

# **NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (NACEW)**

## **ANNUAL REPORT 1995/1996**

### **Introduction**

This Annual Report covers the period from 1st July 1995 to 30 June 1996. During this time NACEW has developed a project on childcare, and has continued working on parental leave.

In the past year NACEW responded to the recommendations of the Careers Information and Guidance Review, and has also submitted comments to the Ministry of Education on capital development assistance for early childhood education.

NACEW members also met with a representative of the Law Commission to discuss the Commission's project on Women's Access to Justice.

### **Childcare**

Childcare was identified by NACEW as a priority issue for the Council to consider in 1995/96. Consequently, a research project on childcare has been developed by NACEW.

Given NACEW's interest in employment issues for women, NACEW decided to look at the relationship between childcare and women's employment. In looking at this, NACEW members became increasingly aware of the lack of solid data describing the interface between women's labour market participation and their childcare arrangements in New Zealand. After undertaking a literature review and looking international studies on childcare, particularly those conducted in Australia, the United States and Canada, a number of information gaps in the New Zealand data were identified. These include information on:

- the employment status of women and childcare arrangements;
- additional demand for different types of services;
- the impact of availability, cost and quality of childcare on employment status;
- the use of formal and informal care; and
- factors which are associated with the choice of childcare.

NACEW has developed a research project which involves a survey which aims to gather high quality information from primary caregivers about their use of childcare. The purpose of the research is two-fold. Firstly, to identify the characteristics of primary caregivers that are associated with their employment and childcare arrangements; and secondly, to identify the perceived and actual childcare related barriers influencing labour force participation.

In order to progress this research NACEW commissioned a paper which set out the objectives of the proposed survey and identified initial question areas necessary for meeting the objectives.

Within the main purpose of this research there are a number of key objectives. These include determining:

- the regular childcare arrangements caregivers make to enable participation in, or movement towards, the paid workforce;
- the extent of demand for alternative or additional formal and informal childcare;
- the impact of perceived and actual child care related barriers to labour force participation; and
- ways in which caregivers' paid work arrangements are responsive to their child care commitments.

In addition to questions based on the objectives outlined above, data will also be gathered on the demographic profile of the primary caregiver and each child, the economic/social profile of household unit, and a labour market profile of the primary caregiver.

It is envisaged that this will be a large scale survey, and will be a key project for NACEW to co-ordinate over the next few years. NACEW is hoping to gain input and funding assistance from a range of groups, including government departments, employer groups and other interested organisations. During the 1996/97 year NACEW aims to further refine the objectives of the survey with input from other interested groups and to develop the questionnaire design and look at sampling issues.

## **Parental Leave**

Although the project on childcare has been the primary focus of the Council over the past year, NACEW has continued to work on parental leave and in particular is interested in the issues surrounding parental leave provisions in New Zealand. As part of its interest in parental leave, NACEW investigated two possible research projects in order to obtain more information on parental leave in New Zealand. These included undertaking a cost benefit analysis, and doing some case study research. However, NACEW decided to concentrate its efforts in preparing a report for the Minister of Employment which would essentially be an overview of the key issues in relation to parental leave provision in New Zealand. This report includes a discussion of why parental leave is an important area of labour market policy, a description of parental leave provisions under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987, paid parental leave and conclusions about the implications of current provisions and areas for further work.

In May 1996, NACEW met with representatives from the *12 weeks paid parental leave campaign* and discussed the issue of paid parental leave. The aim of the paid parental leave campaign is to promote debate and support for 12 weeks paid parental leave.

## **Submissions**

During 1995 NACEW responded to the recommendations of the Careers Information and Guidance Review, and submitted comments to the Ministry of Education on a paper on early childhood capital development assistance.

### *NACEW response to the Recommendations of the Careers Information and Guidance Review*

NACEW submitted comments to the Careers Information and Guidance (CIG) Review Panel during the consultation phase of the Review of careers services. The comments by NACEW focused primarily on issues relating to the provision of CIG information for girls and women, both in schools, tertiary institutions, and for women who have been out of the workforce and are seeking to return to employment.

A number of the issues which NACEW focussed on in its original submission were addressed by the Review Panel. These include:

- that the government has an important role to play in the provision of CIG services for a range of groups. NACEW supported the joint responsibility of the Minister of Education and Minister of Employment for CIG services, and the provision of accurate, neutral, up to date, gender inclusive career information;
- that information is required to be neutral, gender balanced and include positive role models for Maori, Pacific Islands people, women, and people with disabilities. NACEW also pointed out in its initial submission, the importance of information available to women which covers a wide range of subjects and career options;
- the move towards clearly defining the responsibilities of schools in relation to the provision of career education through the National Administration Guidelines and the National Education Goals;
- the development of guidelines for schools which encourage assisting students to appreciate the benefits of a broad, general education. NACEW noted that it is important that students be encouraged, at an early stage, to take subjects which will allow for flexibility when deciding on more specific career options further down the track;
- the establishment of a contestable contract pool for the focused provision of CIG services to Maori, Pacific Islands people and people in rural communities who are either registered unemployed or beneficiaries; and

- specialised training for staff who are providing careers information in schools and measures to increase the number of Maori and Pacific Island teachers who are trained in providing careers information and assistance.

Other points raised by NACEW in responding to the CIG recommendations were:

- that in order to ensure improved usage of CIG services by women with disabilities, information needs to be provided in a variety of mediums which are accessible and appropriate for people with a range of disabilities;
- the need for concentrated development of CIG services in schools in communities where unemployment is entrenched, and some families are experiencing second or even third generations of unemployment. In such areas young people may have limited access to role models of people in employment and they are likely to face significant barriers to gaining employment;
- information and input from local industries and employers, and the links between schools and businesses, have the potential to be of great benefit in relation to CIG services. NACEW pointed out that there is scope for investigation into how to improve relationships with employers to further assist schools through both provision of localised information on future employment opportunities, and through training and work experience programmes for students; and
- The need for CIG services to be available to jobless women and sole parents who are not registered as unemployed. Many of these women may have limited access to financial resources and information and may lack the self confidence to access CIG information and assistance through private agencies.

#### Ministry of Education Early Childhood Capital Development Assistance

As part of its overall interest in childcare issues NACEW provided comments to the Ministry of Education on capital development assistance for early childhood education services. In this paper, NACEW stressed that a comprehensive approach be taken to work that is being carried out in the early childhood services area.

NACEW noted the importance of looking at the issues around the low participation in early childhood education by children from low income, Maori, and Pacific Islands families. There may be a number of reasons for low participation by these groups and analysis of these reasons is essential in order to determine whether capital development assistance for early childhood services would address the problem. Clearly access to capital is one of the significant factors (particularly given the evidence on the high proportion of unlicensed Pacific Island Language Groups). There are, however, a whole range of factors which need to be taken into account in assessing take up, including, the cost of services, location, appropriateness against parental aims for early childhood education, and parental attitudes.

NACEW also emphasised the importance of high quality services to the outcomes for children. A key issue for Pacific Islands Language Groups is that of licensing as there

is a large number of unlicensed services in this sector. In addition to the need for capital assistance for buildings, a number of other difficulties affect services such as Pacific Island Language Groups, and unlicensed Kohanga Reo. An example is the difficulty many of these services have attracting qualified staff due to their limited ability to pay appropriate going wages. This then means they are unable to reach licensing standards because they do not have qualified staff.

NACEW also stressed that once all services have been brought up to the minimum quality standards that currently apply, there may need to be a long term strategy to further raise the current standards in order for services to provide high quality care and education.

### **Law Commission Women's Access to Justice Project**

Early in 1996 NACEW met with a representative from the Women's Access to Justice project which is being organised by the Law Commission. The aim of the Law Commission's project is to examine the response of the legal system to the experiences of women in New Zealand, recognising the importance of the Treaty of Waitangi in the examination of Maori women's experiences. This will involve an examination of the impacts of laws, legal procedures and the delivery of legal services upon family and domestic relationships, violence against women and the economic position of women.

The Commission spent much of 1995 consulting with women, and a separate consultation process for Maori women is currently underway. Although the issues noted above were outlined by the commission at the beginning of the project, it is interesting to note that a number of other issues have become apparent through the consultations. These include the costs of using legal services and access to legal information and advice.

### **Looking Ahead to 1996/97**

Over the next year a significant amount of NACEW's time will be taken up in working on the childcare survey. In particular the Council envisages that co-ordination of the group of interested organisations, refining the objectives and developing the questionnaire will be a key area of NACEW's work in 1996/97.

NACEW is intending to undertake medium to long term strategic planning in order to identify future priorities for the work of NACEW. The Council will also continue to make submissions and comment on issues relevant to women in employment.

## Council Membership

In 1995 Merepeka Sims resigned from NACEW. Merepeka has been a member of NACEW since 1990 and was particularly involved in the research on women in self employment which culminated in the publication of Te Wahine Hanga Mahi - Women in Self Employment. She also took great interest in the work of the Employment Task Force and the Women's Consultation meetings run by NACEW and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Merepeka's commitment to working on employment issues, particularly for Maori women, has been a valuable asset to the work of NACEW over the past six years.

Pania Scott replaced Dale Karauria as the representative on NACEW from Te Puni Kokiri.

The membership of the Council as at June 30 1996 was as follows:

Adrienne D'Ath (Chair)	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Anae Si'anaua Ostler	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Linda Schofield	Auckland	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
Pania Scott	Wellington	Te Puni Kokiri
Fiona Ross	Wellington	Ministry of Education
Gayelene Wright	Wellington	Ministry of Youth Affairs