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**THE IMPACT OF INSTITUTIONAL - POLITICAL
FACTORS ON EMPLOYMENT EQUITY :
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POLICY FRAMEWORK
IN NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIA**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the question: to what extent does the development of employment equity for women rely upon direct government intervention in the labour market? Particular attention is given to how institutional arrangements and structural factors in New Zealand and Australia affect the achievement of employment equity. These factors include: the system of wage-fixing and negotiation of conditions; the human rights, equal pay and equal employment opportunity legislation; and the agencies that administer these policies. This research takes a comparative public policy approach, using official statistics and documentary analysis.

The extent of employment equity is measured in terms of equal female and male labour force participation; the elimination of the earnings gap; and the reduction of occupational and industrial segregation.

By making a comparison with the Australian situation, this research examines the proposition that the movement towards a deregulated labour market in New Zealand has inhibited the achievement of employment equity for women. The period covered is 1980-94.

The study found that labour force participation rates increased for Australian women over the period 1987-94, while the labour force participation rate for New Zealand women fluctuated during this same period.

Depending on the measure used, the earnings gap in New Zealand has slightly widened, or at the most, remained static since 1987. In Australia, male and female earnings continue to slowly converge. Ordinary time weekly earnings for Australian women and men are 6-8 percent closer together than is the case for their New Zealand counterparts. The total weekly earnings of Australian women and men are also approximately 6 percent closer than between New Zealand women and men.

In Australia, any improvements have occurred under a centralised

bargaining system, reflecting a greater level of government intervention in the labour market. In New Zealand, however, women's position in the labour market has slightly deteriorated over the period of deregulation and lack of employment equity policies. Women's position in the labour market is discussed critically in the light of the institutional and statutory differences of the two countries.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ABS - Australian Bureau of Statistics
- ACCI - Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ACTU - Australian Council of Trade Unions
- AJHR - Appendices to the House of Representatives (New Zealand)
- BCA - Business Council of Australia
- BIL - Brierley Investments Limited
- CAI - Confederation of Australian Industry (now part of ACCI)
- CEDAW - United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms
of Discrimination Against Women
- Census - New Zealand Census of Population and Dwelling
- CTU - Council of Trade Unions (New Zealand)
- ECA - Employment Contracts Act 1991 (New Zealand)
- ECNZ - Electricity Corporation of New Zealand
- EEO - Equal Employment Opportunities
- HLFS - Household Labour Force Survey (New Zealand)
- HRC - Human Rights Commission (New Zealand)
- HREOC - Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
(Australia)
- ILO - International Labour Organisation
- IRC - Industrial Relations Commission (formerly the Australian
Conciliation and Arbitration Commission - ACAC)
- NACEW - National Advisory Council for the Employment of Women
(New Zealand)
- NZEF - New Zealand Employers' Federation
- NZPD - New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
- OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- QES - Quarterly Employment Survey (New Zealand)
- RCSP - Royal Commission on Social Policy (New Zealand)
- SES - Senior Executive Service (Australia)
- SOE - State-Owned Enterprise
- SSC - State Services Commission (New Zealand)