

TOWARDS A FAIRER WORKPLACE

■ GISBORNE DISTRICT COUNCIL CASE STUDY SUMMARY



→ THE COUNCIL

The Gisborne District Council is one of four New Zealand unitary authorities. Its status comes from the district's relative isolation and the strong communities of interest within it.

Unitary councils combine the functions, duties and powers of a territorial authority (service delivery bodies) with those of a regional council (regulatory authorities).

Council exercises powers and fulfils responsibilities under local and national legislation.

The purpose of the Gisborne District Council is to enable and ensure democratic local decision-making to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of the Gisborne district and its residents in the present and for the future.



→ STAFF SNAPSHOT

- 265 permanent staff.
- Forty-six percent of the permanent workforce of the Gisborne District Council are female and 54 percent are male.
- 32% of women and 10% of men are employed part-time.
- The median full time equivalent (FTE) salary of female staff within the Council is 78.4% of the median FTE salary of male staff.
- The median actual salary (taking account of part-time work) of female staff within the Council is 79.3% of the median actual salary of male staff.
- 53% of women have an FTE salary of less than \$40,000 compared to 26% of men.
- 27% of men have an FTE salary of more than \$60,000 compared to 7% of women.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The Review was charged with investigating and assessing whether women and men:

1. Have an equitable share of rewards (including pay but not just pay)
2. Participate equitably in all areas of the Council
3. Are treated with equal respect and fairness

Following the completion of the Phase One Reviews in the Public Service and the Public Health and Public Education Sectors, Phase Two Reviews were initiated in Local Government and Crown entities.

The Pay and Employment Equity Unit of the Department of Labour developed a streamlined four step review process using new tools and learnings from Phase One Reviews.

Gisborne District Council volunteered to be the first local government organisation to use the new streamlined review process as a result of negotiations with the Public Service Association which highlighted the issue of pay and employment equity.

“ *When the idea of the Gisborne District Council participating in the pay and employment equity project was first mooted, I was a bit sceptical I'd have to say. None of us – or at least I hope that's the case – set out to create injustices and inequity in our work places. Intuitively then, there's no problem so why go down this track. I've realised that's the point – it's not enough to rely on intuition. The potential issue is such that some hard data is needed. Attracting good people to work for us is challenging enough without running the risk that there is something inherent in our pay policies, practices and procedures that prejudices a high percentage of our market. I'm looking forward to the results and seeing what they might mean for our approach to personnel management in the widest sense.* ”

LINDSAY MCKENZIE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

HOW WE DID IT

The Process

Following consultation with relevant unions, a seven member Review Committee was established.

The Review Committee endorsed a Project Plan which outlined the stages, processes and timetable for the Review. A “Working Together” Agreement was signed off by members of the Review Committee.

A Communications Plan was also adopted by the Review Committee and four newsletters were distributed to staff via email and hard copy during the Review. A dedicated website was also available for staff to obtain information about the Review and its progress and outcomes.

The Review used the new four step process and associated tools and support documentation developed by the Department of Labour. The tools and documentation were adapted to meet the specific needs of the Gisborne District Council.

In particular the questions in the staff survey template were rigorously examined to ensure that any questions that were not relevant to the Council or sought information that could be obtained from other sources were not included. The Review Committee believes that the resultant shorter survey contributed significantly to the high response rate.

→ CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

The Review was very successful in:

- engaging staff
- identifying issues
- meeting deadlines; and
- proposing practical solutions.

The responses contained in the report seek to address the identified gender equity issues to move towards a fairer workplace. They aim to:

- Ensure there is no gender bias in job evaluations
- Address the low proportion of women in management positions
- Improve participation in KiwiSaver amongst lower paid staff

- Build women's confidence in the fairness of training and development, promotions processes, performance management and use of discretion by supervisors
- Build awareness and confidence in flexible working arrangements
- Build a more positive work environment.

““ *The process gave us the guidance, tools and ability to use the documentation to validate/improve on the plans required for discussions and decision making by the committee members.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *I thought the four step process was good as you only had to focus on one step at a time.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Training the Committee

The Review Committee undertook a day's training delivered by the Department of Labour assisted by the Project Manager.

““ *Understanding the review and the intricacies of the process and timeframes was a little bewildering at the beginning. I think the training was informative and it was encouraging to know that other sectors had completed the review process, and furthermore that the Project Manager understood the review to guide us through.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *The training day was very informative – assisted me in the understanding of what the purpose of the Pay and Employment Equity Review was.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Review Committee

Following the training day in July, the Review Committee met four times at fortnightly intervals during August and September. Papers were provided to the Review Committee several days before each half day meeting.

““ *... meetings had great support from Human Resources Department which was important for the success of meeting deadline targets and everything seemed to be well organised.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *The main aspect of the review committee in my opinion was to participate and be involved to the completion and to have a quality result for the benefit and improvement of our organisation.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *It was good to see the team develop together in their understanding of the issues.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Project Management

The Council engaged an external Project Manager with experience in conducting a number of Pay and Employment Equity Reviews in the Public Health Sector. The use of an experienced external consultant in this small organisation assisted the review being able to be completed within the timetable established in the Project Plan.

““ *... excellent project management. Always easy to follow his guidance, very well organised.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *Thoroughly enjoyed working with Doug – he understood what the role was and also how to bring the team together.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

““ *I was very impressed with the skills and organised manner of our Project Manager.* ””

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Analysing and Prioritising the Data

Workforce data from July 2008 was used by the Review Committee as the basis for analysis.

For the purpose of analysis, jobs were grouped according to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification

of Occupations (ANZSCO). The initial grouping resulted in 66 separate classifications for the 265 permanent positions (casuals excluded). These were then grouped into 13. These groups and the gender breakdown of each are listed in the following table. Those which are female or male dominated groups are shaded.

GROUP	FEMALE %	MALE %
Clerical and Administrative Workers	77	23
Call or Contact Centre Operator	81	19
Librarian	95	5
Inspectors and Regulatory Officers	29	71
Information and Organisation Professionals	47	53
Caretaker	56	44
Secretary (General)	100	
Urban and Regional Planner	88	12
Manager	16	84
Lifeguard	30	70
Engineering Professionals		100
Specialist Managers		100
Technicians and Trade Workers		100

“ The data analysis, preparation of papers and facilitation was of a high quality, timely and consistent, accurate and the quality of the data bodes well for a good relationship and a good result. ”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

Engagement with Staff

The Review Committee surveyed all staff in July 2008 to find out their perceptions and views on the issues being investigated. This opportunity to have a say was taken up by 214 staff. This represented 81% of all staff. Eighty-five percent of female staff and 77% of male staff responded.

The Review findings in relation to participation and respect and fairness were largely drawn from the responses to the staff survey, including the comments from individuals. While some of these comments from staff may not have related to gender specific issues, they did provide a good snapshot of the perceptions and views of staff at the time the surveys were undertaken.

The substance of these additional comments has been summarised and forwarded to the Chief Executive for consideration.

Given the very high response rate, the Review Committee had confidence that the gender differences identified in the staff responses could be relied upon in formulating their findings.

During the course of the Review, staff were asked for further feedback on findings and suggestions for responses.

“ Communication to staff that this was a national survey and not an internal survey caused a large percentage of staff to participate in the survey. The feedback at each step was excellent – the staff were kept informed of the results and findings and had the opportunity to provide feedback at each step. ”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

“ Opinions were able to be easily expressed because of the confidentiality of the process. Staff felt their opinions mattered and were important. ”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

“ The communication and staff engagement was exceptionally good. The motivation to participate and contribute was inspiring and was reflected in the result. ”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

The findings from the Review, responses and outcomes sought are contained in the following tables.

Reward

	FINDING	RESPONSE	OUTCOME SOUGHT
1.1	<p>Job Evaluation</p> <p>Job evaluation for all jobs has not been checked to ensure they comply with the Gender-Inclusive Job Evaluation Standard.</p>	<p>Implement the new Job Evaluation (JE) system.</p> <p>Monitor and report resultant changes in JE ratings on a gender basis.</p>	<p>All job evaluations comply with the Gender-inclusive Job Evaluation Standard.</p>
1.2	<p>Low proportion of women in Tier 1-3 jobs</p> <p>Only 14% of Tier 1-3 positions in the Council are occupied by women. Women constitute 46% of the total workforce.</p>	<p>Identify “feeder” positions for Tier 3 positions within Council.</p> <p>Identify development opportunities for those staff occupying feeder positions.</p> <p>Ensure developmental opportunities are fairly and equitably allocated.</p> <p>Develop guidelines for rotation of short term higher duties to ensure development opportunities are shared.</p>	<p>Increased proportion of women in Tier 1-3 jobs (whilst maintaining merit based selection).</p>
1.3	<p>Superannuation</p> <p>Overall, 41% of women and men are receiving employer subsidised superannuation.</p> <p>However the proportion is less for low paid staff (predominately female) and greater for higher paid staff (predominately male).</p>	<p>Ensure all staff are aware of KiwiSaver.</p> <p>Identify reasons that some staff do not take up the option.</p> <p>Investigate alternate employer contributor options.</p>	<p>Increased participation of lower paid (predominately female) staff in KiwiSaver.</p>

Participation

	FINDING	RESPONSE	OUTCOME SOUGHT
2.1	<p>Training and Development</p> <p>Women are less confident than men that they are provided with good opportunities for training and development and that development opportunities are fairly allocated to both men and women in the Council.</p>	<p>Implement the new Training and Development Policy and develop associated guidelines.</p> <p>Establish a Professional Women’s Focus Group within Council to discuss training and development issues for women within the Council.</p>	<p>Increased confidence of women that they are provided with good opportunities for training and development.</p> <p>Increased confidence of women that development opportunities are fairly allocated to both men and women in the Council.</p>

2.2	Promotion/advancement Women are less confident than men that the promotions process is equally fair to women and men.	Establish greater transparency and consistency in promotion processes through a review of policy and guidelines.	Increased confidence of women that the promotions process is equitable and fair to both women and men.
2.3	Performance Management Women are less confident than men that the performance management system is equally fair to both women and men.	Continue implementation of the P File (Position Profile and Personal Performance) system within Council. Continue to build commitment to the P File system from the Corporate Management Team across the board.	Increased confidence of women that the performance management system is equally fair to both women and men.
2.4	Flexible working arrangements Women are less confident than men that the flexibility of working arrangements in their current job is satisfactory.	Further develop and promulgate the existing policy and guidelines for flexible working options available within the Council. Develop a new policy on remote working. Identify options that are available or feasible in the District for child care and school holiday programs for staff with child care responsibilities.	Greater staff awareness of the flexible working arrangements in the Council. Increased confidence of women that the flexibility of working arrangements in their current job is satisfactory. Greater staff confidence in the Council's commitment to assisting employees achieve a good work-life balance.

Respect and Fairness

	FINDING	RESPONSE	OUTCOME SOUGHT
3.1	Respect Women are more unsure than men that their opinion matters to their supervisor.	Ensure supervisors/managers are provided with training and guidance on creating and maintaining a positive work environment.	Increased confidence of women that their opinion matters to their supervisor.
3.2	Exercising of discretion by supervisors Women are less confident than men that in exercising discretion (for example over allocation of work) their supervisor is equally fair to men and women.	Establish greater transparency and consistency in decision making including a process for reviewing decisions.	Increased confidence of women that in exercising discretion their supervisor is equally fair to men and women.

3.3	<p>Inappropriate behaviour</p> <p>Women are less confident than men that the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes active steps to minimise the risk of harassment, bullying, discrimination and other inappropriate behaviour. • would address and resolve any instance of harassment, bullying, discrimination or other inappropriate behaviour. 	<p>Develop and implement a fuller Code of Conduct and Anti-harassment Policy.</p> <p>Ensure supervisors/managers are provided with training on the Policy and guidance on managing and resolving cases of inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Ensure all staff are aware of the Policy and standards of acceptable behaviour and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.</p>	<p>A more positive work environment.</p> <p>Increased staff awareness of, and confidence in, the formal processes and procedures for making a complaint about harassment, bullying, discrimination and other inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Increased confidence of women (and all staff) that the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • takes active steps to minimise the risk of harassment, bullying, discrimination and other inappropriate behaviour. • would address and resolve any instance of harassment, bullying, discrimination or other inappropriate behaviour.
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Pay and Employment Equity Policy Issues

	POLICY ISSUE	RESPONSE	OUTCOME SOUGHT
4.1	Monitoring progress	Provide a 6 monthly update to staff on progress in implementing the Response Plan.	Staff are confident that the responses are being implemented.
4.2	Measuring progress	Incorporate gender equity indicators related to the “outcomes sought” from the Response Plan in the annual climate survey and report changes in staff views on these issues on a gender basis.	Staff views surveyed to benchmark against results from 2008 survey.
4.3	Further full Pay and Employment Equity Review	Complete another Pay and Employment Equity review in 3 years time.	Re-assessment of Council’s performance on Pay and Employment Equity issues following implementation of 2008 Review responses.

KEY LEARNINGS AND CHALLENGES

Overall the Review was very successful in engaging staff, identifying issues, meeting deadlines and proposing practical solutions.

The four step process worked very well within the project timeline for an organisation of this size.

Some of the responses contained in the Report build on or link to existing initiatives already underway in the Council.

The Review Committee members rated their level of confidence on the outcomes of the Review from 1 (not confident) to 10 (very confident).

- The level of confidence that the Review has identified the key gender equity issues within the Council was rated at 8.9.
- The level of confidence that the proposed responses will improve gender equity within the Council if implemented was rated at 8.3.
- The level of confidence that staff morale will improve if the responses are implemented was rated at 7.6.

“...what has been developed for preparation to the final report looks achievable.”

[REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER]

“The review has done what it is meant to do. It has identified the key gender equity issues and some issues have been discussed and organisational awareness has progressed in a positive way. The proposed responses/recommendations will improve gender equity within Council and have a positive snowball effect on how it is implemented and reviewed by the organisation.”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

“I see this national review on gender equity in local government as a reality check and a conscious step for equity within Council. It is healthy and honest awakening some of the findings/results that come out of it, and it impacts on all staff at varied levels who work for Council.”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

“This was the first constructive opportunity (where issues AND solutions were sought from staff) for staff to comment on working conditions. It is inevitable that a range of issues not specifically related to gender and pay equity were raised. The process needs to provide a clear path for those issues to be raised with management.”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

“There have been some valid issues raised and I feel confident that most of these issues will be taken seriously by the Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team as a result of the review.”

REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBER

→ PAY AND EMPLOYMENT EQUITY REVIEW CASE STUDIES

The Pay and Employment Equity Review Case Studies series provides future review committees with an opportunity to learn from others experiences. Further summary and full case studies are available on the website: www.dol.govt.nz/services/PayAndEmploymentEquity/index.asp.