

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (NACEW)

ANNUAL REPORT 1996/1997

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period from 1st July 1996 to 30 June 1997. During this time NACEW has continued to focus on the Childcare Survey. NACEW has also completed its Report on Parental Leave.

During the past year, a sub group of NACEW was established to look at issues around women's earnings. After considering possible projects, NACEW decided to work with the Ministry of Women's Affairs on a research project being undertaken by them on performance related remuneration.

In addition to these projects, NACEW submitted comments to the Employment Strategy Implementation Steering Group on the proposed employment policy changes, and to the Ministry of Education on School Holidays and Term Dates for 1998.

Childcare

In 1996 NACEW undertook the initial development of objectives for a research project aimed at collecting information from parents about childcare of children under the age of 14 years. The key objective of the survey is to examine the use or non use of childcare and the relationship between childcare and participation in employment. In particular it is intended to identify whether access to childcare is a barrier to labour force participation by parents or caregivers.

Following the completion of the initial objectives paper, NACEW continued to refine the objectives and investigate possible methodologies for the survey. In consultation with NACEW, and on the basis of the objectives paper produced by NACEW, the Department of Labour applied for, and received funding for the survey from the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology.

A Steering Committee was established to oversee the development of the survey. This Committee is chaired by the Department of Labour, with representation from NACEW, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Education, Statistics New Zealand and Department of Social Welfare. Comment has also been sought from Te

Puni Kokiri. A working group was also established for the purpose of undertaking the development work and advising and recommending appropriate actions to the Steering Committee.

The survey will be conducted by Statistics New Zealand, as a supplement to the Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS), in the 1998 September quarter. The HLFS sample comprises around 16,000 households and it is expected that information will be collected on approximately 5,000 households with children. The interviews will predominantly be held over the telephone although some will be face to face.

Within the survey, details will be collected on:

- difficulties with childcare arrangements and the impacts of these difficulties on paid work, unpaid or voluntary work and study or training;
- whether respondents want different arrangements for their child/children, and why they are not using the arrangements that they want;
- barriers to childcare use which affect participation in employment, education and training and voluntary work; and
- work provisions that are used to help them balance childcare responsibilities.

In addition the labour force information collected in the HLFS will be available and will be matched with the respondents to the childcare survey.

It is envisaged that the objectives will be signed off by the Steering Committee in September 1997. Further development work will continue as the questionnaire is designed and following the pilot which is scheduled for November 1997. NACEW expects the data from the survey will be available in February 1999.

Parental Leave

Following on from the work undertaken in 1995/96, NACEW completed its report on Parental Leave Provision in New Zealand. The 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 and a consideration of possible provisions for paid parental leave. The report draws conclusions about the implications of current provisions and identifies areas for further work.

Research on Performance Related Remuneration

A sub group of NACEW met during the year to consider work in the area of women's earnings. This was in accordance with the agreement amongst NACEW members to give priority to a research project on the gender earnings gap. The group looked at a range of international studies and relevant New Zealand literature on remuneration systems and human resources practices in relation to gender.

Discussions with the Ministry of Women's Affairs indicated that the Ministry had current research underway on the gender earnings gap. In addition, as their research programme for 1997/98 provided an opportunity to gather some primary data on

remuneration systems, the Ministry invited NACEW to consider working jointly with the Ministry on this project.

Accordingly, the NACEW sub-group, in conjunction with the Ministry of Women's Affairs plans to develop a detailed research specification for a project on remuneration systems and associated human resource practices. This specification will consider the overall purpose of the research, key objectives and information needs and the most appropriate methodology. The research will be contracted out once a specification is finalised.

It is envisaged that this research will be carried out early in 1998, with results being available in the later part of 1998.

Gender analysis of the Survey on Labour Market Adjustment under the Employment Contracts Act.

During the year, information was presented to NACEW on the results from the Survey of Labour Market Adjustment under the Employment Contracts Act 1991, undertaken for the Industrial Relations Service of the Department of Labour. Similar surveys were conducted in 1992 and 1993 to gather information on industrial relations changes occurring since the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act 1991.

In 1994, NACEW contracted a gender analysis of the 1993 survey. NACEW agreed that it would also be useful to obtain a gender analysis of the 1996 survey and intends to initiate this work as soon as the results from the survey become available.

Employment Strategy

The Minister of Employment joined NACEW at one of its quarterly meetings. Council members discussed with him the proposed changes to employment policy as outlined in the Coalition Agreement, in particular the introduction of a requirement that job seekers be available for suitable part time community work or training and devolving control over employment related resources to the regional level.

Submission to the Employment Strategy Implementation Steering Group

NACEW prepared a submission to the Employment Strategy Implementation Steering Committee which raised and discussed a number of issues in relation to the employment policy proposals and the implications of these for women.

Two key areas the NACEW submission focused on were firstly, the proposed introduction of regional employment commissioners and regional employment committees and secondly, the proposal that job seekers undertake some work or training in return for a 'community wage.'

Regional Delivery

In commenting on the proposals to decentralise more resources and control to the regions, NACEW expressed:

- support for the proposal to decentralise resources and responsibility to the regional level;
- the importance of regional committees being appropriately balanced in terms of gender and ethnicity;
- support for the maintenance of a public employment service which links individuals with prospective employers;
- the need for the regional agencies to be required to take into account the needs of groups with particular needs;
- the view that the accountability of both the Regional Employment Commissioners and the Regional Employment Committees will need to be clearly defined with careful consideration given to accountability issues; and
- that accountability is also particularly important in relation to the achievement of equity objectives.

Community Work and Training

NACEW also identified a number of issues in relation to the proposal that job seekers undertake some work or training in return for a 'community wage.' The NACEW submission stressed that giving people the opportunity to participate in society and maintain some dignity while not in paid work, and increasing the likelihood that they will move into unsubsidised employment should be the foremost objectives if such an initiative is implemented.

The key points made in the submission were that the community work and training initiative should:

- provide opportunity for meaningful work;
- not displace current workers;
- provide meaningful training to increase the qualifications and ultimate employability of job-seekers for jobs;
- assist job seekers to move towards unsubsidised employment;
- not expect job-seekers to meet additional costs associated with participating in work or training;
- occur within a work/training environment which provides a safe and non-exploitative environment;
- take account of family responsibilities of job seekers, as well as childcare issues and costs;
- be adequately monitored to ensure that minimum requirements are met, funds are spent appropriately, and that people who have the skills and experience to run the schemes are available; and
- not crowd out existing New Zealand Employment Service initiatives that cater for women job seekers who may not be registered job seekers.

Retirement Savings

NACEW members considered the issue of retirement income prior to the referendum on Compulsory Superannuation. This was not a key area of work for NACEW during 1997. However, the Council wrote to the Ministers of Employment, Women's

Affairs, Finance and the Treasurer supporting the set of principles developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs to assist the Retirement Savings Scheme design team develop a scheme which would not disadvantage women.

School Holidays and Term Dates

NACEW submitted brief comments on the Ministry of Education discussion paper on 1998 School terms and Holiday Dates. NACEW noted that although consideration of children's educational needs should be paramount in any discussion on school terms and holidays, these dates do have a significant impact on the lives of working parents. NACEW noted that:

- In order for parental stress to be minimised, school holidays should be set on a consistent basis to enable parents to plan for the care of their school age children;
- the greater the co-ordination of primary and secondary holidays, the lesser the lack of correlation between parents' leave and the children's holidays;
- a late finish to the school year in December minimises childcare problems at a time when the workplace is busy and parents are dealing with the challenges of Christmas; and
- whenever school holidays overlap with Statutory holidays, there is more opportunity for parents to take time off work with their children and families.

Looking Ahead to 1997/98

Over the coming year NACEW will continue to focus on current research projects. The childcare survey is a relatively long term project and development work will continue until the data collection begins in July 1998. Development will also continue on the joint NACEW/Ministry of Women's Affairs research on performance related remuneration. NACEW will be represented on the Steering Committee overseeing the development and conduct of this research in the next year.

NACEW also intends to further consider the potential implications for women of the Government's Employment Strategy and the proposed changes to employment policy. Where appropriate NACEW will seek to provide advice and input on the proposals as they develop.

Council Membership

The membership of the Council as at June 30 1997 was as follows:

Adrienne D'Ath (Chair)	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Anae Si'anaua Ostler	Auckland	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
Susan Wetere-Bryant	Te Awamutu	Ministerial Appointee
Stephenie Knight	Wellington	State Services Commission
Barbara Burton	Wellington	NZ Employers Federation
Lindsey Rea	Auckland	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Sue Shone	Wellington	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
Sandra Hamilton	Wellington	Ministry of Youth Affairs