

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (NACEW)

ANNUAL REPORT 1994/1995

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period from 1st July 1994 to 30 June 1995. During this time made a submission in response to the Issues Report of the Prime Ministerial Task Force on Employment Policy, and also hosted, in conjunction with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, two consultation meetings for women with the Employment Task Force.

A major project for NACEW over the 1994/95 year has been parental leave. At the end of 1994, a proposal was developed for a report on parental leave to be produced by the Council, which outlined the key areas NACEW would focus on. NACEW decided to look as closely as possible at the New Zealand situation and issues related to the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987.

NACEW also identified childcare as a priority area for work at the beginning of 1995. While no major project has been developed on childcare, it is intended that this will become more of a focus for NACEW in the 1995/96 year, and preliminary information gathering has begun in this area.

NACEW was also involved in preparing submissions and commenting on a number of issues over the 1994/95 year. Submissions were made to the Careers Information and Guidance Review and the Review of Accident Compensation. NACEW also submitted comments on the draft Pre-employment Guide-lines prepared by the Human Rights Commission, the Review of the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust, and the Review of the Holidays Act.

The Employment Task Force

NACEW's submission to the Employment Task Force

NACEW made a submission in response to the Employment Task Force, in response to their Issues Report. The NACEW Chairperson also met with members of the Task Force to present and discuss the points raised in the submission.

NACEW considered the range of issues raised by the Task Force in the Issues Report, and in the submission primarily focused on possible solutions to some of the issues

raised, as well as other issues the Council considered relevant to women's employment.

In its submission NACEW raised the importance of looking at the broad range of issues facing women in the labour market, particularly when analysing possible solutions to women's employment issues.

The key points in the submission are outlined as follows.

Transition from school to further education, training or employment

Here the submission raised issues for young women, particularly Maori and Pacific Islands women, who are likely to face multiple disadvantages, such as; poor experiences in the education system, lack of appropriate career guidance and information, low self esteem and discrimination. NACEW raised the need for further work to be carried out looking at how the training and employment outcomes for these groups could be improved. NACEW suggested that particular areas for further consideration included improved provision of careers information, improving relationships between schools and families/communities, and wider and more effective sources of information and support for students.

Post school education and training

Some of the key points raised in NACEW's Industry Training Report were included in the submission, particularly in relation to the concerns NACEW has regarding:

- gaps in the breadth and depth of ITO coverage;
- the significant number of female intensive industries which had not formed ITO's (as at December 1993), and the need for the Education and Training Support Agency (ETSA) to work along side industries to develop systematic training in these areas;
- the extent to which support staff will have access to training;
- the need for recognition of prior learning; and
- the monitoring of the quality of industry training that is delivered.

Assisting people into work

In this section of the submission NACEW focused on measures for improving the position of those disadvantaged in employment. Such groups include those women who are not registered as unemployed but would like work, mature women, people not eligible for TOP training, Maori women, Pacific Islands women, and women with disabilities.

A second issue identified in this section of the submission was self employment, and the importance of this as an employment option for Maori women.

Childcare was also raised in the section on assisting people into work as this is a key barrier to women's participation in paid work. Two options were identified here; either a universal approach where childcare is funded to a level that ensures high quality provision of early childhood services for all people; or a more targeted approach through a means tested childcare subsidy. Issues relating to out of school care services were also raised, with a need to look at how assistance for out of school care services might best be delivered.

The role of income support

NACEW argued for improvements in the availability and consistency of information people receive in relation to their benefit and in particular, how they would be affected by taking up work. NACEW also recommended to the Task Force that policies relating to benefit abatement, supplementary income measures and sanctions and stand-downs need to take into account the changing nature of work, in particular, the increase in part-time and casual employment.

A further key point made by NACEW in relation to benefit entitlement was the issue of individual rather than household entitlement to income support (as is currently the case). NACEW recommended that investigating the option of individual entitlement to income support be given serious consideration by the Task Force as it could have a number of benefits, including; increasing the likelihood that at least one person in a household would find employment, increasing the number of women registering with NZES and therefore becoming eligible for employment assistance, and potentially assisting low income families.

Women's Consultation meetings with the Employment Task Force

NACEW, in conjunction with the Ministry of Women's Affairs organised two consultation meetings with the Employment Task Force which were held in Wellington and Auckland in July 1994. The aim of these meetings was to provide an opportunity for women to respond to the Task Force Issues Report, and identify solutions to employment issues for women.

Over forty women attended each meeting and participants formed discussion groups on the following topics:

- education and skills development, and economic growth;
- assisting women back into the workforce;
- income support issues; and
- overcoming barriers to women's employment/self employment.

There were also three caucus groups; one for Maori women, one for Pacific Islands women and a third group for women with disabilities. These provided a forum to identify solutions to employment issues for these groups of women.

Several themes emerged during the course of the consultations. Two of the biggest issues were the importance of family friendly work-places and childcare services. Many of the consultation participants stressed in particular, the benefits of government funded, accessible and high quality childcare. Other key themes that emerged were:

- the need for recognition of voluntary and unpaid labour;
- a call for a universal basic income, and the disincentives inherent in the current income support and abatement systems;
- improving information available to women in relation to training and employment assistance; and
- the importance of community input and endorsement of policy initiatives arising from the Employment Task Force.

A report, based on summaries of discussions at the consultation meetings, was prepared and forwarded to the Employment Task Force as a submission. This report, *Women's Consultation: Advising the Employment Task Force*, was also distributed to all those who participated in the consultation meetings.

Parental Leave

Parental leave was identified by NACEW members as a key area for work in 1994/95, and a proposal was developed for a report on Parental Leave. This proposal outlined six key sections that NACEW's report on Parental Leave will cover. These six sections are:

1. Background/contextual information

This section will cover definitions of parental leave, aims and objectives of parental leave policies, the rationale for government intervention, and policy arguments for provision of parental leave.

2. Benefits and costs of parental leave

Here, a discussion of the range of possible costs and benefits of parental leave schemes that apply to parents, employees, employers, children, society and government will be covered.

3. Description of New Zealand's Parental Leave Provisions

This section will include an outline of the provisions and eligibility criteria of the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987. In addition to the parental leave legislation in New Zealand, parental leave provisions may be written in to employment contracts. This section of the report will also look at available information on parental leave provisions in employment contracts.

4. Effectiveness of the Parental Leave Act

In this section of the report NACEW will aim to discuss the ways in which parental leave works well, along with any information available on any difficulties that may be experienced by both employees and employers in relation to parental leave provisions in New Zealand.

5. Other Issues

A discussion of some of the wider issues that are relevant to parental leave will be included in this section. Such issues include payment for parental leave and childcare.

6. Conclusions/recommendations

The concluding section of the report will aim to both identify areas for further investigation, sum up the discussions in the report and make recommendations regarding NACEW's view on how the effectiveness of parental leave provision in New Zealand could be improved.

Work on this report is currently underway and it is anticipated that this report will be completed by the end of 1995.

Submissions

Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust Review

The EEO Trust was reviewed and submissions on this review were called for at the end of 1994. NACEW was unable to make a full submission on the review of the EEO Trust due to timing pressures, however the Council did submit brief comments to the Review Committee in relation to the effectiveness of the Trust, and the issue of resourcing. NACEW noted the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of the Trust, due to the difficulty in measuring any changes in the level of public awareness of EEO and whether or not any changes that are apparent may be related to other trends and changes in attitudes generally.

NACEW noted that the Trust had undertaken valuable work with some employers. The resources produced by the Trust and the EEO database are excellent sources of information. NACEW noted that one of the key issues however, appeared to be that many small employers are still unaware of the work and resources of the Trust, and do not consider EEO issues important to their work-place. This is likely to be a reflection of the level of resourcing the Trust receives. It was noted that with such limited resources, it is more cost-effective to target larger organisations as any resulting EEO policies will have an impact on a larger number of employees. NACEW noted that if the Trust was to reach a wider range of organisations, the issue of funding to the Trust will need to be addressed.

NACEW recommended that priorities for the Trust could include:

- looking at how the Trust's information could filter through to a wider range of employers and work-places;
- the importance of targeting small employers and employers in smaller regions outside the main cities, provided additional resourcing is available; and
- identifying ways of the measuring the levels of EEO awareness, and the effectiveness of the Trust in contributing to public awareness of EEO.

Careers Information and Guidance Review

During the first half of 1995, careers information and guidance services were reviewed. NACEW made a submission to the Review Panel, which identified the importance of effective careers information and guidance for women in relation to their employment outcomes. Careers information is important during schooling years for girls, as well as for women who have spent time out of the workforce and are wanting to return to paid employment. Some of the key issues relating to careers information and guidance for girls and women identified in NACEW's submission were:

- the importance of access to information about a wide range of occupations and the subject choices and training required to follow particular career or occupational paths;
- the needs of Maori women and Pacific Islands women and the importance of culturally appropriate advice and guidance, both in the information that is provided and the way in which it is provided;

- recognition of the diverse range of women's needs. For example women with disabilities may have specific needs for information to be delivered through appropriate mechanisms; and
- consideration of the needs of women who have been out of paid employment for some time, as these women are likely to have little access to on the job networks and information on training and career options.

NACEW raised in it's submission the need for more effective co-ordination of careers services across government agencies. The submission also discussed the need for specifically targeted services for a number of groups of women, including Maori women, Pacific Islands women, women with disabilities, and jobless women and sole parents wanting to re-enter the paid workforce, as these groups are likely to face significant barriers educationally, and in paid work.

NACEW noted that five key elements of effective careers information and guidance for women, which were outlined by the Ministry of Women's Affairs briefing to the Careers Information and Guidance Review Panel (February 1995), were:

- early intervention and ongoing availability of services;
- integration of careers information and guidance with other aspects of schooling;
- responsiveness to the diverse circumstances of women;
- responsiveness to women's job values; and
- accuracy about the changing nature of work.

NACEW stressed the importance of considering the above points when looking at ways to improve the current careers services for women.

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) Review

In 1995 a review document was produced by the ACC Review which outlined the issues and some of the options being considered as part of the review of ACC.

NACEW made a submission in response to the review document which discussed some of the key issues in relation to ACC that are particularly relevant for women.

One of the relevant issues for women relates to the fact that women's working patterns are different to men's, and many women are likely to spend some time out of the paid workforce caring for dependants during their working lives. NACEW noted that although ACC provides for medical expenses for those who suffer an accident or injury while not in paid work, other forms of compensation, including vocational rehabilitation are not provided for. This is a problem for women in that they are likely to be less able to return to the workforce in the future if they suffer an injury at home and do not receive vocational rehabilitation. NACEW noted that rehabilitation is important for anyone who suffers a major accident and NACEW would like to see greater emphasis placed on rehabilitation assistance for women, both those in and out of the paid workforce.

The increase in part-time, casual and contract work, and the large proportion of women employed in this type of work is also relevant to ACC, as the current ACC legislation does not work well for employees working in non standard employment. Some of the issues here are similar to those relating to women who are temporarily

out of the workforce caring for dependants, however there is also a difficulty here in relation to the calculation of earnings related compensation.

Again, based on their labour force involvement at the time of suffering an injury, NACEW noted that women are likely to be disadvantaged in terms of earnings related compensation, as compensation for loss of potential earnings is not provided for. NACEW recommended that in making decisions on the calculation of earnings related compensation, the position of non standard workers and those who are temporarily out of the workforce be considered.

NACEW supported the ACC's move to a system of case management of clients, and noted that this may be a way in which to deliver more appropriate assistance to women. NACEW noted that women, and in particular Maori and Pacific Islands women respond well to case management type intervention where assessment, treatment, rehabilitation and compensation are co-ordinated to ensure the specific needs of the client are met.

The final point made in NACEW's submission on ACC was the need for the Corporation to collect information on ethnicity of it's clients. This is important in enabling monitoring of the services ACC provides, and assist with the development of effective policies and culturally appropriate services, particularly for Maori and Pacific Islands people.

Looking Ahead to 1995

The Council's efforts over the next year are likely to focus on completing NACEW's report on parental leave, and developing a project on childcare. NACEW will also continue to make submissions and comment on issues relating to the range of employment issues facing women.

Council Membership

In 1994/95 a number of changes were made to the membership of the Council. Rosemary Ryan, Linda Smith and Philippa Revell were appointed to NACEW by the Minister of Employment. These women replaced Yvonne Oldfield, Rawinia Mathews and Linda Sissons on the Council. Si'anaua Ostler and Linda Schofield were appointed for a second term on NACEW.

Fiona Ross replaced Lis Cowie as the Ministry of Education representative and Janice Burns (and more recently, Rae Torrie) replaced Margaret Hanson as the State Services representative. Dale Karuaria replaced Ria Earp as Te Puni Kokiri's representative on the Council. Gayelene Wright replaced Liz Seymour as the representative from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Jan Compton replaced Diane Salter as the Department of Labour representative on NACEW. Jan was later replaced by Liz MacPherson.

Linda Mitchell replaced Lynn Middleton as one of the representatives from the Combined Trade Unions (CTU) on NACEW.

The membership of the Council as at June 30 1995 was as follows:

Adrienne D'Ath (Chair)	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Anae Si'anaua Ostler	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Linda Schofield	Auckland	Ministerial Appointee
Merepeka Sims	Lake Rotoiti	Ministerial Appointee
Suzanne Snively	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Rosemary Ryan	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Linda Smith	Auckland	Ministerial Appointee
Philippa Revell	Christchurch	Ministerial Appointee
Rae Torrie	Wellington	State Services Commission
Barbara Burton	Wellington	NZ Employers Federation
Linda Mitchell	Wellington	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Lois Hampstead	Auckland	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Liz MacPherson	Wellington	Department of Labour
Anne Riley	Wellington	Ministry of Women's Affairs
Fiona Ross	Wellington	Ministry of Education
Gayelene Wright	Wellington	Ministry of Youth Affairs
Dale Karauria	Wellington	Te Puni Kokiri

