

Inquiry into pay equity

Some thoughts on:

The adequacy of current data to reliably monitor employment changes that may impact on pay equity issues.

Data to monitor employment changes need to take into consideration the effect of wide-ranging physical and emotional problems suffered by women from the stresses and pressures of:

- child-rearing itself;
- finding adequate, affordable, appropriate childcare;
- dealing with abusive and/or controlling behaviours of the children's fathers;
- the legal battles to try and protect children from further abuse;
- the coercion by government to participate in useless time and physical and emotional energy consuming activities with useless, resourceless network providers;
- the Centrelink bumbles that leave a person in debt then;
- the pressure to repay Centrelink while;
- trying to keep up to date with the onerous income reporting requirements;
- working in temporary and/or casual positions when regular permanent work is sought,
- fear of losing any paid employment due to ill health or family commitments (This is, of course, not pronounced as the reason for the fault found with the employee's performance.).

These have the effect of limiting women to part-time, menial, physically demanding work, when they may prefer full time work where they can use their intellectual and managerial abilities. Also women under these stresses, may use up all their sick leave and recreational leave entitlements, meaning they are then unable to be paid for further days of leave taken because of ill health or family commitments resulting in decreased income.

The need for education and information among employers, employees and trade unions in relation to pay equity issues.

Education of employees is definitely needed. The opportunity to participate in tertiary and other studies for mothers, needs to be made more readily available by increased Austudy payments, the subsidising of rents, the re-instatement of health benefits and once again, appropriate affordable childcare.

Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women.

A woman re-entering the paid workforce does not have the current experience that those already employed, have. Therefore she may feel as though she does not deserve

greater remuneration than the absolute minimum available, despite her innate abilities and life experience. Attempts to negotiate increases in wages may result in further pressure on performance.

The adequacy of recent and current equal remuneration provisions in state and federal workplace relations legislation.

The adequacy of legislation is somewhat irrelevant, given the other constraints women experience.

The adequacy of current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have taken maternity leave and/or returned to work part time and/or sought flexible work hours.

Shouldn't this training be available on a part-time or flexible basis also? There are some correspondence courses available, but many require regular full time attendance even during hours for which there is an extreme dearth of childcare provisions.

And what about women who prefer to go back to work full-time? Shouldn't they have fair access to training and promotion?

The need for further legislative reform to address pay equity in Australia.

Legislative reform is desperately needed in the areas of:

- childcare – non-privatisation;
- child protection – assessment of alternative parent's skills as such;
- family law – to recognize the best interest of the child's safety and wellbeing, especially in cases of historical conflict arising from domestic violence, and/or the attempt by one parent to abuse, dominate and/or control not only the children but also the nurturing parent (in most cases, the mother)
- Centrelink – to simplify
 1. payment formulas,
 2. reporting requirements and
 3. pathways to desired employment that increase and utilise a woman's knowledge, skills, and abilities.