



Auckland Women's Centre QUARTERLY

WINTER
ISSUE

2018

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#MeToo Forum – “We need to make misogynists afraid again.”

By Nicola Brebner

New Zealand's own #MeToo movement was brought under the spotlight at a recent forum held by the Auckland Women's Centre, drawing a large crowd of all ages.

The line-up of speakers was superb, each offering a different perspective on the #MeToo movement, from media to politics, to the absence of an intersectional lens within the movement itself.

Green MP and Under-Secretary to the Minister of Justice, Jan Logie, spoke about how the #MeToo movement offers a real opportunity for the government to make massive changes in how gender-based violence is dealt with. “Already we’re looking at how sexual harassment can be treated as a health and safety issue and how our justice system needs to change, so sexual violence victims aren’t re-traumatized.”

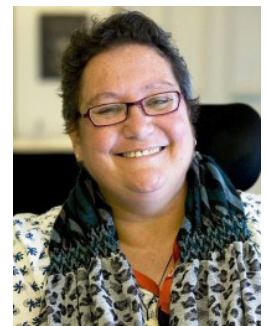


From left to right: Jan Logie MP, Mengzhu Fu, Alison Mau, Dr Nicola Gavey and Mira Taitz

While acknowledging there is no quick and easy solution, Ms Logie said a dedicated government body is being set up to co-ordinate a national strategy around family and sexual violence.

Ms Logie spoke of the sexual harassment that is rife in New Zealand workplaces and labelled it as a “sad indictment on us as a society.” She acknowledged the lack of knowledge and training currently within workplaces to effectively deal with sexual harassment claims, and how currently nothing, in terms of real prevention, is happening on that front.

Disabilities and legal research scholar, Dr Huhana Hickey, was unable to attend the evening in person but gave an informative and poignant video presentation which examined the desperate lack of diversity within the #MeToo movement.



Dr Huhana Hickey

Dr Hickey explained how the most marginalised groups, in particular Māori and disabled people, continue to be invisible and left out of the conversation, despite figures showing that they experience the highest levels and severity of abuse. Dr Hickey lamented the lack of statistics collected in Aotearoa, noting that our figures are likely to be the same as the USA, where more than 80% of women with disabilities were victims of sexual assault.

Co-founder of Shakti Youth, Mengzhu Fu, also acknowledged the lack of intersectionality within the movement, highlighting the challenges for migrant women. “There is a double silencing of migrant women of colour in New Zealand....while the voices of the white and wealthy are amplified the most.”

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'Motherhood Penalty' Costs Women Dearly in Wages

On average women experience a 4.4 per cent decrease in hourly wages when they become mothers, according to a report released by the Ministry for Women on 28 May 2018.

The paper, Parenthood and Labour Market Outcomes, was written by Dr Isabelle Sin, Dr Kabir Dasgupta and Professor Gail Pacheco. For those who were out of the paid workforce for more than 12 months, the average decrease in pay climbed to 8.3 per cent.

By contrast, men experience no significant decrease in hourly wages when they become fathers. Parenthood accordingly increased the gender pay gap in hourly wages.

This mirrors the findings of overseas studies. In the United States, Professor Michelle J. Budig of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst reported in her paper titled *The Fatherhood Bonus and The Motherhood Penalty: Parenthood and the Gender Gap in Pay* that, for most men, fatherhood resulted in a wage bonus, while for women motherhood led to a wage penalty.

She said that fatherhood was a valued characteristic of employers, possibly seen as signalling greater work commitment, stability and deservingness.

By contrast, each child resulted in a financial penalty for women.

The 2018 New Zealand research said that some, but not all, of the decrease in hourly wages experienced by mothers could be explained by them taking jobs in lower-paying industries or occupations after becoming mothers. Among those employed, women decreased the weekly hours they worked in paid employment from a median of 40 hours pre-parenthood to 27 hours after having children.

The median hours worked by men remained constant at 41 after they became fathers.

The researchers said that the average monthly earnings of employed women fell dramatically when they became parents, driven by the combination of fewer hours and lower hourly rates. Their monthly earnings did not return to their pre-parenthood trends within 10 years, meaning that their lifetime earnings were substantially reduced.

After 12 months, 61 per cent of women had returned to work for at least one month. By 24 months, that figure rose to 69 per cent. Women from all income groups were less likely to be employed after becoming parents.

The unrecognised value of women's care work

Women are not only punished by a wage penalty for becoming parents, but their economic contribution in the care they provide to children and others continues to go undervalued. In the article *Making Women's Unpaid*



Work Count, Anne Manne recently celebrated the 30th anniversary of Marilyn Waring's book, *Counting for Nothing: What Men Value and What Women Are Worth* (The Monthly May 2018). Waring's groundbreaking text examined the consequences of excluding women's work from calculations of national GDP. Manne writes that "the central reason that the revolution is unfinished is right there under our noses in everyday life: women's unpaid work."

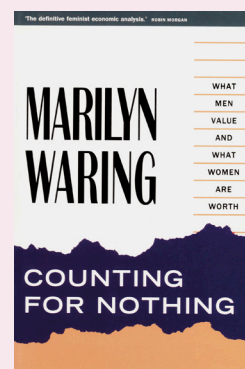
Women do the bulk of many types of work that goes uncounted: caring for children, community work, voluntary work, housework, caring for elderly people and people with disabilities, as well as the 'mental load' identified more recently. The New Zealand 2009/10 Time Use Survey identified that while men and women spent similar time on productive activities, the bulk of women's time was spent on unpaid work, while men's was paid. Manne encourages Time Use Surveys for both genders, to make women's work visible.

Manne links the undervaluing of women's unpaid care work, to the low pay rates women receive when they do care work for pay, as seen with caregivers and early childhood teachers. We can be heartened by the pay equity win of Kristine Bartlett, whose case transformed the equal pay landscape for caregivers and others. May the push for pay equity in industries dominated by women continue.

At the same time, women's unpaid caregiving work of looking after children remains unvalued by the formal economy. The Australian government Workplace Gender Equality Agency calculates the value of unpaid childcare work in Australia at around \$345 billion.

It is significant that we have a Prime Minister whose partner will be a stay-at-home father to their newborn daughter. Men taking on more caregiving work is part of the solution.

Our Prime Minister has signaled a turnaround in direction from the last 9 years, using words like 'care', 'compassion' and 'manaakitanga'. We await the urgent removal of sanctions on mothers who do not name the father of their child, and, into the future, policy settings that enable both the paid and unpaid work of women to be properly valued. ■



#MeToo Forum – “We need to make misogynists afraid again.” continued

Ms Fu implored the audience to recognise the extreme silencing of migrant women, advocate for them and support young people. “We need to make misogynists afraid again” – calling on the participants to strengthen the feminist movement.

Alison Mau, broadcaster and founder of the #MeTooNZ project, which launched in February, spoke of hearing hundreds of heartbreaking stories from rape to inappropriate comments. Ms Mau shared her own feelings of anger and explained how survivors had to overcome incredible fear before sharing their own stories. “Women are worried they won’t be believed, will get sacked and won’t be able to get another job.” Ms Mau said some “major revelations” were forthcoming, search #MeTooNZ for updates .

It was a powerful, thoughtful and highly charged evening which left myself, and I suspect, many others, with mixed emotions. These ranged from optimism for the future, relief and gratitude that this conversation was finally being had, to an overwhelming dismay at the enormity of the



Community Forum

obstacles ahead of the movement, including a justice system which continues to fail women.

But as the chair of the forum, Dr Nicola Gavey said, there is room for optimism for the future. The large turnout for the forum, the solidarity, sharing of stories, the speakers’ expertise and commitment, and the feeling of being heard is incredibly empowering and, the conversation has finally begun. Let’s not let it end. ■

Racist and Sexist Sanction Should Be Scrapped Immediately

A sanction which takes at least \$22 a week away from single parents on benefits should be abolished now, say Auckland Women’s Centre and others campaigning against the penalty.

The sanction is racist and sexist – 52.8 per cent of those sanctioned are Māori and 97.7 per cent are women. It is applied when women on benefits do not identify in law the fathers of their children.

Beneficiaries are initially docked \$22 a week, rising to \$28 a week if they still do not provide the information. The sanction is applied to every child whose father is not identified, meaning that some beneficiaries could lose around \$100 a week.

The rationale for the penalty is to ensure fathers can be assessed for child support, but there is no evidence that the sanction achieves that purpose.

A key reason women do not provide the information is threats and violence from fathers who do not want to pay child support.

A Ministry of Social Development report estimated that the Government would pay out at least \$25 million more a year if the sanction was abolished. That means that \$25 million is being taken every year from some of the poorest families in the country.

Auckland Action Against Poverty in September 2016 launched a campaign to abolish the sanction and the

coalition Government stated last year that it would do so.

Ms Sepuloni in late May this year established a Welfare Expert Advisory Group and advised that reforms would wait until after the group reported back in February 2019.

The panel is charged with carrying out a broad-ranging review of the welfare system. It will deliver advice to the Government on ways to ensure that people have an adequate standard of living, are treated with respect, can live in dignity and are able to participate meaningfully in their communities.

Ms Sepuloni said that Cabinet would make decisions on the Government’s response to the group’s recommendation in March 2018.

That means that changes are a long way off, as legislation will be required to implement the recommendations accepted by the Government. ■



High School Feminism Project Forges Ahead

The last three months have been a whirlwind for our high school feminism project, led by Gabriella Brayne. Gabi recently spoke to 5 high school feminist clubs and presented about high school feminism at the Wāhine Kākano NZ Young Women's Festival.

Gabi also enjoyed presenting to over 300 students at Pasadena Intermediate on gender stereotypes. The intermediate students were so engaged with the topic that they continued to discuss gender stereotypes when they returned to their classrooms.

Many of the school students have described Gabi's talks as "inspirational." In one student's feedback, her take away message was "feminism only works when it's intersectional – go forth and conquer!"

Gabi has launched a Facebook Group – *Auckland Women's Centre – Youth*. Please give it a like or join the group to show your support and keep up to date. Another Facebook group named *Auckland Women's Centre - High School Feminists Collective*, was created as a networking platform for high school students interested in feminist activism. It now has 40 members and is growing as Gabi visits more schools.

Young feminists are responding enthusiastically to the feminist resources Gabi has created and shared on Facebook, including a 'responding to criticisms of feminism' document to further support young activists.

To book Gabi to speak at a school, please email youth@womenz.org.nz. ■



Top: Gabi and students, Wāhine Kākano NZ Young Womens Festival
Left: Gabi presenting at Pasadena Intermediate
Right: Pasadena Intermediate students at Gabi's presentation.

Self Defence For Women

Barb Wallis

A practical, empowering workshop where you can learn new skills or refresh old ones



Saturday 4 August, 2018
Sliding scale \$40 - \$60

1.00pm - 4.00pm



Auckland
Women's
Centre

Please enrol before Friday 27 July
info@womenz.org.nz
376 3227 ext 0
4 Warnock Street
Grey Lynn
www.awc.org.nz

Auckland Women's Centre



Contact & Services

Contact us

09 376 3227 x 0
info@womenz.org.nz
www.awc.org.nz

Centre Hours

Monday to Friday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Library Hours

Monday to Friday
9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Services

- + Women's Support: free support, info, advice and referral
- + Community Education
- + Community Events
- + Counselling
- + LGBTQ support
- + Low Cost Massage
- + Self Defence Classes
- + Opportunities to talk and support feminism
- + Diversity Forums
- + Support Groups
- + Support for High School Feminism