
Equal Pay Amendment Bill introduced

On 19 September 2018, on the 125th anniversary of women's suffrage in New Zealand, an Equal Pay Amendment Bill was introduced to Parliament.

The bill was jointly introduced by Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Iain Lees-Galloway, and Acting Minister for Women, Eugenie Sage.

The purpose of the bill is to improve the process for raising and progressing pay equity claims, and to eliminate and prevent discrimination on the basis of sex in the remuneration and employment terms and conditions for work done within female-dominated jobs.

Until now workers have only been able to make claims through the courts, however the bill will allow workers to make a pay claim within New Zealand's existing bargaining framework. By making court action a last resort, the proposed approach will lower the bar for workers initiating a pay equity claim, and use a collaborative process more familiar to unions and businesses. Under the bill, employers, workers and unions will negotiate in good faith, with access to mediation and resolution services available if they are unable to agree.

The bill followed all of the recommendations of the reconvened and original Joint Working Group on Pay Equity Principles, without the hurdles planned by the previous National Government that would have made it much harder to raise pay equity claims.

Ms Sage said of the bill: "It's time that women and men who perform work of the same value are paid the same. We must continue to close the gender pay gap, and this bill is one piece of the puzzle to achieve this."

How will the dispute resolution process work?

The dispute resolution process for pay equity bargaining is the same as that for other employment relations matters. The Employment Mediation Services can assist in collective bargaining between employers and unions. Their support includes assisting parties to unravel difficult issues and develop options, steering parties back into negotiations, and providing coaching and feedback on behavior. When a matter has not been resolved through mediation or other processes, an employee or employer may take the matter on to the Employment Relations Authority or Employment Court.

The bill will be referred to a select committee for review before being set down for a second reading.

Want to know more?

If you have any questions about pay equity or employment issues, please contact our specialist [employment team](#).