



When will pay equity become a reality?

At the 2008 ASU Women's Conference, resolutions were to conduct a pay equity survey throughout all sectors, highlighting the problem women face in regards to remuneration compared to men.

Pay equity is about achieving equal remuneration outcomes, eliminating sex discrimination from the wage-setting system by ensuring that employers use gender-neutral and gender-inclusive criteria to determine the value of job components such as skill, responsibility, qualifications and working conditions. It is, however, about more than just pay through wages. It also includes discretionary pay, allowances, performance, merit, bonus payments and superannuation.

Equal pay for work of equal value involves comparing the value of jobs performed by one group of workers with that of jobs performed by another group of workers, where the jobs may be of a different nature but are comparable in other ways such as skill and responsibility.

Pay inequity in your workplace can be caused by the uneven gender distribution of your workforce, in which, for example, more men occupy senior and therefore higher-paying jobs than women, and more women may work part-time or casually.

Discovering what type of pay equity problem you have is the first step. The solution will be different depending on what conclusions you arrive at.

The labour market has been distorted

by historical, social constraints and prejudices. While there may be no intention on the part of employers to act unfairly towards their female employees, market rates incorporate historic distortions and assumptions about what skilled work is and what women's work is worth. Without some means of addressing the social components in these market rates, labour markets will continue to operate in a discriminatory way.



The main reason for the inequitable pay gap is the uneven distribution of the workforce, in which more men occupy well-paid jobs than women and more women work part-time or casually. The second contributor is the value placed on traditionally female work versus traditionally male work. The third contributor is the difference in the amount paid to men and women undertaking the same job, simply because of gender (which often occurs unconsciously).

Other factors contributing to the earnings gap include:

- ▶ Undervaluation of women's work and skills
- ▶ Greater numbers of women at the

bottom of organisations where pay is the lowest and greater numbers of men at the top where pay is higher and where discretionary pay and bonuses are more likely to be made

- ▶ Gender expectations that make women's 'natural' skills seem to be worthless
 - ▶ Different levels of discretionary payments paid to male and female occupations (eg, over-award payments, bonus payments, commissions, allowances, etc)
 - ▶ Explicit and implicit views and values that men need and deserve to be paid more
 - ▶ Over-influence of existing job hierarchies
 - ▶ Failure to recognise that current pay hierarchies may reflect social power or industrial muscle
 - ▶ Job descriptions that do not include the full range of actual skills employed
 - ▶ Equal opportunity factors contributing to the earnings gap include:
 - ▶ Differential in working times, as women have less access to paid overtime and are more likely to be in part-time or casual positions
 - ▶ Occupational segregation of labour into 'men's work' and 'women's work' across industries and within occupations
 - ▶ Less access to training for women workers
 - ▶ Inflexible structures and workplace practices which restrict the employment prospects of workers with family responsibilities
 - ▶ Greater likeliness of women to take time off work for family responsibilities
- The latest average weekly earnings data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that there is still a gender wage



gap of around 16 percent. Furthermore, this gap has been fairly static despite developments that could have been expected to reduce it, including increased education, increased share of professional jobs, longer workforce duration and the related increased experience.

The figures, based on full-time adult ordinary earnings, shows that in 1994 women were earning 83.9 cents for every dollar men earned. By 2004, they were earning 84.8 cents. The pay gap in men and women's total earnings is even more pronounced. In 1994, men's total average weekly earnings were \$643.10, compared with \$424.90 for women - a difference of 34 percent. Ten years later, men's total weekly earnings had risen to \$911.60 compared with \$604.00 for women - once again a pay gap of 34 percent.

Clearly, there is still a long way to go in achieving pay equity in Australia.

We need your help

The ASU wants to gather information from our members to assess the pay equity gap at in our industries. We ask that you complete the online survey to help evaluate this critical issue.

To fill out the Pay Equity Survey, go to www.asuvc.asn.au/951.html or for more information please go to: www.ewa.gov.au/

For further enquiries, contact Maria Kaplanis at mkaplanis@asuvc.com



18 weeks Paid Maternity Leave - a huge step forward

The Productivity Commission's proposal for an 18 week, government-funded paid maternity leave scheme would bring relief and financial security to tens of thousands of working mothers and their families, says ACTU President Sharan Burrow.

"Eighteen weeks is a good start to help women recover from childbirth, bond with their baby and establish feeding. Two-thirds of women currently have no access to paid leave and many return to work too early because they can't afford rent, mortgage and household bills. This scheme, combined with two weeks paid paternity leave, would begin to alleviate the financial and emotional pressure."

Ms Burrow says the proposed scheme should also require employers to "top up" the government payment so women have their income fully replaced while on leave.

"The Productivity Commission's model only offers a government payment at the federal minimum wage level (\$543.78 per week), with 9 percent superannuation paid by employers.

"An employer top up would be an investment in the well-being of employees, with women more likely to return to work in good mental and physical health."

It would also be an appropriate way of valuing the skills women bring to our workplaces.

"Australia's economic expansion in the last 15 years has been fuelled by record numbers of women entering the workforce.

"To sustain this growth, every effort should be made by employers to help female employees balance work and family responsibilities. Modernizing

the workplace culture is in everybody's interest," says Ms Burrow.

The ACTU says "stay at home" mothers should also receive an equivalent 18 week payment, in recognition that most are in paid work at the time of the birth of their first child and the majority will be again when children are older.

Ms Burrow says the Productivity Commission should also re-think the possibility of allowing women to access some of the 18 week scheme before the birth of their child.

The ACTU says the scheme should be introduced in the 2009 federal budget or sooner to move Australia into line as quickly as possible with international standards.

The following articles highlight the importance of Paid Maternity Leave in the workplace.

Community Legal Centres Funded Paid Parental Leave

26 Community Legal Centres around Victoria have just voted to approve the ASU's Community Legal Centre Multi Business Agreement. This agreement has been a long time coming mainly because the ASU has worked hard to secure funding for paid parental leave entitlements for Community Legal Centre employees.

The agreement has been able to secure 14 weeks paid maternity leave and two weeks partner leave. Whilst 14 weeks is a great achievement in the Social and Community Services (SACS) industry it is not the most significant achievement in this case.

The ASU has been able to secure paid parental leave in many SACS organisations. Admittedly usually not as much as 14 weeks in a first agreement. But rarely has the ASU been able to get the government funding body, in this case Victorian Legal Aid, to take on the responsibility to fund the cost of the parental leave.

Victorian and Federal Government funders of SACS services do not fund services to provide basic provisions such as paid parental leave to their staff. This in stark contradiction to public servants whom have their parental leave factored into their departments or programs funding by government.

One has to wonder, why does the government believe that social, welfare, youth and community development workers are unworthy of funded parental leave. It is the ASU's hope and mission that the Victorian Legal Aid will be the first of many government funding bodies to see the light and to fund SACS workers so that they have the same entitlements as public sectors workers.

The ASU, SACS, Respect The Workers Sustain The Services campaign is setting its sights on Department of Human Services (DHS) by campaigning for DHS to fund workers paid parental leave across the industry. If you wish to learn more about the campaign and to become involved please contact the member contact centre on 1300 855 570 or email info@asuvic.com

From worst to first

Hume City Council was the last metropolitan council to offer maternity leave to its employees, offering eight weeks maternity leave in 2001. Another two weeks maternity leave was offered in 2003, and again in 2004, bringing the total maternity leave to 12 weeks. During the 2003 negotiations, there were significant work bans with the Agreement taking a whopping 15 months to certify.

In contrast, negotiations for Agreement No. 4 commenced in March 2005, and the Agreement was certified in August – a five-month process – without any work bans and realised an increase in maternity leave to 16 weeks or 32 weeks at half pay, a first for local government.

The strategies were so successful that the last Enterprise Agreement (No.4) saw a major improvement in the culture of the union/management relationship. It was the first time after negotiating the previous three agreements that there was no industrial action taken during the

process. Relations with the unions and Hume City Council have improved and both parties work out differences in a respectful, conciliatory manner which benefits Hume as an employer and its employees with superior working conditions to which other Councils aspire.

In 2005, management made a deliberate effort to be recognised as an employer of choice to implement the culture, demonstrate commitment to employees and to be seen as a leader within the industry.

A landmark agreement was negotiated which included:

family friendly and flexible work practices

By promoting a family friendly and flexible work environment and substantially increasing tangible employee benefits, Hume, along with the unions, were innovative and creative in the approach and negotiated a comprehensive range of family friendly support, benefits and entitlements.



These flexible, family friendly benefits are enshrined in Hume's Enterprise Agreement and include:

- ▶ Paid Maternity and Adoption Leave – 16 weeks at full pay or 32 weeks at half pay
- ▶ Up to 78 weeks total maternity/adoption leave (includes both paid and unpaid leave)
- ▶ Paid Partner's Leave – two weeks at full pay or four weeks at half pay
- ▶ Pre-Natal Leave (up to 38 hours per pregnancy)
- ▶ Partners Pre-Natal Leave (up to 10 hours per pregnancy)
- ▶ Death in Childbirth – provides for

- guardian to utilise mother's maternity leave benefits (conditions apply)
- ▶ Part-Time Return to Work from Parental Leave
- ▶ Job Share and Transfer to Part-Time Employment
- ▶ Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities
- ▶ Carer and Employee Support Facilities (rooms available for employees to care for relatives)
- ▶ Out of Hours Care - for parents attending after hours meetings
- ▶ Funeral Leave – Additional to Bereavement Leave
- ▶ Emergency Leave (Includes Casual and Temporary Staff)
- ▶ Cultural and Religious Leave
- ▶ Armed Forces and Emergency Services Leave
- ▶ Study Leave – Including Study By Distance at work
- ▶ Jury Service (Includes Casual and Temporary Staff)
- ▶ Juniors Rates of Pay as a percentage of adult rates of pay
- ▶ Flexible Work Arrangements
- ▶ Extended Annual Leave – Up to 12 Weeks (covers school holidays)
- ▶ Employment Security

A comprehensive range of support and assistance programs has been developed through Council's joint union/management Consultative Committee, many of which are specifically incorporated in the Enterprise Agreement, demonstrating the shared commitment to the initiatives. The parties acknowledge that Council's Consultative Committee has an important role in enhancing relationships between the parties, facilitating communication and consultation, and addressing workplace, Industrial Relations (IR) and Employee Relations (ER) issues.

In 2008, Hume City Council remains the leader in local government, providing these benefits to its employees.

Do you want to receive First Priority by e-mail? If so, please subscribe to the electronic version by calling Maria Kaplanis on 9342 3410 or emailing: women@asuvic.com

Geelong & Region Trades & Labour Council (GTHC) Women Unionists Network Leadership Training Weekend

14th - 16th November 2008

The Geelong and Region Trades and Labour Council has been able to develop a network of women unionists which has provided a forum for discussion, support and information. From discussions within the working women's network it was identified that there were not enough women in leadership roles and that there was a real need for training in a number of areas to improve their skills.

The GTHC has planned a two-day residential training weekend for women unionists who are keen to strengthen and develop their leadership skills and actively use these skills at work within their local community. The details are as follows:

DATE:

**Evening of Friday 14th,
Saturday 15th & Sunday
16th November 2008**

VENUE:

**Cottage by the Sea
29 Flinders St,
Queenscliff**

**COST:
FREE!**

For more information and to nominate to attend the training weekend please contact Maria Kaplanis at the ASU on 9342 3410 or email: mkaplanis@asuvic.com

GTHC Women Unionists Annual Dinner

The Women Unionists Network annual dinner was held on the 24th of July 2008 and was a great success. The feedback has been that it was one of the best nights that was had. Pictured below are snapshots of the evening, including two tables of ASU women.



*Welcome by Chris Couzens,
President Geelong Trades Hall.*



Guest speaker Michele O'Neil, State Secretary Textile Clothing and Footwear Union.



Performance by Musique.



A great night had by all.

The Annual OHS Representative Conference

The eighth annual OHS Representatives Conference, "Time to deliver the highest OHS standards" is being held on Thursday October 30 at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre - near the corner of Flinders and Spencer St.

The Conference will give OHS Reps information about and discuss the national OHS review into model laws currently underway, harmonisation issues, including the duties of workplace parties, penalties, the role of WorkSafe and their own role and powers under a future model OHS law.

There will be a range of eminent speakers from the Network Review Panel, WorkSafe and Unions in the morning and workshops in the afternoon. A large variety of stalls offering a range of information, advice and materials will be on display.

As in previous years, the VTHC has gained approval for the Seminar from the VWA under the OHS Act. This is a WorkSafe Victoria approved course of training and all elected Health and Safety Representatives are entitled to attend on paid time.

This is a free event for Health and Safety Representatives, morning tea and lunch will be provided.

Registrations for the day are now open; please contact ASU OHS Officer Graham Wilson for a registration form on (03) 9342 3400 or e-mail gwilson@asuvic.com.