

**April 2012 –  
March 2013**

**Women's Health Action Annual Report**



**WOMEN'S  
HEALTH  
*Action***

## Message from the Chair

The period from April 2012 to March 2013 has been a very busy and successful one for Women's Health Action. There have been many great achievements including a presentation to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in New York; expansion of the organisation to include the Body Image Leaders programme in secondary schools; and another very successful global event, the Big Latch On.

We were sorry to farewell Director Maree Pierce at the end of March 2012 when she accepted a position with the National Screening Unit. Following a recruitment process in April the Board was very pleased to appoint our new Director Julie Radford-Poupard who began in May 2012. Julie's initiative has resulted in new areas of work for the organisation, and her passionate commitment to the role continues to increase the effectiveness and influence of Women's Health Action in New Zealand. The achievements in this report reflect Julie's skill and enthusiasm alongside the dedication of a very talented and hardworking team.

As the new Chair of the Trust it has been a privilege and pleasure to work with our strong committed group of trustees who give their time voluntarily in the service of the organisation. In 2012 we farewelled Trust Chair Jesse Solomon who had provided strong guidance over many years. Emily Stenhouse-White took the Chair role until the end of 2012 when we farewelled her also, followed by Trust Treasurer Kirsty Charles in March 2013. Despite the departures of these great dedicated women, the combined good judgement, professional linkages, experience and skills of the trustees has provided good governance through the period.

Women's Health Action has been fortunate to have continued funding from the Ministry of Health. In addition to this we have received support from Lottery Grant Board, ASB Community Trust, Internal Affairs COGS, the Todd Foundation and Auckland Council. We are grateful to the support of these agencies which has enabled us to undertake the excellent work outlined in this report.

Gill Sanson

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## Message from the Director

Kia ora koutou,

Women's Health Action expanded operations this year with the addition of the new youth body image programme, taking over the health promotion activities from Eden (also known as Eating Difficulties Education Network) after they sadly closed their doors after 22 years working at the forefront of community efforts to improve body image with young people.

Rebecca Leys came on board mid February 2013 as our body image health promoter leading the Body Image Leaders Programme (BILs). The BILs programme runs in Auckland secondary schools implementing a peer education school wide approach tackling negative body image. This programme is unique in Aotearoa New Zealand. Body Image Leaders tell us they have gained body confidence, leadership and health promotion skills and have seen a decrease in appearance bullying (the second most common type of bullying) in their schools. Women's Health Action looks forward to the expansion of this programme.

Women's Health Action went to New York this year, George Parker, senior policy analyst and Julie Radford-Poupard as an NGO delegates with New Zealand Women's Watch presented an oral report representing 90 NGOs to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. The report was well received by the CEDAW committee with many issues represented in the concluding comments.

In 2005, Women's Health Action established the event the Big Latch On. Led by the maternal and child health promoter Isis McKay, the Big Latch On 2012 was another success with a record breaking 135 venues and 1571 children breastfeeding simultaneously throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. A further 22 countries joined the Big Latch On this year establishing it as a successful global event.

Other highlights include a successful Cartwright Seminar exploring women's experiences of the Family Court in partnership with the University of Auckland and Auckland Women's Centre, several consultations and submissions and resource development. Women's Health Action and our partner Alcohol Healthwatch completed research on 'Women and Alcohol' and co-hosted a seminar with international speakers in mid November. The research is intended to inform policy and service delivery aimed at reducing alcohol related harm to women.

Women's Health Action have been very providential to have attracted two new team members in 2012, Maggie Behrend in the role of women's health coordinator and Sandy Hall as our policy analyst, bringing the Women's Health Action team to eight.

Ngā mihi nui

Julie Radford-Poupard

## History of Women's Health Action

Founded in 1984 to assist New Zealand women take claims for Dalkon Shield damage to the United States Courts, Women's Health Action (then called Fertility Action) came to national prominence in 1987 with the publication of an article by health activists Sandra Coney and Phillida Bunkle called 'An unfortunate experiment at National Women's Hospital' in the monthly Auckland magazine Metro. The article outlined an unethical study at National Women's Hospital, the country's premier women's hospital. The study, led by Dr Herbert Green, started in 1966, and involved following women with major cervical abnormalities without definitively treating them, and without their knowledge or consent to participate. By 1987 many had developed cervical cancer and some had died.

The revelations led to public outrage and a Ministerial Committee of Inquiry, known as the Cartwright Inquiry, after the presiding judge Dame Silvia Cartwright. While focused on the treatment of cervical cancer, the Inquiry led to scrutiny of a range of issues related to the practice of medicine including research practices, teaching methods, patients' rights, and medical dominance. The resulting report, released in 1988, was a blueprint for patients' rights in New Zealand and recommended the establishment of a Health and Disability Commissioner, a code of health consumer rights, a system of ethical review of research involving human participants, and the establishment of a National Cervical Screening Programme.

In the years that followed the 'Cartwright Inquiry', Women's Health Action, along with other women's health groups, were strongly focused on ensuring that the report recommendations were implemented. This included assisting with the establishment of a national cervical screening programme and the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner. We retain a strong commitment to ensuring that the legacy of the Cartwright Inquiry is not forgotten and that Aotearoa New Zealand remains a world leader in recognising the rights of health

consumers. We also retain a commitment to ensuring the motivations and goals of the women's health movement continue to drive the work of our organisation. While many gains for women have been won and secured there remain many challenges.

Today, Women's Health Action is regarded as a leader in the provision of quality, evidence-based, consumer-focused information and advice through a critical gender lens. This helps to ensure women are empowered in their health care encounters. It also helps to ensure that health policy and service delivery meet the needs of diverse women, and has intended and equitable outcomes.

We provide:

- Expertise in the development of high-quality health consumer information resources
- Consumer representation and women's health perspectives in a range of consultations, working parties and health service reviews
- Discussion forums, seminars and presentations on women's health, public health and gender issues
- Evidence-based analysis and advice to health providers, NGOs and DHBs, the Ministry of Health, and other public agencies on women's health, public health, gender and consumer issues. We promote recognition of the differences and inequalities between women particularly according to indigeneity and ethnicity, disability, sexuality and gender identity, and socioeconomic status
- A range of breastfeeding promotion activities which connects us with women, their families, and communities
- Research and publications on women's health issues from a critical gender perspective
- Women's human rights monitoring and reporting
- Positive body image health promotion for health professionals, organisations and schools to create environments that encourage body satisfaction, size acceptance and body diversity.

## Representing New Zealand women at the United Nation's CEDAW Committee Hearing in New York

The United Nation's committee responsible for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reviewed the New Zealand government's progress in meeting its women's human rights obligations under the treaty during its 52<sup>nd</sup> session in New York in July.

Two representatives from Women's Health Action, Director Julie Radford-Poupard and Senior Policy Analyst George Parker were invited by Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) to join the delegation of New Zealand NGOs who reported to the committee alongside the New Zealand government delegation. Julie and George travelled to New York along with representatives from Pacific Women's Watch (NZ), Shakti Women's Council and the National Council of Women. They joined the Minister of Women's Affairs Hon Jo Goodhew, Kim Ngarimu, Acting CE and Deb Moran, Policy Director from the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and Judy McGreggor, EEO Commissioner from the Human Rights Commission. While in New York Julie and George attended training by International Women's Rights Action Watch, met with the New Zealand High Commissioner, presented to the CEDAW committee during the NGO formal session and New Zealand lunch briefing and had meetings with various CEDAW committee members. They also had the opportunity to offer solidarity to NGO representatives from other countries also participating in the 52<sup>nd</sup> session including Mexico, Samoa, and the Bahamas. On their return Julie and George have presented various report back sessions including:

- Ministry of Women's Affairs International Women's Caucus with Hon Jo Goodhew
- Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) Half Day Conference 'Driving Equality Forward'
- Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) Report Back Session
- Labour Party Conference

The Committee released its concluding observations in August and made recommendations to the New Zealand government on actions necessary to address discrimination and advance the status of women. Women's Health Action is now part of a national CEDAW coalition of NGOs working to ensure the government actions these recommendations.

## Developing Research Capacity

From Harm to Harmony Mai Te Tūkinu Ki Te Hāmaria



In November 2012 Women's Health Action, Alcohol Healthwatch and Hapai Te Hauora Tapui held a two day symposium 'From Harm to Harmony' with a special focus on addressing the impacts of alcohol on the lives of women, and the burden of alcohol-related injuries and violence in New Zealand.

Day One of the symposium provided an opportunity to present the key findings and recommendations from Women's Health Action's research project on women and alcohol. Sue Zimmerman, Portfolio Manager-Violence Prevention Issues Lead and Women's

Health Action's contract manager from the Ministry of Health also launched a draft policy briefing paper that summarises and highlights the research findings, for consultation.

Day Two included inspirational presentations from two international guests, Dr Evelyn Gillan, Chief Executive, Alcohol Focus Scotland and Caterina Giorgi, Manager, Policy and Research, Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, Australia. This was followed by workshops where symposium participants were engaged in reflections on where to next for policy and action to reduce alcohol-related harm, including a focus on women.

The symposium was an excellent conclusion to the Ministry of Health funded Alcohol and Women research project that has run over the past year. The aims of the research were to investigate the changing patterns of drinking among women over time and the harms that result for women from their own and others alcohol consumption. The research also explored whether the impact of alcohol on women's health is a growing problem, what are the major influences on women's drinking are, and the harm to women from others drinking. Current successful initiatives to prevent or reduce harm to women from their own or other people's drinking were also investigated.



## Events

Women's Health Action leads several events each year and a couple of key events are profiled below.

## Another record breaking Big Latch On

Part of Women's Health Action's core service is the delivery of a number of Ministry of Health funded activities focussed on breastfeeding promotion, protection and support.

A number of factors have been identified as continued barriers to breastfeeding including the loss of breastfeeding as the cultural norm within communities and confidence to breastfeed in public. Women's Health Action leads a number of initiatives aimed at reducing some of these barriers including the Big Latch On.

Initiated in 2005 by Women's Health Action to celebrate World Breastfeeding Week in Aotearoa New Zealand, the Big Latch On involves women coming together at registered venues across the country to latch on (breastfeed) their children at the same time. The purpose of the event is to normalise breastfeeding, raise awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding, and encourage women to form support networks. Since its inception in 2005, the Big Latch On has increased in popularity and has spread from New Zealand to become an international event.



This year, the record for the greatest number of women simultaneously breastfeeding was broken once again with 1571 children latching on at 135 venues across Aotearoa New Zealand. While internationally, 7291 children in an additional 22 countries latched on.

In New Zealand, there were increases in the percentage of women who identified themselves as Māori, Chinese, and European NZ/Pakeha compared to 2011, and the percentage of Samoan participants doubled. The number of younger women (under 20 years old) participating also increased.

Feedback from both the coordinators and participants was very positive. Coordinators held that the Big Latch On provided a safe, enjoyable atmosphere for supporting breastfeeding mothers while also reporting that the event is important in promoting and normalising breastfeeding and supporting mothers. Most participants (91%) reported that taking part in the Big Latch On positively impacted their feelings about breastfeeding. Compared to 2011, a greater percentage of women felt the event helped improve their confidence to breastfeed in public. Participants also reported the event was educational and they were highly likely to encourage others to attend future Big Latch On events.

Overall, the Big Latch On 2012 was an enjoyable experience that promoted, protected, and supported breastfeeding in New Zealand, and was well-received by participants, coordinators, and the media. It is a valuable opportunity to celebrate the work breastfeeding women do and a positive sign that we are strengthening breastfeeding support in New Zealand.

A full copy of the Big Latch On 2012 evaluation, undertaken by students completing a Health Science degree at the School of Population Health, University of Auckland, can be obtained by emailing [isis@womens-health.org.nz](mailto:isis@womens-health.org.nz).

### Annual Cartwright Anniversary Seminar

In August, Women's Health Action held its annual Cartwright Anniversary seminar. The seminar commemorates the release of the Cartwright Inquiry report into the 'unfortunate experiment' at National Women's Hospital by exploring sites of gender discrimination within social structures.

This year, Women's Health Action partnered with the Auckland Women's Centre and the University of Auckland to present 'Silent injustice: women's experiences of the Family Court'. The seminar focused on the challenges women face when using the Family Court to negotiate relationship separation and child custody arrangements, and how these challenges are compounded when leaving abusive relationships.

Senior University of Auckland academics, Nicola Gavey (Psychology), Julia Tolmie (Law) and Vivienne Elizabeth (Sociology) discussed their recent research which indicated many Family Court professionals valued shared care resulting in fathers' access to children being prioritised with little consideration of fathers' parenting abilities or their relationships with the children, or the concerns of mothers. This prioritising is in contrast to international research which indicates quality parenting, rather than a particular custody arrangement, is fundamental in children's wellbeing.

Lisa Close, spokesperson from the 'It's Still Not Okay' domestic violence campaign spoke more about women's lived experiences and reactions to the failings of the Family Court. Lisa Close has frequently heard from survivors of domestic abuse who thought the justice system would protect them but instead find the abuse perpetuated by the courts which dismiss concerns of women and impose shared care.

During the question and answer session, a number of women in the audience chose to share their own experiences of the Family Court, and it became apparent that many women wanted to continue the discussions. Women's Health Action and the Auckland Women's Centre agreed to co-convene a support group and within a few weeks of the seminar, the first Silent Injustice support group meeting was held. The group aims to support women going through the Family Court and strategise ways to improve justice for women in the Family Court.



### Women's Suffrage Breakfast

In September, Women's Health Action held its annual Suffrage breakfast to commemorate women getting the vote in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This year, the guest speaker was Dr Cat Pausé, Human Development lecturer and Fat Studies researcher at Massey University. Dr Pausé presented a discussion of the effects of our weight-obsessed culture on the health of women and girls.



### Waitangi Day 2013

One of Women's Health Action's breastfeeding event highlights is our ongoing collaboration Ngāti Whātua o Orakei Health and in February, our organisations worked together along with local breastfeeding support services and health professionals to set up another successful breastfeeding and health area at 2013 Bastion Point Waitangi Day Celebrations.

The focus of this initiative is to assist pregnant and breastfeeding women and their whānau to access information and support aimed at improving health during pregnancy and the postnatal period as well as provide free onsite breastfeeding support and advice. We also provided a comfortable shaded area for women to breastfeed and refuel with healthy snacks and water.



### Body Image Health Promotion

In November 2012, Women's Health Action announced it would take over the health promotion services of Eden. For 22 years Eden (also known as Eating Difficulties Education Network) worked at the forefront of our community's efforts to create a world which values body trust, body satisfaction, size acceptance and diversity.

When Eden closed its doors in October due to funding constraints, Women's Health Action offered to continue the legacy of Eden's health promotion services as it saw these



services as being invaluable to the community and a natural fit with Women's Health Action's own kaupapa.

The health promotion activities focus on supporting and educating health professionals, organisations and schools to create environments that encourage body satisfaction, size acceptance and body diversity. These health promotion services include the Body Image Leaders (BILS) programme in schools, Nourish workshops aimed at people working with youth, and annual events – Love Your Body campaign and Diet Free Day.

By the end of March Women's Health Action was working with four Auckland schools. Each school has 10-12 student Body Image Leaders who the Women's Health Action health promoter meets with fortnightly to support student-led body image health promotion campaigns and discuss any arising issues in the schools.

## Other projects and work streams

This reporting period saw us complete over 30 submissions on a wide range of topics related to women's health and wellbeing including the social determinants of women's health, health consumer issues, maternal and child health, and infant and young child feeding. Highlights include:

1. **Food Standards Australia NZ, Regulation of Infant Formula Products in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code:** Women's Health Action supported the overarching goal of this proposal to address problems with the current regulations for infant formula products, as well as providing clarity in areas of regulatory uncertainty as to the intent of the relevant standards. Women's Health

Action believes that both Australia and New Zealand have an ethical responsibility to ensure that all products exported from these countries ensure: protection of public health and safety; provision of adequate information relating to food to enable consumers to make informed choices; and prevention of misleading or deceptive conduct.

2. **Ministry of Health, Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act:** Women's Health Action strongly advocated that health professional regulation must ensure that consumer safety is paramount to all health professionals. In particular, the ability for consumers to receive accurate information about the services provided, the effects of any health care interventions and the qualifications of any healthcare practitioner. This includes the requirement that healthcare professionals ensure informed consent is obtained in regards to procedures and research. Women's Health Action believes the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 is extremely important and is concerned that the current focus on workforce and cost issues does not undermine this legislation. Women's Health Action strongly supported the HPCA Act and a continued focus on the protection and safety of the public.
3. **Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology, Proposed Amendments to Guidelines on Surrogacy Arrangements involving Providers of Fertility Services and Guidelines on Donation of Eggs or Sperm between Certain Family Members:** Women's Health Action supported the proposed amendments relating addressing discrimination faced by men in same sex

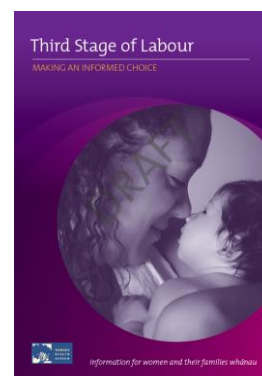
relationships or single men wishing to access surrogacy arrangements through a fertility provider by removing the requirement that there be an “intending mother” as well as the changes to the Guidelines on Donation of Eggs or Sperm between Certain Family Members to ensure single men and women, and men and women in same sex relationships have equitable access to assisted reproductive technologies.

Women’s Health Action recommended on-going consultation with members of queer/trans/intersex communities to ensure guidelines and legislation relating to assisted reproductive technologies do not perpetuate discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientations and/or gender identity. As a result of Women’s Health Action’s and others’ submissions ACART held a round of meetings with the queer, trans and intersex community around the country.

Women’s Health Action continued to protect, promote and support appropriate infant and young child feeding through breastfeeding promotion and working to ensure the proper use of breast-milk substitutes, when these are necessary, on the basis of adequate information and through appropriate marketing and distribution. During this reporting period Women’s Health Action led a number of regional and national initiatives including chairing the Metro Auckland Breastfeeding Network (ABN); monitoring and reporting on violations of the Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes; and maintaining the website [www.bfw.org.nz](http://www.bfw.org.nz) dedicated to supporting breastfeeding in the workplace aimed at both employees and employers. Women’s Health Action also assisted Te Wananga o Aotearoa - Muruhiku campus and the Southland Hospital achieve

‘Breastfeeding Friendly Workplaces’ certification.

Women’s Health Action produced a new resource called the ‘Third Stage of Labour’. Women’s Health Action consulted with a wide range of stakeholders to produce this professionally designed pamphlet to encourage informed choice in maternity care.



Finally, Women’s Health Action also continued to provide information and support services to health consumers with complaints and queries, and to be involved in a number of national and regional governance groups and working parties.

**Women’s Health Action would like to acknowledge our Supporters and partners:**

***A special thanks to the Ministry of Health, Lottery Grant Board, ASB Community Trust, Internal Affairs COGS, the Todd Foundation and Auckland Council.***

- Abortion Law Reform Association
- Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA)
- Alcohol Health Watch
- Asian Women’s Health Trust
- Auckland District Health Board
- Auckland Medical Aid Trust
- Auckland Women’s Centre
- Auckland University of Technology – School of Education Te Kura Mātauranga
- Auckland University of Technology – School of Midwifery
- Australian Women’s Health Network
- Birthcare Auckland
- Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)
- Counties Manukau DHB
- Eating Disorders Association of New Zealand
- Eden
- Epsom Girls Grammar School
- Family Planning New Zealand
- Family Violence Clearing House
- Federation of Women’s Health Councils
- Hapai Te Hauora Tapui
- Health Promotion Forum
- Health Star Pacific Trust
- HELP
- Human Rights Commission
- Infant Feeding Association of New Zealand
- La Leche League
- Lactation Consultants of Australia & New Zealand
- MAMA Maternity Information Service
- Māori Women’s Welfare League
- Massey University
- Maternity Services Consumer Council (MSCC)
- Medical Council of New Zealand
- Mental Health Foundation
- Midwifery Council New Zealand
- Mount Roskill Grammar School
- National Women’s Refuge
- New Zealand Breastfeeding Authority
- New Zealand College of Midwives
- New Zealand Lactation Consultants Association
- Ngāti Whātua o Orakei Health
- National Council of Women
- Northern District Support Agency
- Pacific Women’s Watch (NZ)
- Privacy Commission
- Public Health Association
- Rainbow Youth
- Rape Prevention Education
- Shakti
- Shine
- St Dominic’s College
- Supportline Women’s Refuge
- Te Oranga–Te Rūnanga o Te Rarawa
- Te Puawai Tapu Trust
- Te Puawaitanga Ki Otautahi Trust
- Te Whānau O Waipareira Trust
- The Asian Network Incorporated (TANI)
- Thrive Teen Parent Support Trust
- Turuki Health Care
- University of Auckland
- Waitemata District Health Board (WDHB)
- Well Women and Family Trust
- Wellington Women’s Health Collective
- West Fono
- Whakawhetu National SUDI Prevention for Māori