

Winter 2013



Auckland
**Women's
Centre**

Auckland Women's Centre

Gossip

Contact us:

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info@womenz.org.nz

PO Box 78 271, Grey Lynn

www.awc.org.nz

Hours: M-F, 9am - 4pm

Library hours

M-F, 9am - 4pm,

Sat 11am - 1.30pm

on first Sat of the month

Services offered:

Women's support groups
Community education classes
SKIP Single Mums Positive
Parenting activities
Info, Referral & Advice
Personal Counselling
Lesbian support
Low cost massage
Flower Essences consultation

Thanks to Trillian Trust
& First Sovereign Trust
for funding this newsletter

AWC governance collective welcomes four new members

Mira Taitz works for a community law centre as an educator and has previously worked as a research assistant in social science and a uni tutor in the anthropology of gender and race. She is interested in bridging conversations between different generations of feminists, the relationship between non-Western culture and feminisms, and ways in which women's spaces can be more inclusive.



Feminism is **Sabrina Muck's** burning passion and lifelong interest. She is a lawyer, a performance poet, and an active member of Amnesty International Aotearoa, where she is regularly involved in campaigns and raising awareness specifically in terms of women's reproductive rights and sexual freedoms; LGBTQ rights in Aotearoa and abroad; and rights to peaceful protest and freedom of conscience.

Meg Rayner-Thomas moved to Auckland three years ago from the States to study for a master in public health. She is now working on her thesis, which examines the impact of domestic violence on workers and the workplace. She's been involved in feminism and social justice since she was 16 and is looking forward to contributing to feminism in Auckland.



Nicola Brebner is a journalist and communications professional with substantial experience working in the women's health charity sector. She was active in the UK Fawcett Society (a non-profit for gender pay equity) Recently, she volunteered in Guatemala with a local micro-finance charity developing strategies to support and mentor local women.



A New Zealand first? SKIP single mums and their children enjoy a Mother's Day event organised at the Centre just for them.

Family Court reforms will increase suffering of vulnerable women and children

Ruth Busch

The Family Court Proceedings Reform Bill has been reported back from the Select Committee. Despite lengthy submissions from the stopping violence sector pointing out the multiple risks it represents to the safety of women and children caught in its ambit, the most significant aspects of the Bill have been left unchanged. This includes the mandatory mediation provision.



Women (including abused women whose cases are not seen as “urgent enough” to be placed in the Court’s without notice category) must participate in family dispute resolution (FDR) with their (ex) partners before being allowed to file an application for parenting, guardianship and/or relocation orders under the Care of Children Act (COCA).

The evaluations of FDR programmes in Australia demonstrate the following dangers for women who are forced to participate in FDR with their formerly (or currently) abusive partners:

1. The “triage process” utilised by the Courts does not effectively screen out abused women. Many participants will have experienced different forms of violence (some seen as serious by the Courts, others, like psychological violence involving denigration and ridicule commonly trivialised by the Courts). However, they will be expected to vigorously advocate for their positions against their abusers.

This will be done in a room where the only person who doesn’t know about the nature and seriousness of the violence between the couple is the mediator. And the coded language by which threats of future punishment are communicated to the woman may not even be noticed.

2. As in the literature, the Australian FDR evaluations have repeatedly shown that where power and control tactics have characterised the couple’s relationship, agreements that involve unsafe arrangements are often made. These agreements may endanger women and children on contact changeovers or may expose them to further violence.

The women agree in order to placate or appease their partners (a typical survival mechanism) or because they themselves are hopeful (as is the Court all too often) that he can be a great dad even if he was a lousy partner.

3. The third danger comes from the lack of ability to vary these agreements once they become orders of the Court. If proceedings have been commenced in the Court concerning COCA issues, a party cannot commence a similar proceeding in the Court for another two years unless there are material changes in the circumstances of the case.

This materiality test will not be met if the only change is that the woman or a child now feels that the

agreement is unsafe or unfair because of the effects of the violence and the fact that she had no lawyer or advocate with her while the terms of the agreement were ironed out.

More than that, if the woman does not comply with the agreement she has made (often under duress) and which has now become a court order, the enforcement procedures allowable under the COCA

come into effect. These procedures range from admonishment, to fines, to prison.

The Court can also vary the custody order, giving the other parent sole custody. Failure to comply with the agreement also often results in a demonization of the woman. She may be labelled by the Court as “an alienator” or “implacably hostile” thereby subsequently making it even harder to try to get justice from the Courts.

The only (unsurprising) express exemption to mandatory mediation involves proceedings under the Property Relationships Act (PRA). In cases where money and property are in issue, litigants can skip mediation and go directly to the Court for remedies.

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DO WOMEN MATTER?



AUCKLAND COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2013

CANDIDATES FORUM

Living Wage Aotearoa New Zealand and Auckland women's organisations are hosting a candidates' forum. We are calling on candidates to commit to a Living Wage, pay equity and a safer Auckland for women and children.

Hosted by:

- The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa
- Auckland Women's Centre
- National Council of Women (Auckland)
- Working Women's Resource Centre
- Coalition for the Safety of Women and Children
- Women's Health ActionTrust
- P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. (Auckland)
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- AUSA Women's Rights Officers

- St Columba Centre
- 40 Vermont St, Auckland
- September 3, 6-7.30 pm



Does watching television affect young women's employment choices?

Geraldine Whiteford



A well-researched **report** reviews how gender representation in New Zealand-

produced television content viewed by children aged under 12 years can influence young women's employment choices in later life.

How much television are NZ children watching?

While measuring people's TV watching is difficult, research in New Zealand indicates that children's time spent watching broadcast television in recent years has increased. For example, AC Nielson's 2011 report concluded that the average daily viewing time in 2010 for children 5-12 years old, at 128 minutes, was 18 minutes higher than in 2006.

What are NZ children watching?

When asked in a 2008 Broadcast Standards Authority study to name their three favourite programmes, 34% of children named *The Simpsons* in their top three, making it the clear favourite. Of New Zealand programmes, *Shortland Street* ranked third at 16% and *The Zoo* ranked 9th with 4%.

The BSA study recorded 25% of girls naming *Shortland Street*

in their top three programmes compared to just 7% of boys. In contrast, 14% of boys listed sports programmes or channels in their top three compared with just 1% of girls.

How gendered is TV content?

The report assesses New Zealand-produced television shows which account for roughly one-quarter of all television broadcast for children. These shows have a ratio of 1.28 male characters for every 1 female character.

This ratio varies according to genre: in drama women characters just outnumber males compared with news and current affairs where there are 3.29 male characters to every 1 female character and in sport where there are 2.55 male characters to every 1 female character.

Occupation types were equally gendered: the top three occupations for female characters were arts/leisure/entertainment, food preparation and health care. Over 70% of the female health care roles were in *Shortland Street*. For males, the top three occupations were: sports, arts/leisure/entertainment and law enforcement/military. Interestingly,

given recent media discussion, politics was the 7th ranked occupation for men and only the 15th for women. Mirroring real life, women characters were concentrated in less diverse occupation types compared with male characters.

Unsurprisingly there were more female characters in unpaid occupations than male characters, with the two most common categories of unpaid work being food preparation and childcare.

The impact of television on children's behaviour and attitudes

In a fascinating section the report reviews current theories on how TV impacts children. For me, as one researcher notes, "the *possibility* that TV's portrayal of gender may influence children's views on gender difference is enough to warrant changes to children's TV content."

Hence, the report highlights these recommendations for change:

- * Encourage New Zealand produced television that addresses gender imbalances and also across gender/ethnicity, occupation and seniority;
- * Support innovative ways to empower children to be critically aware of the gender imbalances apparent in television content.



Edwina Thorne performed with Vanessa 'Sparky' Maguire at Sing for Your Supper. It was a wonderful night made possible by the outstanding acts and dedicated volunteers. Special thanks to emcee Cissy Rock. (photo by Andrea from the 'Tamaki Makaurau Lesbian Newsletter')

Male violence against women: NZ's shameful stats:

- * About 18,000 women and 12,000 children per year seek safety at women's refuges.
- * Police apprehend men for abuse eight times more often than women.
- * Ninety-two per cent of court protection orders are applied for by women.
- * More than half of child abuse cases occur where women are also being abused.
- * One-third of New Zealand women experience some form of violence from men in their lifetimes.

From 'Gender blind view of violence lets men off the hook', **NZ Herald article** by Peter Adams, author of *Masculine Empire: How Men Use Violence to Keep Women in Line*.

Could a brave caregiver from Lower Hutt set us on the path to equal pay?

Nicola Brebner



Supporters cheer Kristine as she enters the Employment Court.

When New Zealand's Equal Pay Act was passed in 1972 people hailed it as a new era – a time in which women would finally be recognised and rewarded accordingly for doing the same job at the same level as their male counterparts. But 40 years later very few cases have been made under the Act and women continue to be paid less (at least 13% rising to 20% depending on occupation) than men.

However, the brave actions of a Lower Hutt caregiver could well be a catalyst for widespread change. Described as a landmark equal pay case, late last month Kristine Bartlett, appeared in the Employment Court with the support of her union SFWU (Service and Food Workers Union), to allege her \$14.32 pay rate is in breach of the Equal Pay Act 1972 which states that employers may not offer unequal payment or work conditions for the same or substantially similar work for men and women.

The challenge for the SFWU and Kristine Bartlett, who is one of many low-paid female workers clustered in female-dominated occupations across the country, is one of interpretation. While the plaintiff argues for one that determines equal pay according to what men would be paid to do the same work in terms of skills, responsibilities and conditions, the Union is arguing for a wider interpretation of the Act which would

address any systemic undervaluation and structural gender discrimination between occupational sectors.

EEO Commissioner Jackie Blue says: "There are still some really strong prejudices out there about some kinds of work being less important, less skilled and less valuable than others and we can't pretend these aren't related to gender. Work that resembles the unpaid care work that has traditionally been women's responsibility continues to be undervalued, and women continue to be disadvantaged in the workforce. Any assessment of pay inequality needs to take these structural issues into account."

What would a positive outcome mean?

University of Otago public law specialist Professor Andrew Geddis says that if the case is successful it would not only set a precedent which could force certain occupational sectors to raise their pay rates but could also have significant implications across the entire labour market. Cleaners, kitchen staff, administration and library workers are just some of the occupations that could benefit if this case is successful.

The hearing took place over three days (24-26) in late June at the Employment Court in Auckland and a finding is expected to take some time.

Family Court proceedings ▶ from p. 2

Money and property involve real law; their value is understandable and readily ascertainable

by the Courts in ways that threats to kill, a fist in the face, even sexual violation clearly are not. In case this seems too cynical an observation, it's worth looking at s.18A of the PRA which makes domestic violence and sexual abuse irrelevant misconduct when dividing up relationship property.

It's only when the domestic violence and/or the sexual abuse (even against our children) can also be shown to be causally linked to the value and extent of the relationship property that such acts are seen as relevant/"count" under the PRA.

The rhetoric of the Family Court Proceedings Reform Bill is cloaked in phrases about parental decision-making and leaving the courts to handle urgent cases more effectively

There is repeated mention of the expense of the Court processes and therefore the benefits to the would-be litigants, the Courts, the Government and to us the taxpayers as a result of the cost savings these reforms will generate. And there are sops to the issue of violence against women.

Economic abuse (which already is included under the category of psychological abuse) will be an express form of violence. The maximum penalty for breach of a protection order of two years (which no breacher gets) has been raised to three years (which no breacher will ever get).

The Bill is all about cost saving and it's a crying shame that the National Government has decided that these cost savings should be paid for by the Family Court's most vulnerable consumers, the abused women and children of Aotearoa.

