



15 December 2019

To the attention of:
Dr Mike Reid
Local Government New Zealand
PO Box 1214
Wellington 6011
alc@parliament.govt.nz

Re: LGNZ Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Local Government New Zealand discussion paper. The New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW NZ) welcomes this discussion paper which aims to promote localism during the build-up to the 2020 Parliamentary elections and inform the localism manifesto.

We are pleased that the paper outlines the beginning of a journey to trust its communities to play a meaningful role in our social, economic, and cultural development of our country.

Our interest in this submission is because women's rights to decide is a core priority for BPW New Zealand and influencing more just and equitable policies is an important strategy of this work. We advocate for international instruments that support and improve equity and fairness for all in creating a rights-based framework where women seek empowerment and wellbeing. We also advocate for international best practice to ensure human rights, including women's rights, as this is a core priority for BPW NZ.

General Comments

There is a growing need to develop and implement new forms of governance that respond to the increasing complexity of decision making and balance the roles of government and local citizens. State-based governance structures are perceived to be failing to achieve this balance, criticised for the on-going use of strategies that fail to adequately hear, and respond to, the diversity of concerns and conditions facing communities. In the last few years, localism is (re)emerging as an alternative to traditional 'top-down' governance strategies which are criticised for their failure to adequately respond to the diversity of community needs¹.

As problems across New Zealand society become seemingly more complex, and expectations of citizen participation in policy making and implementation rise, there is a growing need to develop and implement governance mechanisms that balance the often overlapping and competing roles of government and local citizens. Localism approaches typically give citizens

¹ Melanie Dare, Localism in practice, University of Canberra, Australia, 2013



an opportunity to become involved and engaged in decision making at the local level, where decisions affect them most. Localism is gaining interest in Canada, the UK, US, Australia with welfare, rural and natural resource management policies promoting a participatory approach that encourages people to solve their own problems².

We refer to **BPW policies**

Sustainable Development Goals

- (i) to work in collaboration with Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), non-government organisations (NGO's) and businesses, towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as signed at Commission of the Status of Women (CSW), United Nations, New York, March 2015;
- (ii) to undertake regular Voluntary National Reviews to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC, involving LGNZ, NGOs and businesses in the review, and to set a time for the initial review. (2018)

BPW NZ members recognise the merit of localism, where decision-making power, resources and functions are devolved from central control to local communities. Currently, many 'participatory initiatives' inspired by community localism fail to empower citizens because they represent one-off consultation exercises with limited devolution of responsibility or control. Localisation is needed and to be a 'conscious letting go of power', by central government. This shift in power requires courage. Courage to adjust our mindset and structures and invest in communities.

The majority of responses from our membership supported localization and investment and effective people's decision making and participation. We understand the strategic importance of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at local level. To achieve this, resources, decision-making, skills, staff but most importantly *power* needs to shift from central government to local government, the regions and community groups, bringing democracy closer to the people. For this we need a new vision to give power to the people³.

² Civil Society Futures (2018). *The Story of Our Times: shifting power, bridging divides, transforming society*. https://civilsocietyfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/11/Civil-Society-Futures_-_The-Story-of-Our-Future.pdf

³ Lent, A. and Studdert, J. (2019). *Community paradigm: Why Public Services Need Radical Change And How It Can Be Achieved*. *New Local Government Network*. http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/The-Community-Paradigm_FINAL.pdf



Question 1: Do you agree with the three recommendations in this section, devolution, negotiated devolution and removing constraints? Yes.

Furthermore, we would like to make more specific suggested additions to your strategy document relevant to localisation and disability considerations.

Question 5: Providing housing choices, perhaps following the final comment “We also advocate [...] communal housing” insert a paragraph such as: Universal Design should be the basis of all housing developments, this being the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. Therefore, as the inhabitants of a house age or become disabled, adaptations or alterations to the house may be carried out without too much difficulty or cost.

Question 6: Enhancing opportunities for social connection and participation.
At end of the first line – delete “But”

Questions 6 and 7: Providing accessible built environment. The New Zealand Government, in 2008, ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to indicate that it intends to undertake the legal rights and obligations contained within the agreement, to promote, protect and ensure the rights of disabled people so that they may have full equality under international law. (UN 2006).

Article 19: “Living independently and being included in the community” is especially pertinent to all disabled people who frequently live in unhealthy, cold and unsuitable low-cost housing, with poor accessibility and are frequently isolated from family friends and community. Ageing women without adequate income for the latter years of their life, fit into this scenario. A recent but as yet unpublished report commissioned by the Disabled Persons Organisations, demonstrates from the interviews carried out with disabled people that their rights are not upheld regarding this Article (quote below). Landlords of rental properties (including Housing NZ) need to be held to account for the state and inaccessibility of their houses through a Housing Warrant of Fitness or similar. LGNZ could be the agent responsible for this survey and action to be undertaken.

Question 8: Will these priorities contribute to achieving this strategy. Refer back to Universal Design at the end of the first paragraph.

Article 19: Living independently and being included in the community. People with disability have the same right as everyone else to live, take part and be included in the community. Countries are to take appropriate steps to help people with disability enjoy this right by making sure they have:

- The opportunity to choose where they live and who they live with like other people;



- Access to in-home, residential and other community support services to help them be included in the community, and prevent them from being isolated, and;
- Equal access to community services and facilities that are available to the public, which should take into account the needs of people with disability.

As a way forward, we would like to think what could happen if all New Zealand governments were effective and trusted to work for everyone.

BPW NZ supports:

- A localised social, environmental and economic new model of democratic innovation and new public management approaches, through the establishment of delegated citizens committees.
- Increased community-based engagement, decision-making and accountability to build action and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Co-design of a shared power plan where subsidiarity, localised decision-making and devolved powers enliven democracy.

Recommendations:

1. **Enable a people-centred sharing of power:** moving away from the default of concentrating power at higher levels of government towards giving more power to locally elected representatives, frontline staff, local governments, service providers, lower-ranking civil servants, or communities themselves.
2. **Culture of trust:** Strong relationships and trust are the basis of a government and policy's success. For power to be shared successfully, people and organisations need to trust each other's motives and capabilities – inside and outside government. Creating space for people to have meaningful conversations and understand each other's experiences and strengths – rather than just each other's needs – is an important step in building a culture of trust.
3. **Distributed leadership:** We are seeing a shift away from traditional, top-down management towards more distributed leadership styles. Good leaders are stewards that steer people towards common goals.
4. **Thoughtful experimentation:** Experimenting with different approaches to complex challenges is crucial for improvement. To encourage experimentation, governments are starting to build a culture in which failure is seen as an opportunity to learn, and employees are given the permission and space to try out new approaches.
5. **Mainstreaming the SDGs:** mainstreaming the SDGs into national and local planning documents and sustainable development policies.



Conclusions

At a time of rapid demographic and cultural change, with frustration over economic disparity, our national politics has not found a way to generate equality for all.

Women across New Zealand continue to get involved in local issues and always have. In the last few years, our organisation has witnessed how communities across the country are driving positive change. Despite differences, women and ordinary citizens are working together in cities and local groups to solve problems and get something done at home. Regions and cities are mobilizing efforts to combat climate change, fight injustice and ensure healthier communities for all its constituents.

Our membership supports for the need for change that better supports community well-being which could be a new model of community led governance and empower women in making more choices for themselves and their families. But to deliver, we need to move out of our comfort zones in pursuing new ways of *collective action*.

BPW NZ welcomes the opportunity to collaborate to the drafting of the Manifesto, to provide advice to LGNZ and to advance women's rights in New Zealand.

Our Organisation

BPW NZ is an affiliate of BPW International. BPW International is one of the most influential international networks of business and professional women with affiliates in 95 countries in five continents and a diverse membership of 23,000.

Our organisation's aims are to link professional and businesswomen throughout the world, to provide support, to lobby for change and to promote the ongoing advancement of women. We work for equal opportunities and status for all women in economic, civil and political life and the removal of discrimination in all countries. We promote our aims and organise our operating structure without distinction as to race, language or religion.

International Status

BPW International has General Consultative Status at the United Nations through the UN Economic & Social Council (ECOSOC). This enables BPW International to appoint official representatives to UN agencies worldwide and to accredit members to attend specific UN meetings.

BPW New Zealand speaks strongly for women in international forums and works hard in relation to the advancement to the status of women.

We request the New Zealand Government to consider the noted recommendations on further steps that can be taken to improve our human rights situation and offer advice and guidance on effective implementation.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide our suggestions and we hope that our comments are of use to you.

On behalf of
New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women Inc.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Hellen Swales'.

Hellen Swales
President
027 528 6799
President@bpwnz.org.nz

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Barbara Bedeschi-Lewando'.

Dr Barbara Bedeschi-Lewando
Vice President, Issues
021 288 1010
vpissues@bpwnz.org.nz