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To Ms. Janna Iskakova
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"General discussion on rural women"

Rural Women New Zealand is pleased to make this submission to the General Discussion on Rural Women.

Everyone has the right to fully participate in society (Report to the Royal Commission on Social Policy 1979). While it is paramount for rural communities to fulfil their economic goals, social exclusion should not be overlooked as it negatively impacts on a person's wellbeing and consequently their productivity. People should not be disadvantaged because of where they live and work.

Rural Women New Zealand recommends that a Rural Impact Assessment is applied to all policy and legislation while in development and before any decisions are finalised. This requires close analysis of the issues that specifically impact on rural. An RIA will mean ensuring that the needs and interests of rural people are properly considered in the development and implementation of changes to the Act. It is not about special treatment for rural areas, but about understanding how rural communities can be disadvantaged through lack of engagement at the beginning of the process.

Fair Travel Policy for the Homecare Workforce

Rural Women New Zealand has rigorously advocated to the Ministry of Health and District Health Boards (DHBs) to urgently implement a sustainable and consistent fair travel policy for rural home support workers. The purpose of this request is to cover the real and actual costs of travelling, including vehicle costs and time spent travelling. This has been a long and difficult process with our evidence based recommendations going unheard. Present conditions have home care workers working at below the minimum wage.

The fair travel policy is urgent but the Government has expressed reluctance to effectively remedy. In a letter from the Associate Minister of Health Hon Jo Goodhew she stated that "...a single national approach is not necessary as many District Health Boards have appropriate systems in place to cover travel costs..."

There is a 30% discrepancy between the payments of the different DHBs. DHBs are funded by the Government but all have different interpretations as to how this should be administered. Most disadvantage our rural homecare workforce of which 94% are women.

This situation was highlighted in recommendation three in the New Zealand Human Rights Commission "Caring Counts" report that the Government and its agencies, the District Health Boards remedy this anomaly. The

....Rural Women New Zealand President Liz Evans said "Ministers cannot continue to claim that Government is providing an increasing quality of services and carer training when all they are simply doing is requiring NGO's to meet increasing quality standards and higher levels of carer training at the unfunded cost of the NGO."

The Government legislates for increases to the minimum wage and yet provides no additional funding to NGO's to meet this new cost imposition; similarly it increases the employer contribution for KiwiSaver without a cost contribution. At the same time, DHB's divert older persons funding into their delivery of secondary services and fail to pass-on inflation increases; some DHB's have not passed-on an inflation increase for three years. The Government cannot claim that they are increasing funding for older persons services when they have no mechanism for ensuring that DHB's are utilising existing funding for such services.....

http://www.nzccss.org.nz/site/news_details.php?id=159 31 May 2012

National Action for Women

Following a remit that was passed at the Rural Women New Zealand National Conference in May 2013, the organisation wrote to the Government requesting a National Action Plan for Women. This has been declined by the Government. The Minister for Women's Affairs advises that by attending the Social Policy Cabinet Committee and other cabinet committees to be briefed is sufficient.

Canterbury Earthquake

Research has established the large spike in suicides in the rural North Canterbury region. This may be a combination of factors including the state of farming, adverse weather events and displaced people from the Christchurch earthquakes. Contributing factors have been EQC (Earthquake Commission) and insurance companies. Rental properties are at a premium in Christchurch with women and children homeless. Stories are emerging of women living in their cars.

There is a rise in Post Traumatic Stress Disorders in Christchurch and Canterbury. Research shows that young women are most affected.

While the Government responded initially to the Christchurch Earthquake there is very little or no robust contingency in place to provide additional funding for ongoing support. Rural Women New Zealand will launch its own fundraising programme in November for counselling for all families that are affected by adverse events.

Chief Coroner, Judge MacLean has expressed concern that suicides in the Canterbury regions may "peak" in 2014 in line with an international trend after natural disasters. International post-disaster research shows antisocial behaviour and suicide attempts peak in the third year of recovery which makes the RWNZ initiative more timely. It will also approach the Government to further fund additional programmes

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/9088438/Elderly-suicide-rate-higher-than-others> 26 August 2013

Family Violence

Family violence in rural areas continues to go underreported. During last financial year 551 women and 543 children living in rural areas received refuge services. That's a total of 1094 rural outreach services delivered. Low level negotiations with Police to have additional enforcement in areas immediately after an adverse event continue.

Rural Women and the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges are in discussions with regard to safe houses to support the refuge outreach services in rural communities. However Government funding to the Collective has not changed in four years which means they are unable to offer additional services to support rural families.

Elder suicides

31 men over the age of 85 per 100,000 committed suicide according to the latest statistics. Three women of the same age committed suicide at a rate of six per 100,000. These figures compared with 10 per 100,000 of the general population and 15 per 100,000 of farmers who commit suicide indicate an alarming concern in particular for older males. The Chief Coroner recommends investment in research.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/9088438/Elderly-suicide-rate-higher-than-others>

Thank you for this opportunity to submit.

Noeline Holt
Executive Officer
on behalf of the National Council Rural Women New Zealand