



Auckland Women's Centre QUARTERLY

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Feminist Parenting Forum

Parenting against the patriarchy requires empathy, a series of inspiring speakers told Auckland Women's Centre's March *Feminist Parenting Forum*.

Lawyer, writer, poet, blogger and Samoan feminist single mother Sisilia Eteuati said her Samoan feminism placed family at the centre of children's upbringing.

"We don't hold to the Western view that the mother is everything. My Samoan feminism embraces that it takes a village to raise a child. I expect help. I don't feel any less for needing help, or for struggling if I'm just doing it on my own."

She was very happy to go back to work full-time after the births of each of her children, knowing they were well cared for and loved.

Sisilia said she had another single Samoan mother flating with her and regarded that as an arrangement which could work well for other mothers. She had accordingly set up a Facebook page - Homeshare Aotearoa.

Tania Pouwhare (Ngāi Tūhoe) said she had not enjoyed being the primary caregiver for her daughter and had hated being pregnant. She and her partner had now flipped traditional gender roles, so that he was the stay-at-home parent.

"I go to work at a job that I love and that fulfils me and I come home a happy mummy."

Tania said she parented through a feminist, Māori, social justice prism. She had taught her six-year-old daughter about consent and was also teaching her that older people were responsible for looking after those younger than them.

"Empathy is the best gift I can give to my daughter. I want her to grow up knowing she has a role challenging injustice and inequality."

Emily Writes, who is the mother of two boys, said she worked every day as a mother to try and dismantle a system that harmed children.



Top: Speakers Tania Pouwhare (Ngāi Tūhoe), Emily Writes, Sisilia Eteuati

Above: The audience. Photo by Leah Foxcroft

She described herself and her husband as Bogans and said one of their sons had confounded them from day one, loving colour and being obsessed with weddings and tutus.

Her husband was the primary caregiver, so her children believed that fathers stayed at home and mothers worked outside the home. They also believed they had a powerful voice that could help others.

"We parent with radical empathy. This is taken specifically from the feminist movement... I combat every toxic message my boys receive with kindness." ■

Government Fails Women After Nine Years



The National-led Government will have been in power for nine years by the time this year's election is held on 23 September.

But women are worse off now than we were in 2008. Why?

Violence against women

Aotearoa has a rape culture which makes women unsafe in every facet of our lives and yet the Government refuses to make healthy relationships and consent a compulsory part of the school curriculum.

Justice Minister Amy Adams has made tackling domestic violence the top priority in her justice portfolio, but the Government has not provided funding to put women's refuges and anti-domestic violence campaigners on a secure footing so they can focus on their work instead of having to constantly be concerned with fund-raising.

Reproductive rights

No action has been taken to treat abortion as a health issue by removing it from the Crimes Act, giving women the right to control our own bodies by choosing whether or not to have children.

Housing

Many women and children live in damp, unhealthy homes with little security of tenure, while the Government continues to deny there is a housing crisis.

Family Court

The Family Court's poor record on disregarding and diminishing domestic violence has worsened. In 2013 the Government abolished the clauses in the law which prioritised the safety of children over the father having care of his children. At the same time the Government favoured mediation as the main method of disputes resolution and failed to adequately protect women who have been abused from being further abused in the mediation process. The Family Court judges still use the concept of parental alienation, despite the fact that it has been thoroughly discredited internationally.

Gender gap and equal pay

Women make up only a third of MPs, and Aotearoa is 28th out of 36 countries for women in senior business roles.

The gender pay gap continues to fluctuate between 11 and 14 per cent. For Māori, Pasifika and disabled women, the statistics are even worse. Māori women earn only 76 per cent of the amount paid to Pākehā men, and for Pasifika women the figure is 69 per cent. Kiwi women on average earn \$600,000 less in our lifetimes than our male counterparts.

Although the Government has endorsed equal pay principles and recently settled the caregiver, Kristine Bartlett's claim, the Equal Pay Bill they recently released would prevent many claims from succeeding (see article Equal Pay Bill Deeply Flawed on the back page).

Women on benefits

Benefit levels are still set so low it is not possible for beneficiaries to actually live on what they are paid. This particularly affects single mothers and their children, who often suffer from the toxic stress caused by extreme economic hardship. Single mothers on benefits are hounded by WINZ to enter paid work regardless of the impact that might have on their children. The Government has also refused to eliminate sanctions which punish mothers unable to name in law the fathers of their children by taking between \$22 and \$28 a week out of their already meagre benefits.

Women losing out

Women are over represented among the poor. Since people on lower incomes spend a greater proportion of their income on essentials, the skyrocketing cost of housing in places like Auckland has hit low income women hard. A failure to address the housing crisis, gender pay gap, rape culture, low wages and chronic underfunding of social services makes many women even more vulnerable today than in 2008. ■

*Photo above: Take Back the Night demonstration August 2015.
Photo by Leah Foxcroft*

First Pay Equity Deal Welcomed

On 18 April the Government made the long-awaited announcement that it would provide money to settle caregiver Kristine Bartlett's historic pay equity claim. The settlement will be phased in gradually over five years, and will increase pay for the overwhelmingly female workers in aged residential care, home support and disability services.

It is a huge win and was only possible because of the support caregivers gave and received from their union, E tū.

Female-dominated occupations have suffered very low pay for hundreds of years, with Ms Bartlett being paid only \$16 an hour despite her decades of experience.

The 55,000 workers covered by the agreement will receive a total of \$500 million extra a year once the settlement is fully implemented. However, there is no back pay to redress the decades of injustice suffered by the claimants. ■



"I've worked alongside people who I could tell were struggling. They come to work without food. They walk in the rain because they have no bus fare. All their money goes on rent.

This settlement will be a life changer!"

Kristine Bartlett
Equal pay hero



Auckland Women's Centre presents

Wonder Woman



Spot prizes for everyone dressed as me!

Please bring \$5 for the raffle!

Thursday 1 June 2017
Reading Cinema, Lynnmall
Doors open at 7pm. 7:30pm Screening
Tickets \$20 from Eventfinda

All proceeds go towards saving our Women's Support Services



THE AUCKLAND WOMEN'S CENTRE PRESENTS



FEMINISTS ARE FUNNY

A Night of Fabulous, Feminist Fundraising and Comedy!
Starring Michele A'Court and Friends

Q THEATRE | 18 JUNE 2017 | 7PM | TICKETS \$45* *Service fees apply
www.qtheatre.co.nz | 09 309 9771305 | Queen Street | Auckland

Equal Pay Bill Deeply Flawed

The National Party's Employment (Pay Equity and Equal Pay) bill leaves three crucial issues to be addressed.

1. Limits on job comparators

First, it completely side-lines the right recently confirmed by the courts for claimants to look outside of their own industry for a comparable job.

If Kristine Bartlett were to lodge her equal pay claim under this bill, she would have to find a comparator in the aged care sector - which is poorly paid across the board due to gender discrimination.

Kristine's Employment Court and Appeal Court judgments were clear on the risk that male work in female dominated sectors might also be undervalued. Ignoring this, the bill proposes limiting claimants to comparators in their own sector.

The proposed bill also extinguishes the right to backpay for pay equity claims only, which is surely discriminatory. It is important to make sure there are no barriers put in the way of proper and full consideration of pay equity claims.



2. Complaints-based system

Secondly, it is a complaints-based system for dealing with equal pay claims. This requires individual women or their union to gather historical and labour market evidence and make a claim directly to their employer, who decides whether it has merit or not. If their employer agrees, they then begin to bargain about how much equity she can have!

It would be preferable to legislate for a positive duty on employers to review their wage systems and ensure their women employees are paid a gender neutral rate for their skills, responsibilities, experiences, effort and conditions of work.

3. No pay transparency

Thirdly, Aotearoa needs transparency about pay. Employers are able to continue to pay men more because it is difficult to obtain specific information about what people are paid.

Green MP Jan Logie has drafted a private member's bill to address this: the Equal Pay Amendment Bill would allow employees to ask for aggregated information about pay rates in their workplaces; and would require employers to include gender when recording information. That data would be given to the Department of Labour for publication in aggregated form.

\$600,000 less!

A further issue is that high income earners continue to be paid many times the incomes of those on low wages, and people with capital and many assets pay little or no tax while the lowest-paid pay tax on all their earnings.

The Human Rights Commission has calculated that women on average earn \$600,000 less than our male counterparts over our lifetimes. ■

Auckland Women's Centre



Contact & Services

Contact us

09 376 3227 x 0
info@womens.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
- + SKIP Single Mums Positive Parenting Project
- + Community Events
- + Counselling
- + LGBT support
- + Low Cost Massage
- + Self Defence Classes
- + Opportunities to talk and support feminism
- + Diversity Forums
- + Young Women's Youth Development Projects