

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (NACEW)

ANNUAL REPORT 2001/2002

1. Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period from 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2002. It has been an eventful year for NACEW with the appointment of a new Chairperson, Suzanne Snively, and a number of appointments and re-appointments. The Council has also been working on its strategic direction and this has resulted in the drafting of strategic and communication plans for 2002-05. The past year has seen the completion of two NACEW commissioned pieces of small-scale research. In addition, the Council has continued to produce submissions on relevant legislation.

2. NACEW Strategic Plan 2002-05

During 2001-2002, NACEW members participated in a series of strategic planning sessions that have culminated in a draft strategic plan outlining the key deliverables the Council will be focussing on over the next three years. A NACEW communication strategy was drafted is intended to be the vehicle by which NACEW raises its profile.

3. NACEW Communications Strategy

In June 2002 prepared a draft communication strategy for the next three years. The strategy builds on the strengths of the Council while having the general objective to promote NACEW in a manner that builds on its key strategic priorities, revitalises its relationships with key stakeholders and confirms its relevance.

4. NACEW research activities

The differential impact of Student Loans

Penny Ehrhardt was contracted by NACEW in April 2001 to carry out a research project on the differential impact of student loans on men and women. This research examined how male and female students assess the risks and benefits of taking out a student loan, as well as the extent to which

taking out loans has a greater impact on Maori, Pacific and low income women. The research comprised a literature search, as well as focus group interviews with students, both male and female, in the Auckland region. Funding assistance for the project was received from the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Women's Affairs. The research project was completed in June 2002. The final research report will be made available on the NACEW website. One finding that was of particular interest to the Council was that female students believed they would earn less and have greater difficulty repaying student debt than their male counterparts. Female students in the study also reported that student debt would cause them to delay life decisions (such as having children or getting a mortgage) by about two years.

Supporting Pacific Nations Women into early childhood education

Alison Stephenson, Jenni Armitage and Feaua'i Burgess of the Wellington College of Education completed their research on a strategy for supporting Pacific Nations Women into early childhood education courses in June 2001 (an outline of the research was given in the 2000-2001 NACEW Annual Report). At the August 2001 quarterly meeting Alison and Jenni presented the key findings of the research to Council members. The results of the research will be posted on the NACEW website.

5. Submissions

Annual Review of the Minimum Wage

In October 2001 NACEW was invited to submit comments on the Annual review of the minimum wage to the Minister of Labour. NACEW provided the Minister with brief comments on the review, confirming that the Council remained in agreement with the contents of the 2000 submission. In particular, attention was drawn to the fact that a majority of the Council in 2000 viewed moderate increases to the minimum wage positively, and held that such increases were likely to benefit employed women, as well as increasing incentives for increased participation of women in the labour market.

NACEW Submission on the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Amendment Bill

In February 2002 NACEW prepared a Submission to the Social Services Select Committee on the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Amendment Bill. The submission expressed NACEW's view that a paid parental scheme was beneficial to New Zealand women and would bring New Zealand in line with many other OECD countries.

Funding

NACEW supported the taxation based funding of the scheme. Some members expressed the view, though, that the Government funded nature of the scheme emphasised the social objective of the scheme – to promote the health and wellbeing of new mothers and their babies. Clearly, the scheme would fail to address this objective for thousands of ineligible families.

Level of payment

NACEW members held a range of views on the level of payment offered by the scheme. The capped nature of the scheme emerged as a key issue. NACEW members acknowledged the scheme's potential to benefit low-income workers. The Council also noted that there were important implications of the scheme for women on higher incomes that need to be further discussed. The position of self-employed women was also identified as being of key concern.

Eligibility

A number of concerns in relation to eligibility were raised in the submission and included:

- The significant number of women who would be ineligible for paid parental leave on the basis of hours worked.
- It was not clear from the current form of the Bill (Section 72A (2) (a) or (b) if women who had taken more than a month off during any given year (eg in jobs where required to take time off during school holidays) were eligible for paid parental leave.

- The additional costs posed for employers in keeping track of their employees. It was noted that New Zealand has many small employers who require certainty as to whether staff will return from parental leave.
- A majority of NACEW members were of the view that parental leave payments should not be terminated as a result of the end of a fixed term of employment, as outlined in Section 71L(3)(a) of the Bill.
- Eligibility for women working for the same employer for less than one year was noted as a concern. NACEW commented that 28% of women had been working for the same employer for less than one year, and would therefore be ineligible for parental leave (Statistics NZ, 1996). The Council also expressed concern about the position of women who on returning from one period of parental leave, required a further period of parental leave within twelve months of their return.

Compliance costs

NACEW identified some potential additional costs for employers of the paid parental scheme including the increased costs of replacing employees on parental leave.

Transferability

NACEW supported the transferability of paid parental leave between partners, including those in same sex relationships.

Education

NACEW identified the need for a comprehensive publicity and education campaign on entitlements and obligations regarding paid parental leave for both employees and employers.

6 New Horizons for Women Trust

In 2001-2002 NACEW contributed two \$2,000 scholarships to the New Horizons for Women Trust for second chance education awards. The successful recipients of the NACEW awards for 2002 were Carol Maraahi and Ruta Tanielu-Etuale. Carol is studying in the field of social sciences and has the ambition to help families from her own ethnic group. Ruta is studying to

become a counsellor in alcohol and drug addiction and aims to work with Pacific Island women.

7 Council membership

In December 2001 Suzanne Snively was appointed by the Minister of Labour to a three year term as the Chair of NACEW. Beverley Main, Colleen Tuuta and Philippa Fletcher were re-appointed to further three year terms. Pauline Winter, Marilyn Kohlhase and Ronda Tokona joined the Council as new Ministerial members. In addition, Martha Coleman was invited to join the Council as an expert adviser in the area of pay equity and other issues.

NACEW MEMBERS

The membership of the Council as at June 30 2002 was as follows:

Ministerial Appointees:

Suzanne Snively (Chair)	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Colleen Tuuta	New Plymouth	Ministerial Appointee
Beverley Main	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Philippa Fletcher	Christchurch	Ministerial Appointee
Ronda Tokona	Dunedin	Ministerial Appointee
Marilyn Kohlhase	Auckland	Ministerial Appointee
Pauline A Winter	Auckland	Ministerial Appointee

Expert Advisor:

Martha Coleman	Wellington
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Employer and Employee Organisation Representatives:

Barbara Burton	Wellington	Business NZ
Sheryl Cadman	Wellington	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Margaret Ledgerton	Wellington	NZ Council of Trade Unions

Government Department Representatives:

Lis Cowey	Wellington	Department of Labour
Jenni Norris	Wellington	NACEW Executive Officer
Sarah Metwell	Wellington	Ministry of Women's Affairs
Karen McKenzie	Wellington	Ministry of Social Policy
Ellen Murray	Wellington	Ministry of Education
Anneliese Parkin	Wellington	Te Puni Kokiri