



**Submission of the PSA Women's  
Network Committee on the Equal Pay  
Act Amendment Bill**



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The Women's Network Committee of the Public Service Association wish to make a submission on the above Bill (both written and oral).

The Public Service Association is New Zealand's largest union, having a current membership of over 70,000, 73% of whom are female.

A large number of our female members are employed in female dominated workforces, in roles traditionally viewed as "women's work". As a consequence, the services they provide are highly undervalued and the rates of pay significantly less than those received by men employed in positions requiring similar skills and experience.

The Public Service Association has a long and proud history of upholding women's rights and advancing the cause of gender equality.

In conjunction with Etu Union and the New Zealand Nurse's Organisation, our union played a key supportive role in the successful Equal Pay claim raised by Kristine Bartlett, caregiver, in 2017. Subsequent to that, the PSA has successfully concluded claims for DHB mental health workers and social workers at Oranga Tamariki and currently has a number of other Equal Pay claims lodged with the courts.

The PSA Women's Network Committee therefore believes our union is well placed to comment on this Bill and is keen to ensure any legislation passed is robust, comprehensive and effective enough to ensure all Equal Pay claims raised by the PSA, and indeed by any other organisations or individuals going forward, are addressed in a fair, transparent and expedient manner.

The key aspects of this Bill that we support are as follows:

- The intent of the Bill is to make the process of raising and progressing a pay equity claim easier, i.e. to prevent the inclusion of any unnecessary hurdles or barriers that might prohibit women from raising a legitimate equal pay claim, or make it more difficult for a claim to be successful.
- Clear and accessible definitions of both equal pay and pay equity.
- The inclusion of the Pay Equity Principles jointly negotiated and agreed to by the tripartite forum comprised of representatives from business, unions and the government. These principles have already been successfully used in the state sector to progress and settle a number of pay equity claims.
- Ensuring appropriate comparators are selected to assist in achieving a fair pay equity rate.
- The ability of workers to access their right to equal pay and pay equity collectively through their union.

We seek:

- The inclusion of a pay transparency clause which requires employers to disclose pay information by gender, before a claim is made. This would help people have the necessary information to consider whether they have a pay equity claim.
- Back pay provisions that are consistent with other employment rights.
- Potential delay points are removed or streamlined. The Bill requires claimants to go through mediation and facilitation before they can go to court in a number of situations. Raising and progressing a claim should be made as easy as possible.

To further endorse our submission, we include a number of personal statements from individual PSA women's network members which we believe speak further to the critical importance of this Bill for all working women in New Zealand.

Many of our female members are in positions of significant financial hardship. Despite this, we feel fortunate to belong to a union that is in a position to advocate so strongly for gender equality; many women in this country are far less fortunate. As PSA members, we therefore feel it is our duty and responsibility to speak both collectively and as individuals, to put a personal face on the issues so many New Zealand women contend with as a result of low pay, and the significant difference this Bill will make for them, and for their families.

### Personal Statements:

In 2008, after many years of work in the private sector, I took up an administrative position within mental health at my local district health board.

Very quickly, I discovered a culture vastly different to that of other organisations I had worked for. That is not to say that I had never previously experienced sexual discrimination, harassment or undervaluing of my working contribution as a woman – I certainly had – however, the degree to which these issues permeate the culture within our health system is vastly different, deeply engrained and very troubling.

I consider myself fortunate to have spent a large part of my career working outside of health; had I not, there is no doubt in my mind that, financially, I would be in a far greater position of vulnerability than I am currently.

Sadly, many of my admin colleagues are less fortunate, have spent their entire lives working within the health system. The experience, knowledge and ability required to perform their jobs is considerable. Equally, the high level of personal skills, emotional intelligence and life experience required to engage appropriately with people who are often extremely ill, mentally unwell, distressed, lost or bereaved is also significant. Yet, despite this, our rates of pay have continued to fall further and further behind. Many of us earn less than the Living Wage – and if we earn more than that, it is certainly not by much. Given that the Living Wage is calculated to be the minimum one should be earning to meet the basic costs of living AND to participate equally within a democratic society, how is this just – and how is it a true reflection of the skilled and highly critical work we do which is the fundamental backbone of our health system?

When the PSA first began research for the Admin and Clerical Equal Pay claim to determine when and how this chronic undervaluing had come about, they quickly discovered there is absolutely no written history about hospital administration staff – anywhere. Apparently, around the turn of last century administrative work within our hospitals was performed by doctor's wives – for free. That's

the only mention we get. The pay rates for hospital administrators do not appear to have hugely improved since that time and the negative impact of that on the women I work with deeply angers me.

The reality is that most of us are not doctor's wives who can afford to offer our wealthy husbands our free labour; we are independent, working women who are often the primary breadwinners in our homes, raising children alone on meagre wages, entering retirement with inadequate savings to live on – not due to frivolous spending and lack of budgeting skills but rather because we work in roles traditionally viewed as “women's work” that are associated with care giving – two things that are guaranteed to ensure we are undervalued and underpaid.

Two years ago, an elderly colleague of mine, with whom I shared an office for many years, retired at the age of 72, after 50+ years of service to mental health. I can honestly say I have never worked with anyone – from ANY profession – who was more dedicated and giving to her work.

This woman unflinching gave her time and attention to mental health patients, some of whom had known her for over thirty years. She spoke to them with kindness and respect, she hugged them; she made them feel like they mattered. These are things most of us take for granted in our lives which, sadly, many patients with mental health problems do not experience.

Two years on from her retirement, I still have patients turn up at my door looking for her, looking for her kindness, her warmth, her compassion. I do my best to fill her considerable shoes, knowing I have a great deal to live up to. I am grateful for the example she set and try to emulate it. She was proud of the contribution she made and the support she offered to our doctors and nurses.

If this were all she contributed during her career, it would be considerable, but in addition to this, she was a highly organised, fast and reliable administrator who could plough through the work of three people, when required, which was often.

She trained me from scratch – I had never worked as a medical administrator before – and she trained my 5 predecessors before me.

When her children were young, and she was struggling to make ends meet, she worked an 8 hour day, then carried on without a break as a night receptionist. For many years she also worked Saturday mornings.

She never took annual leave - always being worried about losing her job, she saved her holidays so she would have some sort of financial cushion if such a thing eventuated, knowing her family would not be able to survive for any length of time without a regular income.

I sat and watched her eat her homemade lunches, every day. Nothing was ever wasted – on many occasions I observed her eating bananas so black I would not have deemed them suitable to put in a cake, let alone my lunch box.

Despite this frugality, however, she was one of the most generous, kind, compassionate people I have ever come across, whose giving heart was balanced by an inner strength that is an absolute prerequisite for working in an environment such as this one, where the immense suffering and hardship our patients have experienced is something many individuals find hard to cope with.

Two years prior to this woman's retirement, we accidentally discovered that I was being paid \$2,000 a year more than her, despite the considerable wealth of experience she had over me and the fact that we were doing exactly the same job. I will never forget the look on her face when this hit her. She physically deflated and looked absolutely crushed, the reality of how little her employer valued

her efforts, sinking into her like a stone. We both knew that, in all likelihood, this disparity in pay extended further back than just my time in the role. Knowing that, in addition to this, we were both being undervalued in comparison to men working in male dominated roles requiring similar skills and abilities only further compounded my anger.

Offering my support, I encouraged her to raise the issue through our union, but at 70 years of age, and still suffering the after effects that two major earthquakes had had in her life, she simply did not have the energy.

I watched her soldier on for another two years, the passion, dedication and commitment simply worn out of her.

On her final day of work, our admin team took her out for lunch. Our manager paid for her meal, a well-meaning but poorly timed gesture which only further highlighted how little genuine reward or appreciation my colleague had received throughout her half century of dedicated service.

Afterwards, when we were leaving the restaurant, this dear, elderly colleague took hold of my hand as we were walking out. I literally felt her age from 72 to 82; her fear of retirement and the impact it would have on her quality of life had aged her ten years within the space of a minute.

Retirement is something we should be able to look forward to and enjoy, not fear and dread, but after a lifetime of being undervalued and underpaid, this was all she could see in front of her.

I look around me now, and see younger women walking the same path, raising children on their own, living hand to mouth, being undervalued and underpaid in their roles as hospital administrators. I see the toll this insidious undervaluing takes on their physical and mental wellbeing and I am angry. Very angry.

This equal pay claim has become a living, breathing part of my life. I will not watch any more women being degraded and tossed out in the same manner as my colleague. It's not right – and it WILL. BE. FIXED.

I am grateful to the PSA for the very significant effort it has put into researching and fighting our Admin and Clerical Equal Pay claim and am 100% behind the implementation of the Equal Pay Amendment Bill, knowing the very considerable amount of work my union and others have put into it, to ensure the women of this country finally receive financial justice and a rate of pay worthy of their working contributions.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

Hello, I am a CDHB Dental Assistant and PSA Delegate. I wish to support the Equal Pay Amendment Bill because I believe it will enable New Zealand women to at last be paid a fair and reasonable wage for the work they do.

I believe my colleagues and I are discriminated against because our workforce is predominantly female. There is no gender balance in our pool of CDHB Dental Assistants, we are all women and in the 12 years I have held my position there has only ever been 1 male Dental Assistant.

Our pay scale reflects this imbalance. We are currently paid \$21.89 per hour; this will increase to around \$22.40 at the end of 2018 and around \$23.90 by the end of 2019. Dental Assistants in Private Practice are typically paid between \$25 and \$31 per hour.

Our Service provides Specialist Dental Care to people of all ages within the Canterbury region. It is also a tertiary referral centre for the West Coast and Nelson and Marlborough regions. We are part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest district health board by population and geography in NZ.

CDHB Dental Assistants hold complex knowledge and skills required to perform different tasks and duties. We work alongside House Surgeons, Special Needs Dentists, Paediatric Dentists, Oral Surgeons, Registrars, Prosthodontists, and Orthodontists. We are all required to complete (or already hold) a Dental Assistant Training Course Certificate and Badge and to have had prior private practice experience.

It would mean a great deal to me if women were paid fairly for the work we do as Hospital Dental Assistants. We would feel more valued, respected and able to meet the costs of living without the struggle we face on a daily basis. Some of us are solo mothers. We already feel proud of what we contribute but want to feel more valued, respected and remunerated for what we do.

I work alongside several women of Pasefika heritage who have worked for the DHB from 20 – 40 years. These women have been loyal to the DHB and have entered the work force as young women, married, created families. They have worked in administrative roles and have seen many changes. One of the changes which they have not seen a significant increase to their pay. They have been dedicated to the workplace and their managers and to their work colleagues. They have sacrificed additional hours often to help get the work done without being paid overtime nor any real recognition of the time and energy they give. Their kindness has been exploited and they have been taken for granted. These women, with all their experience and skills have been grouped together with school leavers and other recently arrived employees to the workforce with minimal years' experience and there is not much difference to their pay.

Pasefika women are viewed as humble workers who will barely speak up. Bright and always smiling. They often do not speak up for fear of repercussion and with the notion they should be grateful they have a job. Well, enough is enough. Close the gender pay gap. Pay fairly to our women. Despite the cost of living having skyrocketed in Aotearoa unfortunately this is not reflected with the wages and salaries of many female employees nationwide. Just make it right so the future of all New Zealanders – not just a few – can be successful and prosperous.

I am 46 years of age and of Pasefika descent. I currently work for the Ministry of Justice, where currently a lot of injustices occur because of the way women have been poorly paid. My role in the Ministry, which 95% are women, is one of two roles that have been highly undervalued. We have been demoted to a much lower pay scale than what we're worth. We have been stripped of our value and our worth. The injustices continues to increase and today, we are still fighting for what we're worth. The law needs to reflect the struggles women are still facing today.

From 21 September Pasefika women effectively started working for free until 2019. The gender pay imbalance between Pasefika women and Pakeha men will continue to increase. This is discrimination, and heavily impacts on our people who are already facing discrimination because of racism. I have a 15 year old daughter who aspires to become an Air Force Pilot, to serve her country, to pay back what this country did for her. How can she do that when Pasefika are being discriminated against? What are we telling the next generation of this country? To be segregated perhaps? Why have we been discriminated against for? We want equal pay for work of equal value! Just like our other Pakeha sisters and brothers.

Hi There I work with the Department of Internal Affairs with a lot of Pasefika women who have service the public for over 20years. They are hard working women as well as myself and have a lot of passion for the work they do. Many of us have families and many have either come out as university graduates and many have put studies on hold.

As you can imagine being in one of the busiest department these women work overtime hours without being paid, the amount of workload does not match the wages they receive, many have feedback that increase on their pays is so difficult regardless of the hard hours and overtime they put in they remain on the same income and some get an small increase.

These women have many years of experience and are so dedicated to their work and have been treated unfairly and have not been acknowledge for the amazing work they put in daily. They struggle as living costs have increased so much, yet they get up every morning come into work and give the same dedication and show their loyalty to their roles, colleagues and managers.

We have watched our Mothers , Grandmothers work so hard and are so honest and humble and under paid for so many years, unable to speak up as afraid of losing their Jobs. It's time to put an end to this and CLOSE THE GENDER PAY GAP!!! We have the right to be treated fairly and equally.

We want to be able to make the changes not only for ourselves but for our children and provide a stable future for all New Zealanders.

I love my job, it is a job with purpose and it is a job of value.

Every day I help people, people who have experienced trauma, people who are suffering, people who are at risk and my decisions/actions impact their lives and often their personal safety. This work requires skill, experience, dedication and comes with a personal cost as it is stressful, tiring, challenging work as well as being rewarding and fulfilling. Most of my colleagues are women, I admire their passion and dedication and many like me have been working in their roles for many years. We along with others expected at least a modest pay rise this year to reflect ever increasing cost of living and also a reward for the continuing complexity of our role and the difficulties we now encounter assisting our clients in a challenging social environment.

Instead our employer offered those working in our role, a devaluation of our role, a pay cut and a message that in fact our role is of less value based on an assessment that didn't reflect or place significant value of the work we undertake. What I struggle to understand and feel insulted by is that employer that has one of the highest gender pay gaps in the Public service chooses to target my role and two other female dominated areas of work in our organisation to devalue and offer a paycut while still saying they are undertaking to close the gender pay gap within that organisation.

Significantly one of my largest and most at risk client groups are women who are the victims of family violence. Family violence is a key area of social concern that the government are supposed to be trying to address and by undervaluing my role, the message is clearly being sent that these women victims don't deserve well qualified staff that reflect the complexity of that job.

As a library professional with 30years+ in the workforce, with an Arts degree and library diploma, I earn \$48,000 a year. I am lucky enough to be able to afford a mortgage because I live in a small town, but as a single person find there is precious little left of my salary after bills and expenses are paid.

I work as a librarian in a town of 25,000 people in rural New Zealand. I love my job, and care deeply for the literacy needs of the public I serve daily in my busy role at the public library.

My job is hugely busy and often stressful as we try to keep pace with the needs of the public- interfacing with library software programmes/ ordering, cataloguing and processing books/ running bookclubs and childrens programmes/ outreach for the elderly in resthomes/ homebound services/ digital access for those left behind in the current digital divide, and simply issuing/ returning and re-shelving the 500-800 items our community takes out every day!

On top of all this we provide digital access free of charge to ebooks, audiobooks, newspapers and magazines from around the world, and face a constant challenge to try to educate those members of the public who don't visit us that yes – libraries are still vital –and may have changed a fair bit since they last looked in back in 1984- or even 2004!

I believe Libraries are the vein of gold running through communities, and that all library workers deserve a decent wage in recognition of the service they perform. I support the Equal Pay Amendment Bill wholeheartedly, and hope that one day New Zealand may lead the world in recognising and supporting Libraries, and valuing the work of this incredibly undervalued female-dominated profession.



Thank you for your consideration of our submission. We look forward to the opportunity to also make an oral submission in due course.

