

# WALKING THE TALK



■ Department of Labour

## → THE AGENCY

The Department of Labour's primary role is to improve the performance of the labour market and through this strengthen the economy and increase the standard of living for those in New Zealand by:

- Supporting employers and employees to create safe, fair and rewarding workplaces
- Supporting regions and industries and employers to develop a skilled, innovative and productive workforce
- Researching opportunities to develop the workforce and workplaces
- Developing our international connections by assisting the flow of people to New Zealand.

### **The Department's staff demographics:**

In January 2006 the Department had a variety of job roles carried out by 1666 staff in over 40 onshore locations. There were 982 females and 684 males on the staff: 59% of the Department's staff were women and 45% of managers are women. Both of these statistics are comparable with the Public Sector.

Some of the male dominated roles were Compliance Officers, Labour Inspectors, Branch Managers, Solicitors, Health and Safety Inspectors (99 male, 31 female)

Some of the female dominated roles were Analyst (42 female, 16 male) Policy staff (21 female, 6 male) Support Officers (60 female, 10 male) Information Officers (50 female, 9 male). Half of the Department's staff belonged to the Public Service Association (PSA).



## ⇒ PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The Department was one of the first eleven Public Service organisations that agreed to do reviews during the 2006/07 year. The pay and employment equity review committee was set up in January 2006 and worked to the end of July 2006.

The pay and employment equity review committee assessed the Department of Labour's success in providing pay and employment equity against the following three questions (Equity Indicators):

- Do women and men have an equitable share of rewards?
- Do women and men participate equitably in the all areas of the Department?
- Are women and men treated with respect and fairness?

The committee analysed the Department's human resource practices and data in relation to its 1666 permanent and fixed term New Zealand employed staff to identify any pay and employment equity issues.



## CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

- Throughout the process, there was strong committee leadership in taking the review out to staff.
- There was strong commitment from the Secretary of Labour and senior management.
- Existing partnership with the PSA strengthened the review, especially PSA representation on the review committee.
- The committee had gender, occupational and regional representation.
- Having a communications person attend committee meetings was invaluable in being able to communicate to staff after each meeting.
- Having a facilitator for each meeting freed up the project manager to manage the overall process.
- The data gathering both quantitative and qualitative was seen as important to informing current and future trends.
- For the data gathering, staff were able to provide stories in a variety of ways.
- The focus group methodology provided the committee with stories of staff experiences and perceptions that enriched the review and assisted the committee to prioritise its recommendations.
- The investigation process was so thorough that it disproved and further refined issues.
- Many of the findings were able to feed immediately into existing human resource initiatives underway or projects that were about to start.
- The review process materials were tested and proved to be extremely useful.
- The progress made on implementing the response plan a year later.



## REVIEW PROCESS

### Getting Started

Before the committee was formed, a project manager was seconded from the human resources team. One of the project manager's first tasks was to scope the project and identify the necessary skills and makeup for a committee. The committee was then formed from managers and staff who volunteered to take part.

### Establishing a Committee

The review committee had representatives from four of the five Departmental workgroups. Both manager and staff representatives from the North and South Islands and female and male members were represented as well as PSA staff delegates. An external facilitator was hired to lead the meetings to free the project manager up to lead the project.

*“When we called for applicants for the review committee, we got more staff than we needed. These extra staff were able to help us with the data analysis. Everyone was interested and committed to doing it.”*

COMMITTEE MEMBER

The committee first met in January 2006 for training and familiarisation. They then met seven times over the next six months to complete the review and develop a response plan for consideration by the Department's Strategic Leadership Team.

### The Review Process

The Pay and Employment Equity Unit training introduced the review committee to the workbook Working Towards Pay and Employment Equity for Women. Although this is an adaptable process guide, the committee determined that it would follow the six-step review process recommended by the Pay and Employment Equity Unit:

Step one – Decide on important gender issues to investigate

Step two – Undertake preliminary analysis

Step three – Carry out follow-up analysis

Step four – Validate

Step five – Prepare review report

Step six – Develop a response plan

“As the workbook had been developed by the Department’s Pay and Employment Equity Unit, the committee was keen to follow the process so it could be given a ‘real life’ test. The workbook was invaluable to us.”

COMMITTEE MEMBER



### Analysing and Prioritising the Data

The review focused on differences based on gender. Statistical information analysed by gender for significant differences between women and men included: 2004 Departmental staff survey, Departmental results from the 2004 State Services Commission Career Progression Survey, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) usage, Accidents and Injuries Summaries and Exit Questionnaires for leavers from Workforce area, the Department’s largest business group, from 2004 to current time.

From this and other information, analysis of roles in to “Male Dominant” (60 percent or more male staff), “Mixed” (40–70% female staff) and “Female Dominant” (70% or more female staff) could be done. From this, initial hypotheses were developed and information gaps were identified.

“The way the review committee worked together – union and DoL staff was a true partnership in action.”

### Engagement with Staff

The strategy set out the objectives of the review, identified target audiences inside and outside the Department, included methods to be used for communicating to the various audiences.

The communications strategy was regularly updated and was given attention at every meeting.

A member of the internal communications team attended each committee meeting. An internal communications strategy was developed by this communications team and agreed by the committee in February 2006.

“After each meeting the communications adviser would say, ‘What are we going to say to staff?’ It kept us focused on the outcome of each meeting. Sometimes we could not say very much as the data results were not finalised but we didn’t want the review to be seen as a secret process.”

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Having a diverse range of people on the committee helped with tailoring the information to staff. As well as staff awareness raising activities, resources were developed for managers to use with their teams.

“The communications strategy guided us to keep managers informed and use multiple channels to encourage manager and staff participation in the review.”

PROJECT MANAGER

### Focus Groups

In order to raise awareness of pay and employment equity and to explore issues raised by the stories and the data, the committee ran a series of 18 focus groups at the end of April 2006 and the beginning of May. Staff from Auckland, Palmerston North, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin attended these focus groups facilitated by review committee members. Those who were unable to attend a focus group were able to participate online – via a questionnaire.

Questions focused on:

- Rewards – at appointment and in relation to progression within the Department
- Participation – knowledge and experience of job opportunities and development within the Department
- Respect and Fairness – experience of fair and respectful treatment within the Department.

“*The focus groups were great for producing examples of staff’s experiences, which might indicate support for the gender equity issues we had identified through the data analysis.*” COMMITTEE MEMBER

### Validating the Results

Step four of the review process involves validating the results of the data gathered to date. This process was useful in reinforcing the issues identified and highlighted any areas where further investigation might be necessary.

“*The six-step review process was also validated and conclusively demonstrated that an organisation can get great results from putting it into practice.*”

COMMITTEE MEMBER

“*As part of the validation process, we had a further focus group with staff and internal stakeholders. We weren’t sure what to expect but the feedback reinforced the review’s findings which was great.*”

COMMITTEE MEMBER

## ➔ KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONS

The findings of the Department’s review committee were presented under three themes: rewards, participation and respect and fairness.

### Reward

Overall, 70% of those working in job roles where a pay equity ratio can be calculated had pay equity. Nevertheless twice as many women as men (F: 460 and M: 206) were in roles where the median salary is below the Department’s median salary of \$48,894.

There were gender pay gaps for women in the 40–49 year age group, for women with 3–5 years service and women with 10+ years service. Resignation rates of women with 3–5 years service

(19%) was higher than for all other length of service groups and exceeded the comparable figure for the Public Sector (14%).

### Outcome sought:

- Ensure that reference to gender equity appears in policies and processes as appropriate
- Review human resources policies and processes for statement of benefits and open, fair and transparent processes that provide for reasons in writing for adverse decisions (e.g. on part-time work)
- Support managers by developing general resource to raise awareness about pay and employment equity and the benefits that can be used with staff.
- Ensure any residual historical pay inequity is eliminated following the bedding in of the Remuneration Framework by providing a process whereby staff can request that salary differences are tested and remedied for past effects of any gender bias in job sizing, appointment salary and or lack of progression.

### Participation

Gender equity in participation implies that women and men are employed equitably in roles across the Department. At the time of the review 59% of the Department’s permanent and temporary onshore staff were women. This is the same percentage as for the Public Sector at 30 June 2005. Around half the Department’s staff work in nine “mixed” roles (between 40–70% of the staff are women). At the time of this review, there were 244 managers in the Department of whom 45% were women. This is comparable with the wider public service where 47% of managers were women.





#### Outcomes sought:

- A new Departmental secondment policy, which draws attention to the role that secondments can play in developing capabilities, especially for employees in narrow roles.
- Development of web-based information on career development, whereby employees and their managers can access organisation charts, job descriptions, capability information and links to job interest tools.
- Development of an intranet resource to assist staff assess the transferability of capabilities around the department; encourage managers to provide appropriate capability development opportunities for staff in processing roles.

#### Respect and Fairness

The 2004 SSC Career Progression Survey indicated that more women than men rated the Department as poor in terms of support from their immediate manager.

Half the men but a third of the women attending the focus groups felt that they were treated with respect and fairness. The primary reason given by women for feeling this way was managers' failure to deal with issues they had raised. These included matters to do with pay, progression, part-time work and other flexibility.

#### Outcomes sought:

- More transparent policies and supporting guidelines on how bias can inadvertently creep in (e.g. in recruitment, job sizing, performance assessment).
- Develop guidelines in the new recruitment policy to help managers manage a fair negotiation process and candidates to negotiate a fair package.

- Training for managers around the critical period (3-5 years of service) when those whose career aspirations are not being met will leave.
- Develop the policy, guidelines and resources for employees with caring responsibilities to request alternative working arrangements.

#### Differences arising from the Jobs

The Department's existing job evaluation existing product needs to be tested against the NZ Gender Inclusive Job Evaluation Standard; and the Department's job evaluation committee members trained to identify and address gender issues.

#### Outcomes sought:

- Trained job evaluation committee members who understand how gender bias can creep into job evaluation
- Resources to help managers write job descriptions that accurately describe the accountabilities and avoid words that have gendered connotations.

#### ➔ KEY LEARNINGS AND CHALLENGES

“ Once we knew what the results were, it was comforting to know that many of the solutions to correct issues were already being addressed by current Department projects outside the review. ”

At the end of the review, committee members made the following comments:

“ It is important for any review committee to have a safe and confidential environment so people can say things which are a bit risky. This is what the process demands. Integrity and honesty are key. ”



## ➔ PROGRESS MADE ON IMPLEMENTATING THE RESPONSE PLAN

“ Raising individual managers’ awareness of how gender bias (unconscious or otherwise) impacts on the wider pay and employment equity in the department is the key. ”

PROJECT MANAGER

“ The members came from a variety of backgrounds and this was a strength. It would have been good for the members to have done some work in the review committee training to establish work styles and team skills and how best to make use of these different styles and skills at each part of the process. ”

“ The process identified more skills and ability than was within the committee. If we were doing this review again, it would be good to involve others with these skills at the beginning of the process. ”

In August 2006 the Senior Leadership Team approved a response plan to address issues identified by the pay and employment equity review. An implementation report on what the Department has achieved in the first six months- August to Feb 2007 is available on the full case study.

“ The project manager did the bulk of the work. It was important that this person was from the Department’s human resource team because she had historical knowledge of the organisation but also in returning to her permanent role, she could progress the future actions of the review. ”

## ➔ PAY AND EMPLOYMENT EQUITY REVIEW CASE STUDIES

The Pay and Employment Equity Review case studies series provides future review committees with an opportunity to learn from others experiences. The full case study, further information and resources are available on the website: [www.dol.govt.nz/services/PayAndEmploymentEquity/resources/case-studies.asp](http://www.dol.govt.nz/services/PayAndEmploymentEquity/resources/case-studies.asp)

