

Wairarapa International Women's Day Hui
Wairarapa Women's Centre's Official Statement
Masterton, March 8, 2025

Title: Accelerate Action, March Forward: A Future of Equality for All

Good morning everyone

It is a privilege to stand before you today as we celebrate **International Women's Day 2025**—a day that is more than just a commemoration; it is a global call to action. IWD is marked for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland on March 19, 1911 – with more than 1M men and women attending rallies.

In 1922, Lenin declared March 8 as International Working Women's Day honouring the role of women in the 1917 Russian Revolution. It's also in 1922 that China first celebrated IWD by the Chinese Women's movement. Fast forward 2025 (more than a hundred years) where are we today? So much has changed and improved for women but there are still a lot of remaining barriers and constraints.

This year, we rally behind the powerful themes "**Accelerate Action**" and "**March Forward**", both of which urge us to push beyond words and commit to real, tangible progress in advancing gender equality. These themes remind us that, at the current pace, it could take **over 130 years** (5 generations) to achieve full gender parity. That is far too long. Women and girls deserve **equal rights, power, and opportunities now**—not generations from now. And so, today, right here in our beautiful Wairarapa, we are called to **accelerate** our efforts and **march forward** with determination, unity, and purpose.

The Significance of International Women's Day

International Women's Day is not just a date on the calendar—it is a movement. It honours the generations of women who have fought for progress and highlights the work that still needs to be done. Here in the Wairarapa, this day carries deep meaning because **our women—our mothers, sisters, daughters, colleagues, and friends—are the backbone of our community**. I am not where I am today, if not for the encouragement, love, push and high expectations from my Mom. When I was in my first year high school and I did not want to go to a high-standard school because it's too much hard work, my Mom challenge me with this question: Would you like to be the best tomato in the basket among the rotten ones or would you rather be the rotten one among the best ones? I don't know where my mother got that phrase but it hit hard on me and I never forgot it!

We, women - lead, nurture, create, and inspire.

Today – we have amazing women around us who chose to contribute to today's celebration by making this event a success. We have 6 successful women around us who accepted our invitation to be our panelists. We have volunteers helping to make this event happen. We have the members of the WaiCC and our Executive Director, Christie, who worked tirelessly for today's event and last but not least, we have you, our participants who chose to spend your day with us rather than with your family and other activities. We honour and thank you all for this.

Today, we recognize not only our contributions but also the barriers that still exist and the urgent need to **accelerate action** toward a fair and just future.

The Impact of Celebrating IWD in the Wairarapa

When we celebrate International Women's Day **in our region**, we are doing more than just hosting an event—we are creating change that ripples through generations. Imagine a small stone thrown into the river...it creates a ripple effect. If we do this together, it creates a bigger ripple effect that has greater impact.

We are.....

1. Inspiring the Next Generation

Young girls in our community must see that their dreams are **valid and achievable**.

By sharing stories of local women who have shattered barriers, we ignite confidence, ambition, and purpose in the younger generation.

2. Supporting Women of All Ages

Young women need encouragement to step into leadership and break free from limitations placed upon them.

Working women deserve equal pay, career opportunities, and support for balancing work and family.

Older women must be recognized for their wisdom, resilience, and lifelong contributions.

Every woman, regardless of age, has a role in shaping the future. **We must march forward together.**

3. Creating an Inclusive and Equal Community

When women are empowered, families **flourish**, businesses **prosper**, and societies **thrive**. (Provide examples of my Mom, myself, other Moms I know) Gender equality benefits everyone—men, women, and children alike. We must **accelerate policies and initiatives** that remove obstacles for women in workplaces, education, healthcare, and leadership.

4. Strengthening Support Networks

Mentorship, advocacy, and community-building are powerful tools for change.

Today is a chance to forge **stronger bonds** among women and allies.

We must stand together—not just today, but every day—to uplift and support one another.

Call to Action: What Can We Do?

Let this day be more than just a celebration—let it be a turning point!

Here's how we can **accelerate action and march forward**:

- ✓ **Support women-owned businesses** and initiatives.
- ✓ **Advocate for equal opportunities** in workplaces and leadership.
- ✓ **Mentor and encourage young women** to dream big and break barriers.
- ✓ **Educate ourselves and others** on issues affecting women's rights. (Are we aware of the gender inequality happening in our region? What areas are we not equal with men?) Educate ourselves – in all areas of life and embrace higher and continuing education across all ages.
- ✓ **Challenge outdated norms and biases** in our families, workplaces, and communities. (Are we labelled feminists if we stand up for these causes? Are we seen as the weaker sex? That our place is taking care of our babies?)

Closing: Our Commitment to the Future

My precious fellow women in the Wairarapa and our avid men supporters, the time is now. We cannot wait another **five generations** for equality. We must **march forward boldly and accelerate action today**—for ourselves, for our daughters, and for the future of our community. Let's use this day to **renew our commitment, amplify our voices, and be the change**. Because when women rise, **we all rise**.

Happy International Women's Day! Let's accelerate action and march forward—together!

Thank you!



Speaker: Kinnie Vermeulen, Governance Board, Wairarapa Women's Centre
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