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Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Minister for Education

Rural Women New Zealand



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Overview

Our rural communities are unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, are inherently resilient and unequivocally hold the economic, social and cultural strength of Aotearoa New Zealand in their hearts. Aotearoa New Zealand's history is populated by rural pioneers and entrepreneurs laced together with Te Ao Māori. Aotearoa New Zealand's rural communities are innovative, tight-knit and supportive. They value their heritage and contribution to our way of life which they hold dear and is the envy of many around the world. Rural women are the backbone of our rural communities and are vital to ensuring the communities in which they live, work, and play are strong and resilient. Rural women are leaders in their local communities. Government policies, legislation and decisions impact urban and rural communities differently.

About RWNZ

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) is a not-for-profit, member-based organisation that since 1925 has been reaching into all rural communities and for nearly 100 years has been, and continues to be, a credible, respected voice on rural environment, health, education, technology, business and social issues.

RWNZ is affiliated to the Associated Country Women of the World and as such upholds all United Nations, ILO, FAO and WHO conventions and outcome statements as they relate to women and rural women in particular. RWNZ is a strong supporter of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and seeks acknowledgement of these in its submissions to Parliament.

Role of RWNZ

RWNZ strives to ensure that all rural residents, workers and families have equitable access to services, inequalities are addressed by Government, and the wellbeing of rural communities is considered from the beginning of all policy and legislative development. Our Members play a vital role as leaders in their communities and as decision-makers at local, national and international level.

Engaging With our Rural Voice

Change begins when a community comes together to discuss issues that affect it. When given the opportunity, this togetherness allows rural communities to discuss the effects of government policy and legislation on those living and working in rural New Zealand. Rural voices must be included in consultation and policy development to ensure positive outcomes for rural communities.

Policy Development

RWNZ sees an opportunity for the Minister to ensure that all policy development includes a rural impact analysis alongside the Ministry's gender analysis tool. It is important to identify and mitigate any potential adverse impacts of the intersectionality of gender and rural living.

Currently there are guidelines for rural proofing at the Ministry of Primary Industries which support basic rural impact analyses and the

Ministry for Women has the gender analysis tool, Bringing Gender In. Using these together should give the desired platform, in the creation of policies and plans, for testing any issues that result from the intersectionality of being a woman, or girl, in rural New Zealand.

Consultation

RWNZ further recommends that the Minister encourages consultation and communication with rural communities to ensure effective participation and analysis.

Consultation can be achieved through the use of such mechanisms as focus groups, surveys and newsletters which are hosted and/or distributed by rural interest groups such as ours.

Leadership

RWNZ sees an opportunity for the Minister to partner with us to identify and encourage rural women to represent their communities on District Health Boards, advisory committees, reference groups and taskforces to ensure the voice of rural communities and the health issues facing women are understood and articulated.

International Instruments

RWNZ would like to see the Government action the United Nations Human Rights Instruments, which have been ratified by Aotearoa New Zealand, as they relate to rural women and girls, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the outcome statement of the 62nd United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62); the Beijing Platform for Action and; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Minister could advocate for actions across Government that include accepting and implementing any General Recommendations and State Party Specific Recommendations to Aotearoa New Zealand by the CEDAW Committee and any health outcome statements from CSW62.

Priority Areas:

Rural schools continue to play a vital part in the social cohesion and economic viability of rural communities.

Quality education for rural New Zealanders is compromised by workforce recruitment and retention, distance, isolation, and telecommunication limitations. As a result, rural educational opportunities are limited.

Rural New Zealanders should be able to access lifelong learning opportunities that will enhance their lives and enable them to contribute to their communities.

Extramural and distance learning are integral at all levels of our education system today and RWNZ believes that access to knowledge, skills and qualifications are essential for all New Zealanders regardless of where they live.

A lack of rural representation on government advisory committees and some school boards creates a lack of awareness of rural perspectives in decision-making and leads to inequity in the allocation of resources.

Recommendations for the Minister:

- Include rural voices in the development of education policies, procedures and legislation by ensuring that opportunities are offered to rural communities to have representation at workshops, forums and other meetings where challenges facing education are discussed and policies are developed.
- Ensure that Ministry staff include rural civil society groups in their scoping discussions when considering policies and plans
- Formulate strategies which develop and retain a skilled and multi-disciplined rural education workforce that ensures equitable career advancement;
- Allocate funding and increase resources to ensure that rural communities have effective access to all education services including special needs assistance, tertiary qualification

support, early childhood education and care, and availability and financial assistance for school boarding.

- Ensure rural schools have access to services including school property management which caters for a diverse range of students and rural communities.
- Ensure rural schools have the capacity, capability and resources to provide or accommodate health and wellbeing services for students, staff and whānau.
- Advocate for good quality consistent broadband and reliable cellular coverage to be available for every rural household in Aotearoa New Zealand to enable online life-long learning.

First 100 days

The strategic intentions articulated in the first one hundred days of government are vital to the ongoing success of Aotearoa New Zealand and the transformational leadership needed to lead these intentions should be obvious to all New Zealanders. The economic, environmental, social and cultural strength of the nation is at its most vulnerable as a new Government settles in to its place and we look forward to hearing of the central role rural communities will be playing in those strategic intentions and leadership of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Rural Women New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to meet with you in these first one hundred days to discuss opportunities for collaboration and we look forward to hearing from your office to that end.

He waka eke noa

Whāia te iti kahurangi ki te tūohu koe me he maunga teitei