

PLANS TO PROGRESS PUBLIC SECTOR WAGE EQUALITY WELCOMED

Tuesday 7th February 2017 - YWCA Auckland today welcomes new research supporting the urgent need to address New Zealand's ailing gender pay gap.

The Government-commissioned report, *Empirical evidence of the gender pay gap in New Zealand*, undertaken by Gail Pacheco of AUT for the Ministry for Women, has today been released by the Hon Paula Bennett, Minister for Women.

The report reveals unexplained parts of the gender pay gap soaring as high as 80% in some areas, caused by factors like unconscious and conscious bias.

Today, Minister Bennett has reinforced her commitment to addressing the gender pay gap and pay equity in the public sector, and is urging private sector employers to do the same.

YWCA Auckland, advocates of equal pay, will launch its fourth annual YWCA Equal Pay Awards in June this year.

Chief Executive, Monica Briggs is delighted to see up-to-date research that interrogates the real reasons behind New Zealand's stubborn gender pay gap.

"The report presents new and compelling evidence of unexplained components of the gender pay gap in New Zealand. But most importantly, it has been commissioned by the Government, who now commits to act on its findings. We are encouraged to see that Minister Bennett has laid a stake in the ground and is calling for action," says Briggs.

Briggs believes the public sector needs to be *the* most powerful influencer in leading the change debate on wage equality, raising awareness of the issue and setting the bar for New Zealand's business community.

She also urges private sector employers to review the research launched today and take the issue more seriously, looking at wage equality in their own backyard.

"Businesses have a real chance to position themselves as employers of choice, attracting the outstanding raft of female talent in the workplace today.

“As equal pay advocates, we encourage all businesses to audit their pay data through a gender lens and then take corrective action. This direction must come straight from the top of any business, small or large, to ensure the right solutions and actions are introduced.”

A damning impact on women’s progress in the workforce

Briggs was not surprised to read in the report, that today’s educational achievements of New Zealand women are higher compared to men.

“This has now officially debunked some of the myths around why women earn less than men, with Kiwi women now attaining higher educational levels than their male counterparts,” she says.

“However, I am not at all comforted to read that the ‘unexplained’ part of the gender pay gap can appear to reach 64% - 83%. This is worrying on a number of fronts. It backs up other international research that has shown that conscious/unconscious bias and discrimination are at play, and are contributing factors.

“We agree with the Government’s sentiments that this is holding women back in the workforce. Furthermore, we believe that this negative impact is not just financial, but psychological as well, with generations of women who have been undervalued in the workplace.”

The report goes on to confirm that the gender pay differential has not narrowed in more than a decade, confirming the ‘glass ceiling’ cliché really does exist in New Zealand.

“This cuts deep into the New Zealand psyche, which prides itself on fairness and equality. It is not an option to have this go unchallenged when the economy requires more female participation in the labour force and yet the efforts of hard working women are not valued in the same way as men as they progress through their careers,” says Briggs.

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To learn more about the **YWCA Equal Pay Awards 2017**, entry details and criteria, visit www.ywcaequalpay.org.nz.