



State Services Commission & Ministry for Women

IMPACT WINNER



[WATCH
VIDEO](#)

THE STORY

The Public Service's Gender Pay Taskforce has brought together state-sector leaders, employees and unions to tackle the gender pay gap and achieve fairer workplaces for women – and its collaborative approach seems to be working.

Driven by a belief that a diverse and inclusive workforce will deliver better outcomes for New Zealanders, the State Services Commission and the Ministry for Women established the taskforce to both lead a gender pay gap action plan covering more than 52,000 employees of 34 Public Service agencies, and help resolve pay equity claims covering approximately 346,000 workers in the state sector.

“In 2020 there shouldn't be discrimination or bias in pay, employment or career progression – but there is,” says taskforce manager Alex Chadwick.

The taskforce works to address the workplace drivers of the gender pay gap, which is grounded in deeply held societal attitudes about men's and women's work and its respective value. These attitudes translate into workplace practices and contribute to poorer pay and career progression for women, particularly those who face both ethnic and gender bias.

Launched in 2018, the action plan focuses on equal pay, flexible-work-by-default, addressing bias and discrimination in all human resources systems and policies, and gender-balanced leadership.

The taskforce's pay equity work supports parties to pay equity claims to address historical sex-based discrimination in pay in female-dominated occupations in the state sector.

The taskforce operates collaboratively, with the pay-gap action plan jointly “owned” by the government, Public Service chief executives and the Public Service Association (PSA).

“Joint ownership provides a solid base of collective commitment,” says Alex, “increasing the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes, and strengthening monitoring and accountability.”

The taskforce partners with the PSA to create guidance material, deliver workshops, and monitor progress.

And it collaborates with state-sector unions and employers to create tools for progressing and resolving pay-equity claims.

A 1.7 percentage-point drop in the Public Service gender pay gap between 2018 and 2019 is seen as the greatest measure of the taskforce’s impact. It is the largest annual decrease since 2002.

Half of Public Service agencies are now led by women and the target of a 50:50 gender balance in the top three leadership tiers has been met.

Two pay equity claims were settled in 2018: around 330 Ministry of Education Support Workers received an average correction of 27 per cent in their hourly rates; and more than 1300 Oranga Tamariki Social Workers received an average salary correction of 30.6 per cent over two years. A pay equity settlement recently ratified by teacher aides would deliver between 19 and 30 per cent pay corrections to more than 22,000 workers, and further claims are underway.

Commissioner and Chief Executive of Inland Revenue Naomi Ferguson is among the state-sector leaders who have seen the impact of the taskforce. “The Taskforce’s work to eliminate the gender pay gap has put us on the road to our ‘new normal’ in the Public Service,” she says.

Among workers benefiting from the taskforce’s efforts, the response is also positive.

At Immigration New Zealand, Chief Investigator Joanne Hacking tells of how smoothly negotiations progressed over her starting salary and flexible working arrangements when moving to a new role. “I attribute that to the work of the taskforce,” she says.

At the Ministry of Primary Industries, an agency that takes a flexible-by-default approach, Principal Advisor Peggy Koutsos says that without having the ability to work flexibly she probably wouldn’t have been able to progress her career while raising her children the way she wants to. “I think the gender pay gap action plan has really lifted the profile of flexible working.” Alex says the action plan aims for the Public Service to model behaviour that can be normalised more widely. “We hope that shining a light on our progress will generate momentum in the state and private sectors on gender equality and create fairer workplaces for women.”

“We hope that shining a light on our progress will generate momentum in the state and private sectors on gender equality and create fairer workplaces for women.”

THE CHALLENGE

The Public Service had a gender pay gap and a raft of pay equity claims that needed addressing.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- A taskforce was established to lead a gender pay gap action plan and help resolve pay equity claims.
- It operates collaboratively, with an action plan jointly “owned” by the government, chief executives and the PSA.
- It partners with the PSA to create guidance material, deliver workshops, and monitor progress.
- It works with state-sector unions and employers to create tools for progressing and resolving pay equity claims.
- Engaging with Māori and Pacific women has helped it counter gender and ethnic biases.
- Agencies are required to collaborate with employees and unions to develop their own gender pay gap action plans.



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- The Public Service gender pay gap is down 1.7 percentage points between 2018 and 2019 (to 10.5 per cent). This is lowest level since measurement began in 2000.
- Twenty-three Public Service agencies reduced their gender pay gaps between 2018 and 2019.
- Half of Public Service agencies are now led by women.
- Twenty-three agencies are piloting flexible-by-default approaches.
- Two pay equity claims were settled in 2018, with others in the pipeline.

KEY LEARNING

Collaboration across a sector, collective commitment and a clear plan of action can deliver change more effectively than a piecemeal approach.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

Visit diversityworks.nz or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)