



18 March 2022

Petitions Committee
Parliament

Via email

Support for the Petition on Pay Transparency

Dear Petitions Committee members,

We are writing in support of the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner's petition on pay transparency. We commend the Human Rights Commission for again raising this as a significant equity issue in Aotearoa New Zealand that requires urgent action from Government.

Aotearoa New Zealand was once the international leader in women's rights and equal opportunities, but somehow over recent decades, we as a nation have lost our way. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee noted this in 2018, namely their concern at the low levels of women in leadership roles, particularly in the private sector and the persistent discrimination against Māori, Pasifika and women with disabilities in the labour market alongside a persistent gender pay gap¹.

We call for legislation and regulatory measures around pay transparency to be urgently adopted to address this. Changes via the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2020, although positive, have not gone far enough to truly alter organisational behaviour and improve opportunities across the labour market for minority ethnicities, women, and those with disabilities.

Pay transparency measures have proven to narrow gender gaps around the world and are strongly recommended by the OECD². From the menu of measures available, it is important to first assess the likely impact within the Aotearoa New Zealand context and ensure an equitable approach to public policy, by implementing the measures which will make the most difference for those on lower incomes.

It is also important to recognise the intersectionality between different pay gaps; gender, ethnicity, disability and pay ratios, and implement the measures which are more likely to tackle multiple inequalities. Within the Aotearoa New Zealand context these inequities work to compound one another, as can be seen in the persistent pay gap for Pacific women³.

¹ CEDAW (2018). Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of New Zealand. Retrieved from: https://women.govt.nz/sites/public_files/CEDAW_C_NZL_CO_8_31061_E%20%283%29.pdf

² OECD. (2021). Can Pay Transparency Tools Close the Gender Wage Gap? OECD Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Policy Brief. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/gender/Pay-Transparency-2021-Policy-Brief.pdf>

³ Te Kawa Mataaho: Public Service Commission. (2021). *Pay Gaps*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/workforce-data/remuneration-pay/pay-gaps/#s4>

We believe that the pay transparency measures which hold the most merit right now for Aotearoa New Zealand are:

- Legislating a right to information on pay
- Mandatory annual reporting of pay gaps (gender, ethnicity and disability) to an independent watchdog
- An obligation on all employers to publish pay scales in job advertisements
- Prohibiting enquiries about previous wages during recruitment or pay review processes

Many of these measures have already been implemented in other parts of the world, the most common measure being mandatory reporting or auditing of gender pay gaps⁴. Much of the evidence base relates to the gender pay gap alone; however, extending requirements to the intersecting pay issues are likely to narrow gaps across the board⁵.

We advocate for measures to be legislated and regulated via an independent body and caution against industry self-regulation as the primary enforcement tool. Self-regulation is unlikely to result in meaningful change as has been seen in other countries where “the pressure is not always enough to drive organisations to action”.⁶ By mandating reporting and publicly publishing gaps, it has been found that employers then start to alter their practices and become more inclusive, removing systemic barriers within their organisations which have reinforced these gaps in the past⁷.

We commend the ongoing advocacy and work of the Human Rights Commission and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner (who is a trained social worker!). We thank you for the opportunity to support this petition and welcome any further opportunity to speak with you about our submission.

Ngā mihi nui,



Braden Clark
Kaiwhakahaere Chief Executive
ANZASW

ABOUT ANZASW

The Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) is the professional association for social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. We have over 3,500 members who work throughout the community in both statutory social work and community social work settings. We advocate on behalf of members for social change and justice.

Definition of social work

⁴ OECD. (2021)...

⁵ Dromey, J. and Rankin, L. (2018). *The Fair Pay Report: How Pay Transparency Can Help Tackle Inequalities*. Institute for Public Policy Research: London

⁶ Cowper-Coles, M., Glennie, M., Mendes Borges, A., & Schmid, C. (2021). *Bridging the gap? An analysis of gender pay gap reporting in six countries*. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/giwl/assets/bridging-the-gap-full-report.pdf>

⁷ Dromey, J. and Rankin, L. (2018). *The Fair Pay Report: How Pay Transparency Can Help Tackle Inequalities*. Institute for Public Policy Research: London

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledges, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.⁸

Social work in Aotearoa New Zealand

Social workers in Aotearoa are required to be registered with the Social Workers Registration Board. Social workers are registered under the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 and are not included in the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

⁸ Global Definition of Social Work - International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work