

Changing the Future



People often say, with pride, I 'm not interested in politics.They might as well say I'm not interested in my standard of living, my health, my rights, my freedom, my future or any future...

Martha Gellhorn

Changing the Future



Meri Te Tai Mangakahia

Harriet Morison

Kate Shephard

Elsie Locke

This booklet has been inspired by women like these early activists and created by women, women who take pleasure in putting our shoulders to the wheel of the common good.



Presented to the Women's Rights Party Conference
29 June, 2024, at Ellen Melville Pioneer Women's Hall
Tamaki Makaurau Auckland

Changing the Future



Sandi Hall Co-founded
NZ Women's Political
Party in 1980.

If anyone doubts that women need a political party totally focused on our lives, the fact that recently, the NZ Midwifery Service were told to stop using the words baby, mother, womb in their literature should convince. Though now removed, the fact that such an embargo could be issued at all is itself a worry in this modern world, which continues to devalue women, and dismiss our opinions.

Being a woman has always been perilous: in prehistoric times, any human female who could be pregnant was pregnant. The desire for sex is understandably strong in both women and men, because it is the portal of Life. In our modern times however, we know such desires must not validate acts like sexual abuse

and rape, common threads in humanity's story.

In spite of enacting laws (more than 40 years ago) which support financial change, things like equal pay continue to evade us – why?

Part of the answer to that lies in our fertility, spun out of Woman's essence into robust gestation. Employers knew women could 'fall pregnant' at any time, so valued them less because it's "all hands on deck" that makes money.

That was a long time ago. We can control our fertility now.

A look at how today's events are shaping women's future shows we are walking towards a 'biology IS destiny' time. By that I mean, women all over the world will recognised by governments as the key to the futures they are trying to create. Why do I say that?

Because the birthrate is falling in most of the world's developed countries. When the goal is profit, as it is in democracies like ours, it is 'the family', with its work, food, clothing, sex, and shelter needs which governments and industry rely on. Home, the engine room of peace.

So we must be alert to any strategies which seek to restrict women to pregnancy. At the same time, we must create strategies which describe what governments should do to encourage those of us who wish to commit our wombs -and lives - to that difficult, time-consuming, utterly vital work.

And reward us for doing so. Respect, acknowledgement, financial support are all necessary for women who take up that massive task.

Our challenges are enormous, for we must be alert to how we survive on all our common borders – health, education, peaceful freedom, brilliant art, in these times of increasing climate disruption. Natural disasters on a massive scale – landslides, floods, devastating winds – all are now givens for our future.

I want progress. Definitely for women – it's more than time we were fully valued. That was one reason I founded the NZ Women's Political Party in 1981. We stood five candidates in the '84 election. I stood in Mr. Muldoon's electorate, helping to oust him.

Today's 2024 landscape shows real change is possible, because we have learned so much since 1893. We made essential legislation and know how to use it.

Falling birthrates put Woman at the centre of concerns. The easiest way to get more babies is to make it attractive to have them. The Russians set a precedent with their “Mother of Russia” incentivational campaign more than half a century ago, complete with medals and publicity. It worked, too – the birthrate shot up.

Simply put, womb-power acknowledged by governments gives us real power. We must be ready to use it by knowing what we want. A political Party dedicated to us is exactly the tool we need for that.

I am a kuia manuhiri wahine pakeha. My body was born in another country but I was created here. Aotearoa’s energy and its brilliantly perceptive women have powered my sense of purpose and feminist identity. Women like Meri Te Tai Mangakahia and Harriet Morison, both in Victorian Aotearoa; like Sandra Coney in ‘Broadsheet’ days; like 1990s political environmentalist Jeanette Fitzsimons and more recently, the remarkable Jacinda Ardern.

An invaluable, unique democracy was created here in 1893. By women, its laws have been changed for the better, laws about abortion, equal pay, rape in marriage, domestic violence, equal opportunity. I am proud to be a Life Member of the Women’s Rights Party, a member of that stream of feminists. Proud to be one of today’s women committed to developing that democracy and our vital place in it.

- Sandi Hall, June 2024, Auckland

Women are the niggers of the world – Yoko Ono, 1975 in a BBC interview

“That is what the world needs, for us, for women, to catch fire.” Airini Beautrais quoting Maria Lotura Lawless in Wicked Pack of Cards, 2024, P176, The Beautiful Afternoon



Over the past six years and largely under the radar, lobby groups have been funded by the Government to push an agenda that has put the rights of women at risk.

At the same time women’s voices have been shut down in our universities, public service, the mainstream media and our unions. Jobs have been put at risk if people dare to question gender ideology.

In the name of “inclusivity”, women have been excluded from public debate and our rights eroded.

Jill Owens Co-founded the Women’s Rights Party in 2023.

It was the insidious erasure of “women” from our language that peaked my attention a few years ago when our NZ Council of Trade Unions removed “women” from the Equity section of our strategic Plan. There was equity for Māori, equity for Pasifika, equity for people with disabilities, equity for people of different ethnic backgrounds, but “women” were

missing. I thought it was a typo until I saw that “people of all gender identities” was included in the list. Surely the CTU didn’t mean that women were a “gender identity”, I asked? Complete silence.

I thought it was so bizarre that I posted about it on facebook. The pile-on was immediate. “Don’t you agree that transwomen are women,” was the mantra. “If I identify as Māori, does that make me Māori?” I asked, knowing the answer. “Of course not,” was the response. “You have to whakapapa Māori to be Māori.” “Well, don’t you have to be a woman to be a woman?” Apparently not!

Soon after, I saw an article in the Sunday Times titled “Not all pregnant people are women, or mothers”. The intro went on to say “Today not only are not all people who have babies not mothers, not all them are even women.”

This was followed by the health sector and NGOs renaming women as “cervix havers”, “menstruators”, “birthing people” and other such nonsense. Meanwhile there was recently a month-long campaign about prostate cancer clearly aimed at “men”, and ads running on TV for weight loss supplements for “Real Men”. There is no way there would ever be a celebration of “Real Women” in New Zealand media!

At a meeting of then Green Party MP Jan Logie to plan a campaign to include birth injuries in the ACC regime, we were discussing stakeholders. “Women” were suggested, whereupon the EA immediately wiped out the word and replaced it with “birthing parent”. We were literally erased.

As an active member of the Labour Party. I had been a regional representative on the Labour Party Council, South Auckland hub chair, LEC chair in Papakura and later Hunua/Port Waikato, and a local body candidate in 2022.

Around 2021-2022, the “Rainbow Sector” (comprising mostly young men) was pushing for so-called “gender neutral toilets” in all new public facilities. Complaints and counter-complaints went all the way to the Labour Party Council. The demands continued – for example, for recognition of non-binary and transwomen in candidate selections within the Party utilising the “women’s quota”. The proposal failed to win support on the 2022 Conference floor.

We held a Labour women’s hui in Auckland, where I was elected as the Auckland women’s network co-ordinator, the purpose of which was to go through policy proposals for the upcoming 2022 Labour Party Conference to discuss those which particularly impacted on women.

We proposed an amendment to a proposal for more public toilets for those with disabilities to include women and children, as well as the elderly. As soon as I put the amendment on a Zoom call prior to the Conference, I was shut down because any mention of women’s toilets was said to be “code for transphobia”. I was actually thinking of the queue for the women’s loo at Wellington Airport when we land, in contrast to

the men's loo, because they don't take into account how much longer it takes women to use the toilet and therefore fail to build enough women's loos. Nevertheless, when I tried to respond, I was put on mute by the convenor.

Another amendment from the women's hui would have restricted "gender reassignment" surgery (masculinising and feminising cosmetic surgery) to those aged 18 and over. The facilitator of the health workshop who submitted the policy proposal was put under huge pressure to pull the amendment, which she did at the eleventh hour. Evidently the original proposer (on behalf of the Rainbow Sector) had not wanted any age restriction. We didn't realise that the Labour Government had already made such surgery free with funding to the tune of \$3 million to be provided through Te Whatu Ora.

Formation of the Women's Rights Party

So it was no surprise when, in March 2023, Labour and Green Party Members of Parliament openly supported the shocking violence at the Auckland NZ "Let Women Speak" event where Kellie-Jay Keen left the country in fear of her life.

This followed the Melbourne and Hobart "Let Women Speak" events, and quickly deteriorated into a dangerous situation that was whipped up by the media in the week before with allegations of links to Nazism, stoked by leaders of both Labour and the Greens. Any doubts about exactly how much women meant to our MPs were laid to rest. Not one MP condemned the violence perpetrated on women that day.

Those of us who were there were traumatised. The noise from the protestors was incredibly disturbing and the hatred on their faces as they burst through the barriers and pushed us towards the rotunda was hugely intimidating. There was no sign of any Police protection as women frantically called 111.

That night, after long phone calls considering our options, Dawn Trenberth and I left the Labour Party. The following Sunday, we convened a Zoom meeting attended by 20 women and the Women's Rights Party was born.

The first task was to set about recruiting members to get to the 500 financial members we needed to register the Party and be on the ballot in the upcoming 2023 General Election. We held an Inaugural Conference in June where members approved a Constitution and Policy Platform.

The Women's Rights Party policies clearly lay out our priorities for women and children. They leave no room to wonder just whose side we are on, covering a broad range of health, economic, social and wellbeing issues for women, because women have a broad range of needs.

Despite a complete blackout by the mainstream media, we attracted the interest of Sean Plunket on the Platform. Within 24 hours of my first appearance, more than 100

women and men had joined up from all over New Zealand, ensuring that we would reach our goal to register as a political party by the deadline.

We contested the 2023 General Election with a List of 12 courageous women from all over the country. The candidates included Karen Guilliland, a former College of Midwives CE; Marnie Fornusek, an international kayaker and white-water rafter who is active in Save Women's Sports; Prue Hyman, a leading feminist economist; MacKenzie Clark, a business student; and Catherine Mann, New Zealand's first woman trade-qualified joiner.

We knew we wouldn't make it into Parliament, given the short run-up, but that is not why we stood. By registering as a political Party and having our logo and name on the ballot paper in every polling booth in NZ, we gave those women, and men, who could no longer vote for Labour or the Greens, a choice on the ballot.

Having our logo on the ballot mattered. But more importantly, building Party organisation round the country, getting members out sign waving, leafletting markets and shopping centres, dropping banners over motorways, and our national Suffrage Day activities in September, all laid a foundation for the Party going forward.

Of course, it was an opportunity to draw attention to our issues as gender-critical women, and men, because things have been dire. Millions of dollars in Government funding have gone into NGOs that are having huge influence throughout the public sector, including our health and education systems.

When women shared their concerns in submissions to the Select Committee considering the Bill to allow men to change their sex on their birth certificate, the submitters were treated with disdain by the Labour and Greens women MPs. Most submissions were opposed to this, yet the Bill passed without a single dissenting voice among the MPs – not from the Left nor from the Right. You can now change your sex on-line, as many times as you like.

130 years after New Zealand women won the right to vote, the first self-governing country in the World to do so, who would have thought women, and men, would need to exercise our votes to protect our rights?

What of the future for the Women's Rights Party?

The Coalition Government has made a good start by defunding sports bodies that allow men to compete in women's sports, and legislating for single-sex publicly-used facilities, both initiatives of NZ First.

However, the massive job losses in public services will inevitably lead to cuts in services that will hurt women and children. The cuts to the free food in schools programme, introduced by the previous Labour Government and now feeding a quarter of New Zealand's school children, will have significant impact in our poorest communi-

ties, already struggling with big increases in the cost of living.

The scrapping of Fair Pay Agreements will impact most heavily on low-paid women workers. Ruling out Labour's plan to extend 20 hours free childcare to 2-year-olds, again affects lower paid women workers.

Recently, a Judge discharged a thug who smashed a woman's eye socket in a violent attack on 25 March last year at the Auckland "Let Women Speak" event. Women across New Zealand should be very concerned that a man who smashed a woman's eye socket in what was a violent, unprovoked attack has been let off without conviction, sending a chilling message to women in our country where male violence against women is endemic and is so often diminished in its severity and impact on the victim. It sometimes feels like "whack-a mole" where we are fighting on so many fronts. We face a challenge as to how we respond to issues beyond "transgenderism" as a Party that is clearly pro-women's rights and clearly of the Left.

It is true that we don't want men in women's changing sheds or competing unfairly in women's sports. But we also want women's health to be prioritised, and more support for women who are victims of violence and sexual assault.

We want better income support for women with children, affordable childcare, pay equity claims settled in a timely fashion, and superannuation that ensures dignity for women as we age.

Our legislative agenda calls for repeal of the sex self-ID law, and for restrictions on use of puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and gender reassignment surgery with children and adolescents.

Our policies include law reform of prostitution, pornography and surrogacy, as well as protection of sex-based rights in our Human Rights legislation.

But how do we deal with issues that challenge our society like economic policies, climate change, race relations, and international human rights that have the potential to divide our Party?

Can we "get political" as gender critical feminists, while ignoring social and economic issues that impact on women and children? These are the issues to be debated by Women's Rights Party members as we decide our campaign priorities to protect the future for women, our children and their children.

- Jill Ovens, 2024

"The strength of the NZWomen's Political Party is that it offers another image of women asserting ourselves," Pat Wilkinson, Values Party, 1981. From a letter in Broad-sheet 106, P7.



Why was I interested to get involved with the Women's Political Party?

I was raised in a loving family but one where my Mother was plagued with a periodically debilitating low self-esteem. In her own growing up she was made to feel guilty for her parents 'having to marry' and when four brothers followed, it became abundantly clear that the double standard was alive and well.

When she in turn married and had children, she was very focused on making sure that would not be repeated and equity, independence and resilience were prevalent themes for my brothers and I, growing up.

Jo Crowley Co-founder
Sisters for Homophile
Equality

As I moved into my teenage years, it was clear to me that I was emerging as a lesbian, and I thank my parents for the self-esteem to accept that early on and 'come-out' (it was a different journey in 1973). I've always been deeply grateful to my 'coming-out' journey for providing me with a grandstand view of the social boundaries that prevailed at the time including the very clear roles prescribed for women and men and the constructs that femininity and masculinity were based on. It gave me the space and objectivity to develop a political analysis of the social mores of the day. This became even clearer as I became involved in the early Gay Liberation movement, lived in the first Women's Centre in Christchurch; followed by becoming a labourer and truck driver in 1975.

I suppose it was inevitable that I would become involved in the Union Movement. I appreciated the opportunity to high-light the personal and professional compromises women were faced with and I can still see some of the remnants of the positive outcomes for women that were negotiated in the public sector.

By the time the MMP campaign came along I was in Auckland and in talking with my lesbian and feminist friends there was an appetite to establish a Women's Political Party. And so the Women's Political Party was born in 1980. At the time there was much debate about there being too many MPs electorates proposed (120, the number ultimately achieved).

My enduring belief in the Chinese proverb, 'Women hold up half the sky', was a catalyst to develop a policy that would generously solve the 'too many electorates' issue and provide a policy platform for the Women's Political Party. The policy was to have 60 larger electorates with 2 successful candidate in each electorate, a woman and a man.

The Women's Political Party went on to contest 5 seats in the 1984 election in the election that saw the demise of the Rob Muldoon National Government and his seat.

I presented the two successful candidates, a woman and a man, in each electorate, to

the Select Committee that were taking submissions on MMP. There was a great deal of 'intellectual' interest in the proposition, but as we know, no material progress on that idea...yet.

- Jo Crowley

At the very dawn of religion, God was a woman. Do you remember? - Merlin Stone, When God Was A Woman, from Excerpt as Epigraph, Doubleday 1976

Why Aotearoa Does Not Need a Women's Rights Party



Dame Sue Lytollis
Women's self-defense
expert

Well, it has one but not one I subscribe to. The Women's Rights Party (WRP) that I looked at online seems more interested in what a woman is, rather than looking genuinely at issues that impact women/womyn/wimmin and non-binary people in Aotearoa.

So, first off the block, Sue Lytollis is not identifying as part of or supportive of a WRP with website in New Zealand. If I was to look from a 'feminist' point of view and suggest we need a Feminist Rights Party, then perhaps I can create interest. One that embraces people who identify as feminist and moving right along, get to some interesting points:

- a) Female-dominated roles should, like many male-dominated roles, have paid training and study – it's a no-brainer.
- b) Equality in wages/salary/workers' rights
- c) An overhaul of the justice system in relation to general and/or intimate partner violence to women and LGBTQI+ people in particular. For police services to be more supportive and believing.
- d) A focus on rehabilitating people who are violent and stopping the causes of victimisation.
- e) Considerably more support financially for counselling and mental health, particularly trauma informed.
- f) We never want to have devolution like that happening now in the United States. We must ensure the rights of women/womyn/wimmin or non-binary people to have autonomy over their reproductive rights, and to abortion.

Particularly in the politics of 2024, the three-headed monster of the current coalition, an emphasis needs to be placed on what is most important for women and those who identify as female. Under an MMP environment, as demonstrated in the coalition of 2023, a small Party can gain a part of the votes and/or electorates and become part of a coalition government. I'd rather have a heartfelt, embracing, inclusive of diversity Feminist Rights Party in that mix than some of the others.

- Sue Lytollis

"We never know how high we are til we are asked to rise, and then, if we are true to plan, our statures touch the skies." Emily Dickinson, 1951, from The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Harvard Press



Prof. Christine Davies
Exposed bias in teacher-expectations

On the 19th September 1893, Aotearoa, New Zealand became the first country in the world where women achieved the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Women celebrated. This was the beginning of women's fight for equality with men in Aotearoa, but it was not the end. It took until 1933 for the first woman (Elizabeth McCombs) to gain a seat in parliament and until 1943 before a woman held a cabinet post.

The disparity in parliamentary gender representation continued until 2022, when finally women outnumbered men. This situation was soon reversed, however, with the election of a new government in 2023.

For Māori women, the wait to gain entry to parliament was even longer. It was 1949 before the first Māori woman was elected to parliament and 1972 before a Māori woman, Whetū Tirikatene-Sullivan, became a Cabinet Minister.

A Women's Rights Party would empower Māori girls and women, enabling a larger representation in parliament.

Aotearoa New Zealand's voting and representation history reflects its general societal trends, in which men proportionately outnumber women in leadership roles. Despite significant advances leading to 40% of CEO roles now being held by women, only 18% of board members and 23% of executives are women.

In order to ensure a consistently fairer representation of women in parliament (which may then become reflected across society), a Women's Rights Party would continually foreground and highlight the ongoing struggles of women for equality within our society.

An 8.6% gender pay gap between men and women in New Zealand, was recorded in 2023, focused on those working in the same occupations and completing the same tasks. This is despite the Equal Pay Act of 1972 which legally required all industries to implement equal pay and pay equity.

Māori women earn even less: their hourly rate in 2023 was well below that of both European and Asian women. Again, a Women's Rights Party would work to ensure that true pay equality and equity became reality here.

Unfortunately, stereotypes about women are still strong in some sectors of society. For example, the idea that women are less able than men persists, despite many shining examples of women who have been highly successful, usually competently managing family care responsibilities alongside work demands. Our recent Prime Minister, Jacinda Adern, was a wonderful example of that, as is our governor general, Cindy Kiro.

Having a Women's Rights Party would enable highly successful women to be continuously profiled so that misogynistic stereotypes disappear, and women are accepted alongside their male counterparts in all walks of life.

One particular area where women are severely underrepresented is in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) careers. Again, misogyny persists, funnelling adolescent girls into “appropriate” careers. In engineering, for example, a student maximum of 13% are female, making it hard for others to think they have a place there.

The general image of a scientist being a male in a white coat peering into a microscope leaves little space for women and even less for Māori women, who have to fight the societal biases that reiterate that they do not belong. When young women do not see themselves represented in any profession, they are less likely to choose those areas as their career choices.

A Women’s Rights Party could advocate for, and develop programmes for, STEM careers being an appealing choice for young women beginning their life careers.

The #MeToo movement that arose in the United States as a response to sexual assault in that country has highlighted the lack of support and advocacy for women who are abused. Few women report sexual assault – most fearing the ordeals of disbelief, or that it was somehow her fault - and even fewer are brave enough to go to court where, again, they often feel abandoned and on trial themselves.

The horrific abuse of Jeni Haynes in Australia and the United Kingdom by her father (see *The Girl in the Green Dress* by Jeni Haynes and Dr George-Blair-West) is a recent example. Jeni developed multiple personalities to cope with her abuse and abuser. Despite reporting the abuse to many people and several agencies over many years (including counsellors), she was not believed until finally she met Dr Blair-West and was physically examined (it beggars belief that this had never happened previously).

Aotearoa is not immune. Recently, brothers Danny and Roberto Jaz were convicted of sexually assaulting more than 20 women; in spite of conviction, the pair have not accepted responsibility.

On average, 50% of women murdered in Aotearoa New Zealand are killed by their partners. It is estimated that one in three women are abused in some way by their partners and for Māori women, a staggering 80% are beaten and killed by their partners. They are three times more likely to be murdered by a partner than non-Māori

Even shallow research into the abuse of Aotearoa’s women shows many other horrifying statistics.

It will need strong advocacy for and by women if the abuse of women is to end. This is only likely to happen with ongoing support and activism from women for women. A Women’s Rights Party would be a key instigator for changes in legislation that supported victims rather than abusers.

- Christine Davies

“Making a film about the Springbok Tour has been an exciting and challenging project. The difficulties involved ...have concerned the fact that I am Māori, and a woman,” Mereta Mita, 1985, Broadsheet 106, P22.



Natalie Grace grass-roots activist.

Men may have walked on the moon but since the introduction of self-ID, men who claim to be women feel emboldened to walk into females spaces too.

On their say-so “I am a woman”, they’ve gatecrashed our services and our sports as well. One small step for men, one giant leap for mankind is a giant step backwards for women’s rights, sadly.

People cannot change their sex. Those who believe they can are unable to use reason and logic to argue their case because it’s neither reasonable or logical.

The mistaken belief that people can change their sex impacts all aspects of society, including free speech, freedom of association and belief, as well as LGB rights, and women’s rights.

Worst of all, our children and adolescents have been swept along in the maelstrom of ‘gender-affirmation’ insisted upon by ideologically-captured adults. It appears the young of our country [who are] experiencing issues with their mental health aren’t receiving the best evidence-based medical care.

The ensuing result is the stuff of nightmares.

It was these issues leading up to the NZ Election 2023 which made me do something I never dreamed I would do, dear reader – join a political party. After the shocking events in Albert Park, March 2023, where women were assaulted in the name of inclusivity, I decided I would never vote for any Party which had contributed to that situation.

Problem: They were all complicit.

Solution: Hurrah! The Women’s Rights Party was formed, got my vote and continues to get my support because it address my above concerns and more. Let’s keep speaking, let’s keep peaking!

- Natalie Grace, Auckland

“The Church has always wielded its power to crush any action that may lead to the liberation of women.” Deirdre Kelsall, Perth, Australia, 1978. Quoted in Broadsheet 56, P10

A Young Feminist's Dilemma: My Issues with the Women's Rights Party



Phylli Jasonsmith Environmentalist

I've considered myself a card-carrying feminist since a young age, raised by a community of fierce and brilliant women. I took women's studies classes at university, devouring the works of Germaine Greer, Bell Hooks, and Angela Davis. I'm well-versed in the legacies of RBG, Kate Sheppard, Dame Whina Cooper, Sonja Davies, and Katherine Mansfield. I've immersed myself in the plays of Lorae Parry and the complete works of Margaret Atwood, feeling a chill at the political parallels today. As a teenager, I was captivated by the 'See Red Women's Workshop - Feminist Posters 1974-1990.' I go out of my way to watch women's sports and only watch movies that pass the Bechdel test. On paper, a Women's Rights Party should be right up my alley.

Globally, women today are still facing critical issues such as the gender pay gap and the devaluation of work, physical and sexual violence, and financial and structural violence that have been features of being a woman since the adoption of agriculture. The erosion of sexual and reproductive rights, along with the disproportionate impact of climate change, further exacerbates these challenges. The Women's Rights Party is tackling many of these issues with smart, well-thought-out proposals, which is essential and important work. The most notable for me is their policy on Retirement Incomes for Women, addressing the pressing issue of elder poverty, where women are the fastest-growing demographic.

However, the Women's Rights Party's stance on gender expression and trans rights stops me in my tracks. Prioritising gender-critical values in their policy undermines the serious, long-standing issues of equality facing women. Regardless of personal opinions on trans issues, framing the identity of a small, marginalised group as the most serious threat to women is troubling to me. On a personal level, it does not reflect the barriers, challenges, or experiences I face as a young woman. It signals a red flag for conservative and outdated political priorities.

In this day and age, I am very cautious of organisations, particularly political ones, that make scientifically unsound claims. 'Sex is Binary' is displayed in bold typeface at the top of the Women's Rights Party's website. Scientifically speaking, sex is not binary; there are more intersex people in the world than there are redheads. To claim otherwise erases the lived experiences of millions of people. Making a scientifically biased claim that can harm a minority for the sake of making a political statement is something I cannot support. This action reflects a broader lack of intersectionality in the Women's Rights Party's policies. While there is a brief mention of Te Tiriti, Māori wahine, and racial pay gaps, the website offers very little about the diverse experiences and barriers faced by women of different backgrounds, particularly women of different races, classes, disabilities, and sexualities.

It's a long-standing practice for Pākehā voices to claim to speak for those who have been marginalised. Despite the significant focus on sex and gender discussions, there is very little about race-based discrimination against women, the ongoing structural violence of colonisation, or the institutional racism that places brown women in this

country at the bottom of all undesirable statistics (earning, education, mental health, teen pregnancy, prison). The energy and focus directed toward gender and trans issues, with very little directed at the above, seems to be a significant misdirection of resources for a party that claims to represent the interests of half the population.

I do not see trans people as a threat to my identity or rights as a woman, nor to women's spaces, or my ability to express myself as a woman. I have played a full-contact women's sport for 15 years, which has always been trans-inclusive. Competing at the national and elite levels with and against trans women and non-binary people (of all biological sexes) has been a source of joy, pleasure, competition, and strength. I have both won and lost against teams with trans people equally. The notion that trans women in women's sports are dangerous or unfair does not align with my experiences or those of my teammates.

In conclusion, while the Women's Rights Party champions some important causes, the lack of scientific integrity, intersectionality, and inclusive policies does not reflect the feminism I believe in. As a young woman committed to true gender equality, I find it impossible to support a party whose priorities and actions seem so misaligned with the diverse and complex realities of women today.

- Phylli Jasonsmith

Soon that wasn't enough. Men wanted to be women, to have that power. The Transsexual Empire: the making of the She-male. Janice Redmond, 1979, Beacon Press, Boston, P 17

The earliest humans created images of the divine woman from stone, the forms of which still, amazingly, survive. -Vicki Noble, Shakti Woman, 1991, HarperCollins

Why we need a Women's Rights Party



Marg Curnow Unionist,
women's rights activist.

I have always been a Labour Party voter – it's in my DNA! The 90's and Rogernomics shook me and I followed Jim Anderson to New Labour and then the Alliance. Eventually however I returned to the Labour Fold. Until now.

I am a second wave feminist. I came of age in the 1970's when women around the world were finally saying enough is enough! We won't wait any longer to be recognized as equal to men and to be counted. The battles started and over time we had some wins. We've had some losses too, and the battles are still being fought because despite the wins, the war against women continues, even though for most people it is unrecognized.

The war against women is being waged every time people say things like "boys will be boys" or "you can't fight biology" or "don't walk there on your own – it's not safe" or "well you have to be realistic" or "you can't ruin his life because of one mistake" or "she asked for it" or "dressed like that what

do you expect” or “she could be so attractive if she would just try” or (and this is my personal favourite) “not all men are like that” or “you can’t blame men for everything” or “there are some great men out there” or “well what was she doing out that late on her own anyway” or “what was she doing in that place on her own”

War is being waged every time a man is silent when he hears other men treating women as objects – their bodies commented on or their capabilities undermined
It is being waged when drug trials, even for drugs targeted at women, are only trialed on men and when car safety trials only use male sized mannequins

It is being waged when promotion and advertising around signs of major medical events, which differ markedly between men and women only mention typical male reactions and ignore what happens for women, and when medical and quasi-medical products and procedures affect women in serious and sometimes permanently debilitating ways.

It is being waged when we pay women less than men and ‘ghettoise’ work traditionally done by women. And when we use different standards to judge men and women.

It is being waged when men are applauded for doing a small share – or maybe even an equal share – of housework while it is simply presumed that women will do most or all of it. Because that’s just how it is – right?

It is being waged when women do the bulk of the physical and emotional work of raising children and no one cares enough to do anything about changing that.

It is being waged when parents – including many mothers unfortunately collude with their sons not taking responsibility for their behaviour, be it the sports gear that needs washing at the last moment or the lunch they have forgotten to take to school. Boys who aren’t made to take responsibility for their behaviour grow into men who expect women to take care of them

And this war is being waged when our society accepts that women change our behaviour to accommodate men whether that be “to keep the peace” in a relationship or to ensure our safety (as much as possible) when out in public. It is being waged when we are ‘nice’ to men as a default position (being nice is the human equivalent of an animal lying on its back in submission).

It is being waged when men presume they have a right to comment on our behaviour or our looks or the fact that we are not smiling, and when they presume the right to insult us if they feel rejected.

War is being waged when we disguise what men do to women, either with words or by using the passive tense. Let’s call it what it is. It’s not domestic violence, it’s male violence towards women. And let’s remind ourselves that every time we say a woman has been raped what has happened, is that a man has raped her.

And war is being waged when lesbians are made invisible, not recognized or supported, our distinct and unique perspective ignored, in an age where we thought we were, finally, recognized and protected legally. Instead we are being told that we are bigoted and transphobic for saying we are same sex attracted and that men cannot be women let alone lesbians.

This is all part of a new form of silencing women and making all of us invisible. Our awards and acknowledgements are being given to men who want to be seen as women. The medical profession and health authorities are producing and supporting information which talks about birth parents and chest feeding and people with cer-

vixes. Funnily enough though, in health promotional material, it is still men who have prostates and men who are at risk of prostate cancer. And I haven't noticed any women getting 'Man of the Year' awards. This is what happens when we live in an unacknowledged war zone – it is women's rights, women's spaces and women's autonomy which are threatened and invaded. Nothing changes for men.

As a good leftist, I know that it's not individual men who are responsible for creating this problem but they perpetuate it by their behaviour. They benefit from the power and privilege they were born to. Privilege which is embedded into the fabric of our society and which is so embedded that most people don't even recognize it's there. There are a (very) few men who challenge this power and privilege and I don't think that's wonderful any more than I think women challenging it is wonderful. It's just what decent people do. The real questions are why aren't more men doing it and why aren't we asking that question of men? Instead, when a man does a smidgeon of work towards challenging the system he benefits from is he praised and applauded? These are some of the ways in which women are ignored and undervalued in our society and this is why we need a Women's Rights Party.

- Marg Curnow

Someone, I tell you, will remember us. -Sappho, Quoted in Greek Lyric Poetry, Schocken Books, 1967

NZ WOMENS POLITICAL PARTY



Dr Cathie Dunsford Fulbright Scholar, writer

When I was teaching English Literature and Creative Writing at Auckland University in the 1970s and 80s, I heard about the New Zealand Womens Political Party. As a committed lesbian feminist I was excited that we could finally have a voice within the more traditional political scene. I knew Canadian Kiwi author Sandi Hall's work and reputation and knew she would be a fantastic leader for such a movement. For it was a political movement as well as a political party. The Topp Twins were singing political songs and we were all marching against apartheid in South Africa, nuclear testing at Moruroa in the Pacific and for womens and lesbian rights in all areas. We truly felt like the Topp Twins song, that we were indeed Untouchable Girls. We knew the world had to be run by women and with a Pacifist agenda for change. And we truly and deeply believed we could achieve this within the next decade or two!

Well, we did have a huge impact. We sailed to Moruroa Atoll, right into the nuclear testing zone, and alerted the world to the dangers which France, at the time, totally denied. Since then they have admitted their crimes and paid some compensation towards the victims, so many of them women raising children in the horror of a nuclear testing zone. I later wrote a book documenting this, *Manawa Toa: Heart Warrior*, which lesbian feminist Australian publisher, Spinifex Press, published and sold into transla-

tion in Germany and Turkey. I toured with the German and Turkish translators, raising awareness of these issues. That was just one of the many topics about womens rights and human rights that became more visible over this time.

Reproductive Rights, genetic engineering, ecology, domestic abuse, indigenous rights and a myriad of other issues were explored over this period by the NZWPP and all of them made their way into my novels celebrating womens empowerment and decision making involving such challenges. In all, 26 publications and translations, documenting the women's issues of the time with lesbian, multicultural protagonists giving a range of perspectives from their points of view.

The creation of the NZWPP was a focus and a starting point for so many issues to be aired and debated. I adored that Sandi Hall had the nerve, courage and hutzpah to stand against the then Prime Minister, Robert Muldoon, in his own electorate, to highlight the differences between his very right wing government and the changing concerns of the population at this crucial time of change in New Zealand's political landscape.

I have since discovered that a NZ Womens Political Rights Party has formed in 2023 to further address these agenda and I wish them all the best in helping reform the political system in the spirit that the original party emerged, honouring the earlier suffragettes who claimed the right for women to vote in 1893, making NZ the first country in the world to enshrine this in law. It is only by this kind of activism that changes can be made that help empower us all. Kia kaha!

- Dr. Cathie Dunsford.

Hindu scriptures said: "As from a mother comes birth, so from matrika, or sound, the world proceeds." - Barbara Walker, 1983 Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets, P546, Harper and Row



Women's Rights Party

Membership Application Form

Full Name(s).....t

Residential Address.....

Town/City.....

Date of Birth...../...../..... Ph No.....

Email.....

I am a registered elector (circle one)

Yes

No

I am enrolled in the _____ electorate

Only complete this section if you are NOT a registered elector.

I am not a registered elector but I am eligible to enroll (circle one) Yes

No

I am eligible to vote as a New Zealand Parliamentary elector as I am a (select one):

- New Zealand citizen
- permanent resident of New Zealand
- other - please specify: _____

and I have lived continuously in New Zealand for _____ years _____ months.

If you live overseas, please provide the date last in New Zealand ____ / ____ / ____

I have paid my membership fee of \$5 for a 1-year membership with this application.

OPTIONAL: I would like to make a voluntary donation of (please circle one)

\$15, \$20, \$25, \$30 or \$.....

Total paid today \$.....

I authorize the Women's Rights Party to record my name as a financial member of the Women's Rights Party.

I authorize the Women's Rights Party Secretary to release this information and subsequent financial membership details to the Electoral Commission for the purposes of the Women's Rights Party's registration under the Electoral Act 1993.

Signed.....

Date.....2024



Printed by Colour Copy and Print
Formatted by Matthew Lietz
Designed by Lisa Prager

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