

NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN (NACEW)

ANNUAL REPORT 1999/2000

Introduction

This Annual Report covers the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. The major achievement of the Council during this period was the launch in July 1999 of the publication *Childcare, Families and Work: The New Zealand Childcare Survey 1998: A Survey of Early Childhood Education and Care Arrangements for Children*, based on the findings of the 1998 Childcare Survey jointly undertaken by NACEW and the Department of Labour. NACEW held a seminar in Wellington in December 1999 based on the survey and report. In addition to these projects, NACEW submitted comments to the Employment and Accident Insurance Legislation Committee on the Employment Relations Bill. In June 2000 ministerial responsibility for NACEW was transferred from the Social Services and Employment portfolio to Labour.

Childcare, Families and Work

The report is based on The New Zealand Childcare Survey 1998, a joint research project between NACEW and the Department of Labour and conducted by Statistics New Zealand as a supplement to the Household Labour Force Survey in the September quarter of 1998. The main findings of the survey discussed in the report were outlined in the 1998-1999 Annual Report. However some key findings are summarised below.

Key findings and implications

Four key issues were identified in a Department of Labour paper prepared by Kirsten Gendall for the childcare seminar in December 1999. These related to employment, labour market disadvantage, employment and childcare types, and cost of childcare.

The survey findings suggested that for mothers, taking care of their children's care needs had a significant impact on their participation in employment. The younger the child the greater the impact. Access to childcare was found to have a major impact on employment, and this was more of an issue for groups such as sole parents, low income parents and Maori parents.

Those parents who experienced labour market disadvantage (sole parents, low income parents, Maori parents) also reported that access to childcare was a barrier to their participation in employment. Better access to childcare for these parents was therefore identified as a key issue.

The survey also raised many questions in relation to the type of childcare used and the employment of parents. On the one hand many parents indicated that they wanted more formal arrangements to be made available, although the high use of unpaid family members suggested that parents (especially sole parents) favoured informal arrangements with low costs. Families with informal care arrangements were less happy with these arrangements

than those with formal care arrangements, yet a lack of informal care was reported as a barrier.

Cost emerged as a key issue for parents who opted more for low/no cost arrangements and was also identified as the most significant barrier to participation in employment, education/training and voluntary work. Access to affordable, quality childcare and the need for further out of school care programmes were two important issues to emerge from the survey.

Interest in the childcare survey data is continuing. Further analysis of the data is being carried out on an ongoing basis by the Department of Labour as well as the Ministry of Social Policy. The data have also become of interest to policy analysts working in the area of out of school care policy.

Seminar

A seminar was held on 8 December 1999 to consider policy issues arising from the childcare survey results. The seminar was attended by government department officials, non-governmental organisation representatives and researchers. Four key note papers were presented including:

- *Parental employment and childcare use* by Kirsten Gendall, Department of Labour;
- *Issues for children* by Brenda Burke, Ministry of Education;
- *The early childhood education and care Arrangements of pre-school children of work-rich and work-poor couples* by Paul Callister;
- *Parents' work arrangements and informal care use: Multivariate analysis of factors associated with mothers' employment status* by Sarah Hillcoat-Nalletamby and A Dharmalingam.

All four papers are available for public access on the NACEW website and have helped raise the profile of the survey, the report and the Council.

NACEW research budget

a) Low Income Women

Throughout the 1998-1999 year a Low Income Subcommittee of NACEW met and contracted a research team to develop detailed terms of reference for a project aimed at providing significant new information about the financial and employment experiences of sole parent women. The resultant research proposal was completed at the end of June 1999.

Over the 1999-2000 year further action towards carrying out the proposed research was deferred due to a lack of funding, and a perceived overlap between the proposal's brief and work carried out in the Department of Labour on the position of women receiving the DPB. At the completion of the 1999-2000 year no decision had been taken on the future of the research proposal.

b) Caring and providing: Combining paid work and parenting

In May 2000 NACEW approved the payment of \$5000 from its research budget to support the work of Lynda Byrne, a Massey University Social Policy and Social Work Masters student who had applied to the Department of Labour Graduate Research Sponsorship scheme. The research will use data on work transitions from the Massey University *Labour Market Dynamics and Economic Participation* (1997) study and sets out to explore women's experiences of combining working and caring by investigating the factors that guide workforce participation. Lynda Byrne has agreed to keep NACEW informed of her progress.

This research has four key areas of focus, namely: the factors that ensure a successful combination of the two roles of caring and providing, the interaction between issues regarded as affecting paid work (childcare, part-time work, family friendly workplaces and policies), the experiences of women with poor labour market outcomes as compared with those with more successful outcomes, and barriers and disincentives to employment for some mothers.

Submission on the Employment Relations Bill

On 3 May 2000 NACEW made a written submission on the Employment Relations Bill to the Employment and Accident Insurance Legislation Committee. The submission was based on the views of members following a special meeting convened to discuss the implications of the Employment Relations Bill on women's employment. It reflected the diverse membership of the Council and their diverging viewpoints on the likely impact of the Bill on the employment of women. Despite this, the Council as a whole asked the Committee to recognise that women's employment experiences are often different from those of men and that specific regard should be given to the possible effects of the legislation.

Eight key issues were identified as being important in relation to women's employment.

- a Accessibility of collective benefits for women was identified as an issue of concern in relation to the Bill. The legislation as drafted could encourage a two-tier employment landscape, particularly in the short term, with those in unionised jobs reaping the benefits, while many women remained in jobs where pay and conditions were marginal. Young workers were also seen to be of particular risk given their high representation in part-time and casual jobs.
- b NACEW members stressed the importance of achieving high levels of awareness of legislative provisions amongst employees and employers than has been evident in recent years. The submission pointed to evidence that women's needs have not been met in this area and suggested that any information strategy should be developed in consultation with a wide range of organisations, including the Ministry of Women's Affairs.
- c Issues relating to women as employers were of concern to the Council. That women employers (as well as new employers in general) are provided with education and information on employment issues was cited as a key issue. Some members also expressed concern at the high compliance costs they envisaged the Bill would involve for businesses. The provision of on-line resources was suggested as one means of reducing such costs.
- d The emphasis in the Bill on mediation as the first step in dispute resolution, was supported by many members. Other members raised concerns about aspects of the

mediation process proposed, relating to resourcing, access to mediation outside of cities and the selection process to be used. In the Council's view, the gender and ethnic balance of mediators was of vital importance.

- e The Council noted that the effectiveness of the dispute resolution provisions contained in the legislation would depend upon the adequacy of resources.
- f While most NACEW members were positive about the enhancement of personal grievance rights and remedies under the Bill, some held the view that the emphasis on reinstatement as the primary remedy in dispute resolution might be problematic in practice.
- g NACEW stressed the need for effective monitoring and evaluation of the Bill and suggested that current statistical and information gathering methods employed by the Department of Labour should be broadened in scope in order to describe such factors as casual employment or the number of people using parental leave provisions.
- h The Council held mixed views about the good faith bargaining provisions of the Bill. Employer and business members expressed concerns related to the requirement that relevant financial information be disclosed. Union members expressed concerns about the requirement for unions to provide lists of their members to employers.

Website

The NACEW website is linked to the Department of Labour website and is accessible through the New Zealand Government On-line portal (NZGO). After a list of possible key words relating to NACEW was submitted to NZGO in May 2000, the number of requests for information relating to the Council originating from the site increased significantly, indicating the value of the site for researchers and others interested in women's employment issues.

The website contains key NACEW publications on-line, including the childcare report and the seminar papers.

Transfer of ministerial responsibility

Prior to the 1990's NACEW was part of the Labour portfolio. In April 2000 the Department of Labour proposed that portfolio responsibility for NACEW be transferred back from Social Services and Employment to Labour. Both the Department of Labour and Council members considered that the transfer would improve the effectiveness of the Council and reflect NACEW's brief that covers labour market issues as a whole. Ministerial approval for the transfer was given by the Minister of Social Services and Employment, the Minister of Labour and, in June 2000, the Prime Minister. Subsequent approval was given by the Minister of Finance for the necessary change to appropriations.

The Council plans to continue to work towards providing the Government with high quality, relevant and useful advice. NACEW is looking forward to working with the Minister of Labour on issues relating to the employment of women.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the Council as at June 30 2000 was as follows:

Claire Johnstone (Chair)	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Colleen Tuuta	New Plymouth	Ministerial Appointee
Suzanne Snively	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Beverley Main	Wellington	Ministerial Appointee
Philippa Revell	Christchurch	Ministerial Appointee
Susan Wetere-Bryant	Te Awamutu	Ministerial Appointee
Sue Loughlin	Wellington	State Services Commission
Barbara Burton	Wellington	NZ Employers Federation
Annie Newman	Wellington	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Sue Shone	Wellington	NZ Council of Trade Unions
Helen Kennard	Wellington	Department of Labour
Anne Riley	Wellington	Ministry of Women's Affairs
Sandra Hamilton	Wellington	Ministry of Youth Affairs
Ann Pomeroy	Wellington	Ministry of Social Policy
Angela Wallace	Wellington	Department of Work and Income