

November 2020

Briefing to the Incoming Minister

Minister for the Digital Economy
and Communications
Rural Women New Zealand



Contents

Overview.....	3
About RWNZ.....	3
Role of RWNZ.....	4
Engaging with our Rural Voice.....	4
Policy Development.....	4
Consultation.....	5
Leadership	5
International Instruments.....	6
Priority Areas.....	6
First 100 days.....	7

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:

Internet connectivity and mobile coverage are essential to many aspects of our everyday lives. However, the lack of high speed quality and affordable telecommunication services in rural New Zealand creates inequity between urban and rural communities. This inequity hinders rural businesses by leaving them unable to undertake basic tasks online and delayed access to resources and information makes them less efficient and competitive.

Unstable connectivity is also a critical safety issue in the event of an emergency, accident, crime or adverse event.

Large areas of rural New Zealand still do not have mobile phone coverage and are especially vulnerable in a crisis situation.

Lack of internet connectivity impedes educational opportunities for rural students, access to tele-health services and is problematic for those who are now expected to use the internet instead of cheques and cash.

Recommendations for the Minister

- Ensure that every rural household has access to high quality internet and cellphone coverage.

- Provide nationwide access to affordable, quality connectivity by future proofing our communications networks;
- Share information on ways to increase rural connectivity and regular, informative progress reports by government on the rural connectivity roll-out;
- Financially support research into new and innovative ways to provide quality, affordable connectivity to rural and remote areas.

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