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**WORTH
100%**
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Submission of the PSA Women's Network on the Fair Pay Agreements Bill to the Education and Workforce Select Committee

About the PSA Women's Network

The PSA Women's Network brings together women from across the PSA's membership of 81, 000 members working around the country in public and community services. The Network's mission statement is:

By women, of women, for women – our commitment is to identify and promote industrial, economic, political and social issues of concern to PSA women members and advance these issues within the PSA and externally.

This submission

The PSA Women's Network strongly supports the Bill and endorses the submission of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions. The Network has contributed to the development of Fair Pay Agreements through its participation in the CTU Women's Council.

This submission is in the form of personal statements from Nancy McShane, Sonja Lister and Nia Bartley and, the two Co-Convenors of the PSA Women's Network's committee and a Committee member. As union delegates, these women represent women PSA members working in the PSA's DHB Sector and Local Government Sectors, respectively.



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Statement of PSA Women's Network co-convenor Nancy McShane in support of Fair Pay Agreements

My name is Nancy McShane. I am a PSA union delegate and Co-Convenor of the PSA Women's Network. In my working life, I am employed as a Medical Secretary in the Christchurch Mental Health Service. Like many of my colleagues, I find great meaning from helping other people; I am proud the work I do contributes towards keeping those in our communities safe and well.

Fair Pay Agreements are a sensible way to lift hardworking New Zealanders out of poverty and ensure everyone in Aotearoa is paid a fair and liveable wage. Good employers need fear nothing – these agreements are simply another tool they can use to ensure they keep on treating their workers well. Bad employers will be kept in check, no longer able to undercut their competitors through paying their staff unacceptably low wages and forcing good employers to do the same if they wish to stay in business.

The situation of my own work colleagues provides a clear example of why Fair Pay Agreements are important. New Zealand's health workforce is highly feminised; our hospitals are run on the backs of female labour and, sadly, that labour is invariably undervalued and under paid because it is primarily women who do this type of work – work that ensures all of us are, safe, healthy, and well cared for.

Our current government has taken significant and long overdue steps to correct the gender-based pay discrimination that exists within Aotearoa. A number of equal pay claims are



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currently being progressed both in health and within the wider Public Service. Improved Equal Pay legislation has been introduced to ensure that, going forward, it is far less arduous for the women of this country to achieve financial equality. These are all important steps we can be proud of; we have made progress, but the wheels of change always turn slowly. We must keep our foot on the pedal and continue to do more if we are to prevent the next generation of New Zealand women from also being financially disadvantaged because of their gender.

In my 14 years within the health service, I have watched female colleagues forego much needed dental treatment because they could not afford it. I have seen them stay in abusive relationships due to financial hardship or suffer mental health problems due to the chronic grind of long-term poverty, despite working in an environment where they are expected to help care for members of the public who are also struggling with such issues.

I am currently working with many women in their late 70's and one who is in her 80's, none of whom can afford to retire. Like many others before them, they will work until their health gives out. I have watched many women work themselves almost to death for fear of retiring into abject poverty. This has angered me greatly and has, at times, negatively impacted my own psychological and emotional wellbeing. It has also been one of the many driving factors that have spurred me on in my efforts to change things. For if there is one thing I cannot stand, it is to witness the needless suffering of women and their children. I am proud that my own efforts to progress Equal Pay have helped improve the lives of so many women in this country, most particularly those of my female colleagues and their families.



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My ability to belong to a union has afforded me numerous opportunities to help create positive change. Yet I am aware so many others in this country do not share my good fortune. They and their families are struggling hugely – I see the evidence of this every day in the psychiatric hospital where I work. The mental health crisis within this country is continuing to grow at an alarming rate and one of the key driving factors of this is poverty. As a nation, we must do better to protect those who are financially vulnerable. For if we do not, we will only pay the price through the loss of friends and loved ones to suicide, mental health issues and drug and alcohol addiction.

By employing Fair Pay Agreements, we will simply be doing what Kiwis have always done: Looking after each other and ensuring everyone in this country has a decent quality of life – especially our children, whose safety, happiness, and wellbeing should be held paramount - for they are our future.

Statement of PSA Women's Network co-convenor Sonja Lister in support of Fair Pay Agreements

In the Local Government sector and working over the last 18 years in predominantly male career pathways, it has been a continuous battle and challenge to ensure our Wāhine obtain the same recognition and pay as their male colleagues. In the largest Local Government organisation, male colleagues in certain professions are paid 20% more for the same work effort and experience.

Professional Wāhine have had their mental health impacted by a lack of support and empathy in the engineering, project management and regulatory environments and we have lost Wāhine lives because of the lack of management taking ownership and providing



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equity to resolve matters, instead power games are played. Fair pay agreements will ensure all Wāhine are recognised for their skills, efforts, and experience. They will ensure the glass ceilings are removed, equity restored or at the very least, enable the ability for a recognised transparent challenge pathway.

Statement of PSA Women's Network Committee Wellington Regional Representative, Nia Bartley in support of Fair Pay Agreements

Kia orana, ko Nia Bartley toku ingoa, ko tangata o te Moana-nui-a-kiwa ahau and my whanaunga are Tangata Whenua.

The late singer Whitney Houston sang “I decided long ago never to walk in anyone’s shadow. If I fail if I succeed. At least I lived as I believe. No matter what they take from me, they can’t take away my dignity”. Fair Pay Agreements will help restore much of the undignified practices which have become the norm for many individuals and families here in Aotearoa. The subtle and blatant forms of exploitation of women must cease.

In years to come the population of Aotearoa will be dominated by peoples of Māori, Pacific and Asian descent. The median age for Pacific peoples is 22yrs or under. For Pākehā, the median age is 43. The melting pot of Aotearoa will truly be more diverse and hence the



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urgency we must take to improve how things are done at present, e.g: Close the pay gap, provide more opportunities for women especially women from marginalised groups to be involved in decision making and embrace Fair Pay Agreements which will assist in the provision of long overdue improvements. Fair Pay Agreements will transform the vocational sphere and outlook for women and their families. Fair Pay Agreements will provide improved sustainability of a decent life, better pay, training and work conditions. More quality time for individuals with their loved ones and better work-home-life balance.

I have witnessed and experienced the plight of the majority of working women here in Aotearoa in both the private and public sectors through family, friends, and work colleagues. Many have struggled to apply themselves in their paid vocation and go home to tend to their households, cook and clean for their children, significant other and themselves. If only it was that straightforward because there are many women who are the sole income earner in their household or live alone. I have had experiences and stories shared with me by individuals being mistreated in the workplace as second-class citizens: Women being overlooked for promotion; women not being encouraged to aim high; women being told they should be grateful they have a job; women being underpaid that they need to work 2 or 3 jobs to meet the basic of needs; and the list goes on and on. Add to this intersectionality where gender and ethnicity combined are a double hit, or triple this if you're disabled, quadruple if also from the rainbow community.

NZCTU has stated since the 1990's billions of dollars have been lost to workers at an average of \$11,000 per annum per worker because pay is not keeping up with the high costs of living. On average in comparison to a Pākeha male, Pacific women are being paid 73 cents for every \$1 they earn which would mean I, as a Pacific woman potentially have lost \$297,000 over my working life? It does not have to be this way at all for anyone. I fully support all of



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us working together to quell the social injustices experienced by Māori, Pasifika, other migrant groups, the Deaf and disabled, our rainbow communities and all marginalised groups. It is critical that collectively we work together now to remedy the disparities across many facets of our society because the systems of old have sadly not worked for all.

If there is no justice for everyone, then there really is no justice for all. We need action and major transformation. None of us will truly be free until all of us have been liberated and collectively unite. Support Fair Pay Agreements.

Ngā Manaakitanga,

Please accept this as our collective submission.

Aotearoa is the best place in the world to live. Let's make it the best place in the world to work as well - by implementing Fair Pay Agreements now! It's time!

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