



## DISESTABLISHMENT OF PAY EQUITY TASKFORCE

In response to government demands for cuts, Te Kawa Mataaho is going to disestablish the Pay Equity Taskforce whose work has reduced the public service gender and ethnic pay gaps.

Since 2017, in the public service the gender pay gap had decreased from 12.5% to 7.1%; the Māori pay gap decreased from 11.2% to 5.4% and the Pacific pay gap had decreased from 21.6% to 16.6%

full data available here:

<https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/research-and-data/workforce-data-remunerationpay/workforce-data-pay-gaps>

In comparison, the New Zealand gender pay gap remained largely stagnant. These decreases would not have happened without the taskforce.

The Taskforce has two vital roles. First, overseeing the pay equity claims process in the public sector to address the undervaluation of work that is mostly done by women. Second, running the pay gap action plan programme (called Kia Toipoto) which addresses other contributors to the pay gap.

## SUPPORTING PAY EQUITY CLAIMS

The Taskforce's work has been essential in the pay equity process. The people working in the Taskforce have developed knowledge and experience of the claims process and pay equity that is not held elsewhere in Aotearoa and has received notice internationally. Their work supported the successful claims, such as social workers, nurses, physiotherapists, librarians, administrators, and teacher aids, who now have pay equity with equivalent roles that are male-dominated.

The expertise of the Taskforce is vital to ensure that the remaining claims are settled. For example, care and support workers spearheaded recent advances with equal pay, with their victory in the supreme court and groundbreaking 2017 pay equity settlement, but they have seen their claim stall and face further uncertainty. The work of caring for others is the bedrock of society, but many care workers will remain on minimum wage until their pay equity claim settles. The government cutting the Pay Equity Taskforce is an attack on these workers and their ability to settle their claims.

## PAY GAP ACTION PLANS

The Taskforce has gone beyond undervaluation to address all contributors to the gender and ethnic pay gaps through Kia Toipoto. Their programme of work involved setting out best practice guidance and requiring that agencies report on their pay gaps and develop action plans to address them. This programme has worked and made a significant difference to gender pay gaps.

The Pay Equity Taskforce is a New Zealand centre of excellence of what works to address gender and ethnic pay gaps and has been world-leading. Its guidance has been used by other organisations and its expertise could be used much more widely. If it is disestablished that expertise will be lost.

## IMPACT OF CUTS

This is the third time an incoming National government has undone the institutional supports necessary for pay equity to be progressed. In 1990, it repealed the Employment Equity Act. In 2009, it disbanded the Pay Equity Unit of the Department of Labour. Disestablishing the Pay Equity Taskforce will have a similar impact – it will undo work that has already been done and the loss of expertise will make it harder in the future to take the next steps to address pay gaps.

In the meantime, the pay gap will remain and the cost of the government cuts will be seen by women workers, Māori workers and Pacific workers trying to make ends meet while they're still being paid less.