

Pay Equity Speech

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Ko Angela McLeod tāku ingoa, President of the New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women - BPWNZ. We've been lobbying on issues affecting women for 70 years. In 1957 we joined with the NZ Federation of Graduate Women and formed the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity. We fought then, and we fight again now - along with over 25 other community organisations, women's groups and unions. Organisations such as Rural Women NZ, the CTU, NZEI, Dairy workers union, and Finsec.

A coalition committed to the pay equity challenge.

Challenge # 1 - change the legislation so that it addresses the pay gap

The current Minister of Women's Affairs proudly states that 'the National Government passed the Equal Pay Act in 1972'... When the National Government repealed the Employment Equity Act in 1990, they indicated in 1991 that the Employment Contracts Act would better enable women to achieve pay equity and they relegated the Equal Pay Act of 1972 to being part of the minimum code.

Yes, Minister, National passed the act in 1972 and then made it completely ineffective in 1991.

The Minister has also said 'we have plenty of research and investigation on the need for pay parity, and its time we made changes to the law.'

The Minister is right. We need changes to the law.

Challenge #2 - increase the productivity of NZ's economy by addressing the gender pay gap.

We believe that pay equity is good for business.

In February as he axed two pay equity investigations, Hon Tony Ryall said that they generate an additional form of remuneration pressure that is unaffordable in the current economic and fiscal environment.

I guess the investigations might have put pressure on the economy - but the 9.5% gap experienced by those women doesn't. And the money you saved by axing those investigations Mr Ryall, did you spend it on the actual gap - and increased the pay of those women by 9.5% so that they matched their male counterparts?

Pay equity increases productivity and that's what we need to beat the recession. Workers feel valued, staff engagement and work rate increases. There are less sick days and poverty is eradicated.

A UK study suggests that a decrease in gender pay gap would significantly increase productivity and that 23billion pounds would be added to the UK economy. 23billion pounds - thats about \$60billion dollars - do we want that? You bet your bottom dollar we do.

And lets not forget - women are consumers for themselves and their families. We make up just over 50% of the population and nearly 50% of the workforce. Our spending makes the economy tick.

Pay equity is also a poverty-eradication strategy - one US study found that if married women were paid the same as men doing comparable work, their families poverty rates would fall from 2.1 % to 0.8% and for single mums, the rates are cut in half - from 24.3 to 12.6.

The mean weekly total income for women in NZ is 42% less than men - and this can lead to poverty in elderly women. Women outlive men on average and with a lifetime of lower wages

affecting their ability to save for retirement, they have to stretch what little money they get for longer.

Lastly, ministers of the crown, challenge # 3. Listen to the women of NZ.

Listen to the international conventions...the Human Rights Council, ILO Convention 100, CEDAW, MDG3 and the Beijing Platform for Action.

Pay heed to their recommendations.

Listen to us...if you really want to get NZ out of the recession close the gender pay gap.

The gender pay gap is real and it's unfair.

Kia ora