

The Circular #632May 2020

President's Kōrero



Kia ora

I'm writing this on Wednesday 22 April 2020, day 28 of our Covid-19 level 4 lockdown. It's hard to believe that four short weeks ago our country made this phenomenal shift. There has never been a time in my life where Aotearoa has been operating in a time of crisis and demonstrating collective personal restraint. The end of lockdown is in sight even if it can't be considered a reality until May 12th at the earliest.

Women and people who experience inequality are even more vulnerable in crisis. Personal wellness, economic security, having a violence-free home life, are starkly highlighted. This repeats again in the decision making space that governs the recovery and rebuild phases of life. Well rounded and compassionate leadership decisions that include listening to life-critical concerns are a cornerstone to ensure all people can survive and thrive.

Speaking of leadership, I'm pleased to share that the Board has co-opted two more wonderful women from our membership. Congratulations to Carol Beaumont and Jemma Titheridge; we are fortunate to have you with us. Arna Metcalfe is now our Vice President. Many thanks to the Nominations Committee for your

time and deliberations to bring these recommendations to us.

I wish you all well in your bubbles, and in adapting to a post lockdown community.

Ngā mihi
Lisa Lawrence

United Response

Secretary-General António Guterres has called on all countries to, "Make the prevention and redress of violence against women a key part of national response plans for COVID-19" Read the information behind the statements here. [UN Secretary General' policy brief: The Impact of Covid-19 on Women](#)

NCWNZ action and Covid-19

- NCWNZ has signed the [Statement on Rights at the Intersection of Gender and Disability During COVID-19](#) put out by Women Enabled International.

In efforts to respond to COVID-19, women, girls, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming persons with disabilities have been left behind.

This statement seeks to articulate particular issues that are impacting rights at the intersection of gender and disability during this crisis, and provide guidance to governments, United Nations entities, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations who are involved in the response.

- NCWNZ has endorsed the call from [Women Deliver](#) for G7 member states to take into account the gendered dimensions of the crisis, and to prevent the deterioration of gender equality and women's rights worldwide. This letter can be [found here](#).
- NCWNZ is working with some of our existing policies that are particularly worthy of discussion at this time. Thanks to our policy convenors and members who have been active on our Universal Basic Income policy and other area. This is something that we will be putting some energy into over the coming months.
- Lisa has been raising issues facing women at this time, and has met with Saunoamaali'i Dr Karanina Sumeo to discuss ways forward for women in a variety of areas.

These include:

- areas of inequality specifically - access to health services (reproductive and mental health), access to culturally appropriate service provision within mainstream secondary services.
- WINZ access to benefits still being discriminatory to those living in relationships and the perverse impacts this has on the social fabric of communities and family resilience, especially noted that good family relationships are a public health and well being necessity in a Covid-19 lockdown.
- Economic disparity is amplified in lockdown, with a large portion of those on the minimum wage being women over aged 25 years, often in frontline essential jobs. We look to support the living wage being the minimum wage and anything less than the living wage keeps employees in poverty.
- Family violence prevention and also the pressure on women to stay in bubbles that are abusive or coercive

These discussion points were with Dr Sumeo when she met with Parliamentary Undersecretary Jan Logie. Lisa will be meeting with others in the coming days to progress these issues.

Update from Family Planning

Jackie Edmond
Chief Executive, Family Planning



On 18 March 2020, our Parliament voted to remove abortion from the Crimes Act and treat it as a health issue in legislation. Just five days later, New Zealand moved to a month-long level 4 lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. While there has been little time to pause and reflect on the historic change to abortion law for our country, the importance of improving access to sexual and reproductive health services - including abortion - has been immediately apparent during the pandemic.

As the lockdown began, the Government recognised sexual and reproductive health care as essential health care, and supported organisations like Family Planning to offer services – albeit in a different way. Family Planning has made significant organisational shifts to the way we provide services during this time. Most services are currently offered remotely through phone consultations and in-person abortion services are still being offered at one of our clinics. As at 20 April, we were able to offer depo provera injections at some of our clinics where the clinic building allows for clients to enter safely. An expanded suite of services will be offered as the lockdown rules are relaxed and we move to lower alert levels.

It is worth remembering that until the law change last month, abortion services in this country had been delivered under legislation dating back to 1977. This legislation determined that an abortion was only legal if two doctors certified that legal grounds in the Crimes Act had been met. The vast majority (97%) of the 13,000 abortions each year were authorised under the mental health grounds, meaning that an abortion was granted to protect the mental health of the woman or pregnant person. Additionally, abortions could only be provided in specially licensed facilities.

This system meant that the decision to have an abortion was not in the hands of the person seeking an abortion, there were significant delays to accessing abortion, inequitable, limited access to services across the country and service provision was predominantly hospital based. This system meant that we faced difficulties delivering abortion services in a community setting with the exception of our Tauranga Clinic where we have been able to offer an early medical abortion service since 2013.

The process of changing our abortion laws was long and considered. While advocates had been calling for law reform for decades, governments had repeatedly not prioritised the issue because of the view that women were still able to access abortions under the current system, albeit with barriers, delays, humiliation, and lack of autonomy.

For supporters of law reform, there was a sense of hope that the issue did become a priority for the current coalition government. In 2018, the Government asked the Law Commission, an independent entity, to review New Zealand's abortion laws and provide advice for treating abortion as a health issue in law. Later that year, a report was published which offered three potential models for reform. In 2019, after nearly a year, the Government introduced the Abortion Legislation Bill, which was based on one of the models recommended by the Law Commission, and very similar to several laws which had recently been adopted in Australia. It was

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significant that it was a Government Bill, rather than a Bill being proposed by an individual Member of Parliament. Government bills are part of the Government work agenda and have more resources to support success than bills proposed by individual members.

While there was some public debate during the process of the Bill being considered by Parliament, compared to other countries, it was subdued. There were a number of national polls showing the majority of the public supported abortion rights and reform. Strong opposition came from a small but vocal minority of primarily religious groups, who oppose abortion altogether. Family Planning led a group of 30 plus organisations – ranging from health care organisations like the College of Midwives, to social service organisations like the Mental Health Foundation and Women's Refuge to broad issue groups like the National Council of Women – to sign an open letter in support of law reform. While some political parties were more likely to support reform, and some more likely to oppose, MPs from across the political spectrum had different positions on the issue based on their own personal beliefs. The legislation was considered by parliament as a conscience vote so MPs were free to follow their own conscience when voting. Unlike some countries, there was an acceptance of diverse views within political parties.

While improving women's rights and reproductive autonomy were part of the arguments in support of law reform, the primary messages, which were likely less polarising for the general public, was that this law change was about ensuring access to good, compassionate health care and that the current system was simply out of date, demeaning, and not aligned with best practice.

While it will take support and funding from government to fully realise improved access to abortion in New Zealand, the new law has made a critical difference during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, under the new law, people seeking abortion can self-refer to an abortion service, they can take medication abortion pills at home, and some abortion services have been provided remotely through phone consultations. None of this would have been possible under the old law.

Thanks to a new, modern abortion law, New Zealand can once again claim itself to be a world leader in sexual and reproductive health care and rights - at a time when it matters most.

Digital exclusion is a more pressing concern in a Covid world

The Citizens Advice Bureau recently published a report into digital exclusion. This is particularly appropriate at this time given the current situation that we are all facing. What does it mean to be digitally excluded and what are the social impacts? Read the [CAB Spotlight Report into the Impacts of Digital Public Services on Inclusion and Wellbeing](#).



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Rāhui v Lockdown

Suzanne Manning, Board member

During the current Covid-19 pandemic response we are experiencing at the moment, many people are referring to the 'lockdown' as a 'rāhui'. This is not just a change of word, it is a change of worldview, offering a different perspective on our experience.

When we refer to a 'lockdown', the English word carries a law enforcement association. Our rights are being curtailed, our freedoms limited – albeit with a high degree of willingness and compliance. The Māori word 'rāhui' places the focus not on the individual and their freedoms, but on the collective good, and recognises the rights of the environment. Just as the Whanganui River has been granted legal personhood status, and the National Policy Statements on Freshwater Management include protection of 'te mana o te wai' (the mana of the water), a rāhui recognises our interrelatedness with our environment.

According to the [Māori Dictionary](#), a rāhui is 'a temporary ritual prohibition' of an area or resource that has been polluted or for some reason needs to be separated from people. An area that is 'tapu' or sacred can be subject to a rāhui until the tapu is deemed to have dispersed. A common example is where death has occurred, making the area tapu. In that case the mana whenua (the iwi who are acknowledged as having authority in that area) may declare a rāhui. This will be initiated by someone of mana, placed and lifted through karakia, and marked by a visible sign or post (often painted red).

The placing of rāhui is being more commonly reported in the media in recent years. An example is [the rāhui that Te Kawarua ā Maki placed on the Waitākare forest](#) in December 2017, to save the forest from kauri dieback disease. The continued movement of people through the Waitākare forest was seen to be contributing to the disease and therefore a rāhui was placed on the area to prevent people from going there, allowing time for new and better management to be developed.

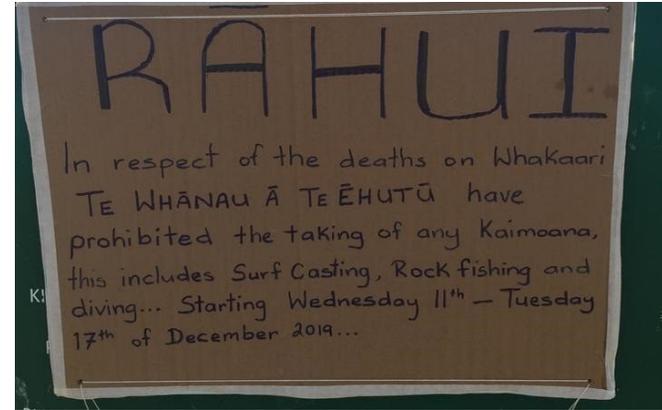
[A rāhui was placed on Tongariro](#) for three days after someone died on the mountain. The iwi explained their action with this announcement:

He aitia! He aitia! Ka papaki te tai o te atarau, ka huri aku kamo ki te tihī o Tongariro ki nga hihī o te ara e piata mai ana. Aue taukurī e!

It is with great sadness that Ngāti Hikairo ki Tongariro and Ngāti Tūwharetoa acknowledge the recent death in Tongariro National Park.

With the support of DOC, NZ Police and LandSAR a rāhui has been placed on the Tongariro Alpine Crossing for three days from today Friday 14 February 2020 and will be lifted at sunrise on Monday 17 February 2020.

A rāhui (physical and spiritual protection mechanism) sets a temporary prohibition around the rāhui area and limits access for that period in order to acknowledge the death and to express our sympathy to the whānau of the deceased. It provides time for tapu (sacredness) to dissipate following the death allowing time for healing and recovery of the natural elements at place as well as the people; in particular the grieving whānau. To show respect all hikers in the area are asked to consider using alternative tracks during the rāhui.



A sign for a rāhui in place following the Whakaari / White Island eruption. [Photo: Supplied to RNZ by Craig Te Kaha](#)

More examples of rāhui being placed on an area, because of death causing the land and water to become tapu, followed the tragedy caused by the eruption of Whakaari/White Island in 2019. Each of the Eastern Bay of Plenty Iwi declared a rāhui over coastal areas where they held mana whenua. [Radio NZ reporters Māni Dunlop and Te Aniwa Hurihanganui](#) quoted the words of Ngāti Awa rangatira Te Kei Merito: "There are a number of reasons to place a rāhui, and in this case the purpose is to acknowledge the fact that multiple people have already lost their lives as a result of the eruption. The application of rāhui in this instance is very much a sign of respect to those who lost their lives, and to their families."

When it comes to the Covid-19 pandemic, we are being asked to temporarily put 'business as usual' on hold, and to keep a physical distance from everyone except a few people we are close to. This has been declared by our democratically elected Prime Minister, a woman of mana and status in this country. These factors mean that the term 'rāhui' could be applied, although the fact that we are allowed to go walking and to supermarkets does not quite fit the strict nature of a rāhui. [Ngahiwi Apanui from Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission](#), said that the words noho taratahi (self-isolation) and taratahi (quarantine) were more appropriate.

Rāhui are being used to support the taratahi, however. The NZ Herald announced that [a rāhui had been placed on the Huka Falls Scenic Reserve](#) on 25 March, the eve of Alert Level 4:

Te Kotahitanga o Ngāti Tūwharetoa Trust made the announcement on Facebook last night saying the reserve would be closed, effective immediately. They said in a statement that they doubted many would visit the site due to the lockdown restrictions, but it was a "precaution to protect the community from potential transmission of COVID-19." The Department of Conservation has implemented the closure on behalf of the trust.

The worldview associated with the concept of rāhui – that enforced separation is sometimes necessary in order to restore the world to a state of normality, allowing the tapu to dissipate – is one that I prefer to that of being 'locked down'. It focuses on the world outside of me, and my place in the world, giving me a sense that respecting a rāhui is a positive thing; instead of words that suggest my personal rights and freedoms are being negatively affected. Perhaps the end result is the same, yet to me, words and worldviews make a difference.

Leadership In Lockdown from Women In Sport Aotearoa

[Women in Sport Aotearoa](#) has been running a brilliant series in partnership with Trans-Tasman Business Circle, IWG Women & Sport. All of the content is available online, with more webinars coming up throughout May. Leadership In Lockdown is another example of how organisations and individuals can be responsive in these changing times. Check out these [great resources here](#).



Universal Basic Income

Arudhati Roy [recently wrote](#) that “Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.”

We are using this time as an organisation to think about how we can repurpose the things around us that are not working for women. This is the first part of a wider discussion to be had on UBI and other mechanisms that are worthy of consideration.

NCWNZ Supports a UBI

Gabrielle BrettKelly, Employment Convenor

NCWNZ has supported the concept of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) for NZ since 1996. At our 2017 Conference we reiterated that support with the rationale that a Universal Basic Income would be just, fair, transparent and equitable.

NZNCW supports a Universal Basic Income (UBI) for NZ

At a time when the majority of NZ workers are physically isolated at home, not working, or doing only a fraction of their normal job, many of us are most anxious about our livelihoods. The government is offering wage subsidies and support to businesses as well as bracing for the highest numbers applying for unemployment benefits since the Great Depression. These are alongside existing benefits and entitlements such as superannuation but our benefit system is having to be tweaked and augmented to get us through this crisis. The idea of a Universal Basic Income has been discussed for decades and is right now being considered as a necessary safety net for citizens of our virus affected present. Finance Minister Grant Robertson told Morning Report, “A universal basic income was one of the options being considered to help people who lose their jobs or face uncertainty.”¹

It could also meet the needs of future New Zealanders seeking a more equal and creative life whilst coming to terms with climate change, increasing automation and artificial intelligence.

What is a Universal Basic Income (UBI)?

A basic income² is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement.

That is, basic income has the following five characteristics:

- Periodic: it is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.
- Cash payment: it is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.
- Individual: it is paid on an individual basis—and not, for instance, to households.
- Universal: it is paid to all, without means test.
- Unconditional: it is paid without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness-to-work.

“A basic income would provide everyone aged 18 and over with an unconditional, tax-free survival level of income each and every year.”³

What are the Benefits of a UBI?

1. It delivers non-asset tested equality of access to regular financial payments
2. Being non-asset tested means a person can gain/ hold a job and not lose their UBI allowance.
3. Without financial pressure, parents are empowered to make the choice to stay at home or not.
4. It enables low income families to participate more readily in society.
5. It reduces the need to have to choose between paying the power bill or putting food on the table.
6. It eliminates the stigma of families having to regularly prove poverty to an agency.
7. It reduces the shame felt by children having to stay home from school instead of participating.
8. It reduces the need for families to hold down two or more jobs to keep their heads above water.
9. Potentially it increases the availability of persons to volunteer in the community.
10. Persons who don't need it, will pay it back to the government via their income taxes.
11. Management of universal payments is simple eg the superannuation process.
12. Potentially allows people to leave precarious work and re-educate to increase their skills to participate in the new jobs that will be created post automation and post climate change.
13. The cost of managing the welfare/benefit system will be lowered, allowing a redistribution of government spending to other areas like education, housing and health, particularly mental health.
14. It will give hope to young people who see jobs disappearing and no place for them.
15. It will provide creative New Zealanders with the means to pursue art and culture.

Further Reading on UBI

[Here Be Dragons: Navigating a Left Approach to Basic Income in Aotearoa New Zealand](#)

Sue Bradford

[Universal basic income: be careful what you wish for](#)

Susan St John

[A Safety Net For All: The Minimum Income Guarantee would make sure no one falls through the gaps in our social security system.](#)

Sarah Arnold, New Economics Foundation

[Basic Income as Common Dividends: Piloting a Transformative Policy](#)

Guy Standing, Progressive Economy Forum

[The Universal Basic Income: should it replace the existing social security system?](#)

Robert Stephens, Policy Quarterly February 2019

[Pros and Cons of UBI](#)

RNZ From The Panel, 4:35 pm on 17 September 2019

[From Universal Basic Income to Public Equity Dividends](#)

Keith Rankin

Our friends at Action Station have a petition calling for an emergency universal basic income for everyone [which can be found here](#)



Oral submissions in a virtual space

Berl Anderson, Parliamentary Watch Convenor

The limitations imposed by Covid19 have meant that Parliament's Select Committees are operating remotely, with members of select committees and submitters meeting via Zoom. After having one online oral cancelled by a Select Committee, NCWNZ took up the opportunity to provide an online oral to the Environment Select Committee on the Urban Development Bill on 9 April. There were four MPs present. Climate Change and Environment Standing Committee Convenor Christine Caughey presented, and Margaret Ledgerton from the Parliamentary Watch Committee also provided input. The presentation could be watched live on the Environment Select Committee Facebook page. This was a first for NCWNZ and indicates how things could be done in future, with potentially more opportunities for convenors of standing committees to participate in presentations to select committees. It was felt that, while the process did not have the same dynamic level of communication as face-to-face presentations to select committees have, the process went smoothly and allowed NCWNZ views to be presented professionally.

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