
Women's
Centre