

# **Almost There: A Comparative Case Study of Senior Academic Women in Australia and New Zealand**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the policy framework within which career progression is structured for academics in an Australian and a New Zealand University. It explores the barriers experienced by women at Associate Professor level in attempting to promote their careers. Women at Associate Professor level generally need to demonstrate both research excellence and international recognition of it. Yet these women often considered their research was undervalued and found it difficult to set aside time in order to maintain research productivity. Moreover, they experienced a disjuncture between formal and informal processes around promotion that often discriminate against senior academic women.

The issues these women needed to address in order to balance work, family and community obligations are examined. These include: managing their academic careers; balancing research, teaching administration, pastoral care and community engagement; and seeking to navigate career progression in a predominantly masculine management culture.

As Helen Kelly indicated (AUS Status of Women Conference 2003), gender linked expectations around the sorts of roles taken both inside and outside the workplace influence opportunities and pay. The paper argues that if many academic women at Associate Professor level are to experience rewarding careers and be able to progress past this ceiling, universities need to review rewards structures. Ensuring that forms of service other than research excellence are tangibly valued, and that promotion criteria consider interruptions as acceptable or appropriate in career progression, and not as a deficit are ways of addressing this.