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Women's suffrage day shines light on important health issue

Women's Health Action Trust
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Media release from Women's Health Action Trust

'Getting Health off the Scales: moving women's health beyond weight obsessed culture' is the theme of this year's Women's Health Action Women's Suffrage Breakfast. The breakfast is held annually to commemorate New Zealand being the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote on the 19th of September 1893. Suffrage Day is a day to remember and celebrate those who fought all around the world for women to secure the right to vote, and to continue the work of New Zealand's suffragettes in building the equitable society they always imagined.

This year's suffrage breakfast will be a call to action to move women's health beyond our weight obsessed culture that is hurting women and girls. We have heard much in recent years about the 'obesity epidemic'; however the real epidemic is body dissatisfaction and fat stigma. Our society's fixation on weight, and the idea that we need to be slim to be healthy and attractive, is dangerous for women's health. Evidence shows that body dissatisfaction is associated with a range of harmful effects including: an increased risk of developing unhealthy eating habits and eating disorders including dieting; increased substance abuse, depression, and anxiety; poorer sexual health outcomes, especially for young women; and a reduction in women's participation in health promoting activities, for example, enjoyable and sustainable exercise. Likewise fat stigma and discrimination, particularly in the health system, has been shown to impact on women's access to health care.

This year's breakfast will be addressed by Dr Cat Pausé, Human Development Lecturer and Fat Studies Researcher at Massey University who presents and publishes on fat stigma and discrimination and its harmful effects on our health. Dr Cat Pausé will implore us to toss out those scales and reject weight as a proxy for our health or our worth! Dr Cat Pausé considers the impact of our weight obsessed culture on the physical and mental health of women and girls, and proposes new ways of moving forward as we advocate for health without encouraging body shame and hatred.

The breakfast will be held at Parnell Trust Jubilee Building on Wednesday 19th September 2012 7 - 9am.

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