

Women and Award Restructuring

*Strategies for women workers
and workers with family responsibilities*

DISCUSSION PAPER

FAMILY INFORMATION CENTRE
AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES
300 QUEEN STREET
MELBOURNE VIC. 3000

Women's Employment Branch, Department of Labour

The restructuring of awards has the potential to remove some of the structural barriers which disadvantage and discriminate against women workers. Restructuring however, will only achieve this if plans for new awards are determined with serious consideration of issues for women workers. This paper is a contribution to the debate about the best ways to approach award restructuring, focussing on issues of concern to women.

The paper brings together a wide range of opinion and makes practical suggestions for implementing procedures which would bring about the desired changes.

It was prepared by Lynn Beaton of the Women's Employment Branch, Department of Labour. The views expressed in the paper are not necessarily those of the Department nor the Minister.

Produced by Women's Employment Branch, Department of Labour,
Level 10 Nauru House, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne 3000
Telephone (03) 655 6790
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Introduction

In the August 1988 National Wage Case the Decision of the Full Bench called for the provision of a structural efficiency principle. This provides the basis for an opportunity to abolish outmoded work practices, minimise structural inequities, improve the efficiency of the economy and provide much-needed wage rises for workers whose standard of living has fallen in the past period of wage restraint.

'We have decided therefore to provide a structural efficiency principle which will be the key element in a new system of wage fixation. That new principle will provide incentive and scope within the wage fixation system for parties to examine their awards...'

Principles laid down as a guide to the sort of issues that should be looked at by parties involved in restructuring were:

'establishing career paths which provide an incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill formation'

'eliminating impediments to multi-skilling and broadening the range of tasks which a worker may be required to perform'

'creating appropriate relativities between different categories of workers within the award and at enterprise level'

'ensuring that working patterns and arrangements enhance flexibility and meet the competitive requirements of the industry'

'including properly fixed minimum rates for classifications in awards, related appropriately to one another, with any amounts in excess of these properly fixed minimum rates being expressed as supplementary payments'

'updating and/or rationalising the list of respondents to awards'

'addressing any cases where award provisions discriminate against sections of the work-force'.

Although at this stage there are differences in interpretation of the way to effect the structural efficiency principle it has been welcomed by all the parties concerned. Governments, unions and employers have all pointed to the need for Australian industry to be updated and made competitively efficient. The Business Council of Australia indicated the wide scope it saw for the efficiency principle when it said 'If Australia is to benefit fully from the opportunity provided by the recent round of award restructuring, it must be

**Main Issues for
consideration under
Structural Efficiency
Principle**

seen as part of a much broader restructuring agenda, a major challenge to Australian management, and another step towards far reaching change to our industrial relations system'.⁽¹⁾

**'Wide scope.' -
Employers**

The Confederation of Australian Industry expressed their interpretation of the far-reaching potential of the principle when they said: 'It is not an exaggeration to say that the scope of the principle is only limited by the ways in which the productivity and efficiency of particular enterprises or industries can be improved. The principle is not a limiting principle. Nor does the principle suggest that one approach is to be preferred over any other approach.'⁽²⁾

Main priority for ACTU

The ACTU have made award restructuring their main priority, their blueprint for procedure was adopted in principle by the Commission in its February Review, and plans for six major industries are well under way. The Metal Trades Industry Association and the Metal Trade Federated Unions have signed an agreed basic plan for the restructuring of the metal industry. In the decision of the February Review the Commission agreed with the ACTU that the economy suffered hindrance from disparity between awards and said, 'The situation...has been tolerated for too long and it is appropriate that it be corrected at this time. The fundamental purpose of the structural efficiency principle is to modernise awards in the interests of both employees and employers and in the interests of the Australian community.'

The ACTU blueprint recognises the outmoded nature of many awards and welcomes the chance to restructure. 'The existing structure has in many cases its origin in the last century whilst the need is to develop a structure for the next century.'⁽³⁾ Nowhere is this more true than the gender differences found in the workforce which have their basis in a social atmosphere of exaggerated difference and inequality between the sexes. Today we live in a society which strives to offer all its members equality of opportunity and freedom of choice.

The principles are especially important for women workers. As a group they are the most disadvantaged by outmoded workforce structures and attitudes, their work is characterised by inequity in pay and opportunity and they have made an important contribution to the economy over the last twenty years for which they have received little recognition and less recompense.

While the structural efficiency principle has the potential to improve the situation, unless it is handled with sensitivity and detailed awareness of the

issues it also has the potential to further entrench the difficulties women workers and their dependents face. Whilst there has been recognition in the late eighties of the need to improve the conditions of women workers, this is not necessarily accompanied by an understanding of the procedures needed to actualize improvement, or of the interrelation of the issues which influence outcomes.

Most industrial awards have been structured on the assumption that workers are men who have no responsibilities outside the workplace other than to bring home a wage packet. The disadvantage that this causes to women workers is compounded each time changes are made which do not pay due concern to alleviating it.

Award restructuring offers the opportunity to redress this situation. In doing so, two main features of women's employment are raised. Firstly that disadvantage exists at the workplace in the very structure of occupational categories, secondly that the entry of women into the workforce brings with it a need to make provision for workers with family responsibilities.

These changes and their social impact have far-reaching implications for governments and policy makers. Unless they are given the necessary attention, well-meaning initiatives will fall short of effectiveness. Attitudes to both women's social role, and to their labour force participation, still tend to lag behind the reality of the changes and all too often the needs of women workers are overlooked when labour market issues and employment conditions are being considered.

This paper will give a brief outline of the landscape of women's employment and then look closely at the structural efficiency principles and suggest ways they may be used to accommodate necessary changes. Different industries and different occupations will clearly need to address different questions and will require different answers. We offer a general and wide-ranging number of ways this problem may be approached to enable parties involved to select those sections of relevance to them.

**Special needs of
women workers must
be addressed**

1. *Business Review Weekly*, October 1988

2. *CAI Wages, Productivity & Structural Change in Australian Industry*: National Employers' Industrial Council, March 1989.

3. *National Wage Case - ACTU Blueprint for Changing Awards and Agreements*: February, 1989

Profile of Women's Employment

Women's workforce participation is a major contribution to economic growth.

When we raise the issue of women in the workforce we are dealing with one of the greatest changes in Australia since the Second World War. The mass entry of women into the paid workforce has caused a re-evaluation of social relationships at every level and has changed the face of the workplace. In the last twenty years the number of Victorian women in paid employment has almost doubled, their participation rate has increased so that now over half of all women⁽⁴⁾ are in the labour force whilst at the same time that of men has decreased at almost the same rate. Most important of all is that the proportion of the workforce that are women is increasing. They now make up 41.3% of the labour force and if this increase continues at the same rate women will comprise 50% of the labour force early next century. Labour force projections see women forming 44% of the workforce by the year 2000. This participation represents a major contribution to the economic growth of Australia over the last twenty years and we can expect that contribution to increase in the future.⁽⁵⁾

The numbers of women working has changed family life.

Many of the old myths like women's place is in the home, that they are taking men's jobs in the workforce have been dispelled by experience. Although the increase in women's labour force participation has been accompanied by a change in social attitudes to women working, the structure of industry itself is in many ways hostile to the needs women bring with them and which come from the family responsibilities which women have traditionally taken care of. The entry of women into the workforce is more than just a change in industrial forms; it penetrates the social organisation on which the whole society has depended. It has brought changes to domestic arrangements, it has altered the nature of 'family life'. Not only are there more women in the paid workforce than ever before but as individuals they are spending much longer in paid work and less time at home. Now over half of all mothers with dependent children under 14 years are in the workforce. This has brought with it an increase in the participation of men in sharing responsibility for caring for families. The category of workers with family responsibilities is expanding and can no longer be assumed to include only women.

There have been important social, economic and legal developments which have assisted and encouraged women to have a more active role in the workforce. Governments have introduced Equal Opportunity and Sex Discrimination Legislation to outlaw direct discriminatory practices and Affirmative Action Legislation to address indirect gender biases which cause discrimination. They have also launched numerous initiatives to improve

access to a wider range of career options, provided support for women in employment and in training. Unions and business have developed plans and strategies to attempt to break down the disadvantage which faces women in the labour force, to improve their workforce access to a broad range of jobs and to remove impediments to them following and developing a fulfilling career.

However the success of these attempts has been limited by residual structural barriers within industry itself, where many forms of work practice are inherently gender biased. This is compounded by an attitudinal resistance to change which is found in industry, in unions and among individuals. The gender bias in some cases has an historical basis and was built into the industrial arena to protect the interests of male workers who saw their conditions threatened by the introduction of female labour. This was the case with the needs based pay decision given by Justice Higgins in 1907 which allowed rates to be based on that needed by a man to support a wife and family, a woman was considered not to have such commitment and her rates were therefore set at just over half those of a man. This decision was followed by applications made on behalf of male workers to keep women out of many industries. Although no such formal conditions still exist the effect on the workforce still predominates. In other cases barriers exist as the result of an assumption that workers were free of family responsibilities, for example inflexibility of hours to allow parents to attend to education or health needs of their children.

One of the most distinctive features of the labour force is its gender segmentation. Almost all occupations and industries employ disproportionate numbers of either males or females and very rarely are the two employed to work side by side. This segmentation is so rigid that the labour market is often referred to as a 'dual' market. Economists have described the situation in the following terms;

'The primary market is one of stable employment, high levels of skill and wages and good prospects for individual advancement. The secondary market is one of relatively low skills, high labour turnover and low wages.'

⁽⁶⁾

This is defined as being gender specific.

'Women have always been disproportionately represented in the labour force in women's jobs which require low levels of skill, offer below-average prospects for advancement and offer few opportunities to cross over

Structural barriers cause discrimination.

Gender segmentation of workforce reinforces discrimination.

4. The term 'women' refers to females over 15 years.

5. The Labour Force, ABS Catalogue February 1988.

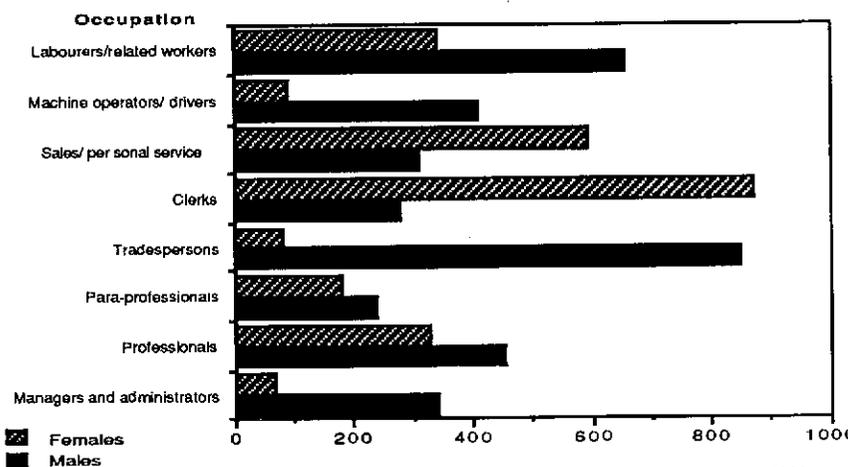
6. The Relevance of Segmented Labour Market Theories, The Australian Experience of the Achievement of Equal Pay for Women, RC Gregory & RC Donca, presented to the Economic Society of Australia & New Zealand at Macquarie University, August/September 1978, p2.

into the better male jobs.'⁽⁷⁾

Women work in a very narrow and rigidly confined group of occupations and the enormous increase of women into the workforce over the last twenty years has hardly changed their concentration in these jobs at all.

Most women work in a narrow range of occupations

Male and Female Employees by Occupation



Source: ABS, Trade Union Members, Australia, August 1988. (Catalogue No. 5325.0)

Much of the disadvantage women face in employment comes from this gender segmentation which has no place in a modern industrial environment. It creates unnecessary resistance to the goals of increased flexibility and the broadening of skill acquisition. The arbitrary division of the workforce prevents the most efficient development of skill according to ability.

The situation is spelt out in the Victorian Government policy document on women's employment; *Victoria - Working for Women*. It says: 'Most working women begin their working lives in one of a narrow range of jobs at the lower status end of occupations. The factors that shape their subsequent employment opportunities are complex, entrenched and inter-related, and include the distribution of domestic and family responsibilities, personnel practices, and attitudes and expectations of the broader community, including women themselves. Without a strategy for change, most women's employment will remain confined to those same narrow, low

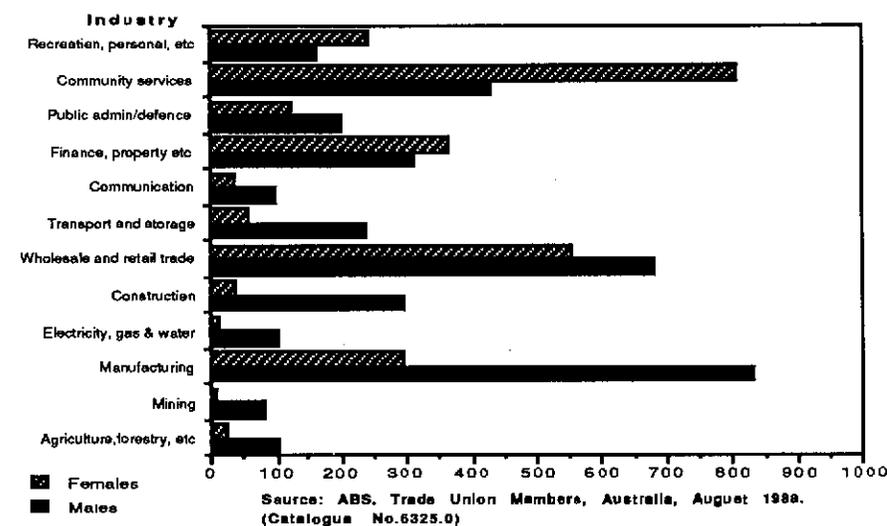
status options where it began.'

'One of the major barriers to improving employment opportunities for women is the content and structure of most low-status jobs.' The document points out that design and orientation of work and training arrangements have confined women to low-status, dead-end jobs, and restricted the benefits to industry of the skills and capacity of nearly half the workforce. 'Removing the barriers to greater utilization of the skills, experience and innovation of women is a prerequisite for meeting the full potential for economic expansion and growth.' In Victoria in February 1989 53.3% of all employed women worked in either clerical or sales occupations.⁽⁸⁾ 70.2% of women work in disproportionately female occupations which comprise only fifteen of the fifty-two ABS minor occupational categories. Australia has the most gender segmented workforce of all OECD countries and despite the rapid influx of women into the workforce the occupational segmentation has remained relatively unaffected.

Women workers confined to low-status jobs.

Australia has the most gender segregated workforce

Male and Female Employees by Industry



Source: ABS, Trade Union Members, Australia, August 1988. (Catalogue No. 5325.0)

The segmentation is manifested in two ways. It is across the workforce in occupational categories but is also found within occupations which are predominantly female and within these occupations women are concentrated in the lower status and lower paid groupings. For example 97.2% of stenographers and typists are women, 75.3% of data processing and machine operators are women, 87.1% of receptionists, telephonists and

The majority of women workers are found in just three occupations.

7. Ibid.

8. Labour Force Estimates - February 1989, ABS Group C Table E26.

messengers are women. These three categories account for over 57% of all women in the major category of clerk. In sales the same is repeated where 66.8% of women are employed as sales assistants, tellers, cashiers and ticket sales persons.⁽⁹⁾

**Part-time work
dominated by women**

As well as the occupational division there is a propensity for women to work part-time. 51.9% of employed women work part-time, while men form 59.8% of the paid workforce they hold almost 70% of full-time jobs.

Eight good reasons for change

1 Women provide the greatest potential for skill expansion in Australian industry, which is denied the resource of their skilled labour while they remain locked into a narrow range of jobs where they have little chance of developing their skill potential. It is extremely inefficient that skill development and career opportunities are divided by gender. There are no longer any valid arguments that women are less capable than men, experience has shown them to be as competent in a broad range of areas to which they have had access. Research shows that women have great capabilities when given the chance and many enterprises who have realised the value of women's work have taken steps to include them at all levels and in all occupational categories.

2 This inefficiency is compounded when we consider the extent to which the number of women in the workforce is increasing. As the number increase and as individual women spend more time in the workforce the wastefulness of their skill potential will weigh more heavily on the Australian economy.

3 Affirmative Action legislation requires all enterprises with over one hundred employees to develop strategies to restructure workplaces removing gender segmentation. It is clearly advantageous for this requirement to be dealt with at the time of restructuring awards when factors which cause barriers can be removed.

4 It is unacceptable to have a section of the workforce which suffers disadvantage merely because of its gender. This is inconsistent with social justice, equal opportunity and affirmative action measures and legislation developed by Government. Furthermore, any inequity suffered by groups of workers creates subjective feelings of injustice which further hampers efficiency and causes demoralisation in the workplace.

5 The increase in the number of women who are sole parents indicates a tendency for the sole economic supporters of children to be women. They need every opportunity to provide for their children equally with male earners. A situation where the children of female bread winners suffer disadvantage is contrary to Government objectives. In August 1988 the mean weekly earnings from employment for female-headed families was \$409.00 whilst that of married couple families which were male-headed was \$680.⁽¹⁰⁾

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Weekly Earnings of Employees*, (Distribution) Australia, August 1988.

- 6** Experience has shown that the disadvantage of women in the workforce is compounded when change takes place unless efforts are made to address the causes of disadvantage. Women tend to be weaker industrially than men, the same factors which have kept them at disadvantage in the workforce have also restricted their union participation so they easily fall behind when gains are made to more militant sections of the workforce.
- 7** There is every indication that in the future employers will need to take on a higher proportion of women workers as the workforce ages and a larger proportion of the population is in retirement. The decline in births since the 1970s is expected to cut the rate of growth in the labour force in half by the year 2000 making competition for first time workers in the 1990s intense. In the US where statistics have been gathered, women, particularly women in the child-bearing years, are expected to provide a key source of new labour and it is reasonable to expect the same will occur in Australia. Restructuring offers an opportunity to upgrade workforce conditions to prepare for this event.
- 8** Workers with family responsibilities are subject to added stress factors. Some common causes may include, worry about imperfect childcare arrangements or sick children, the need to leave work punctually at all times, difficulties to arrive punctually. A work environment which takes account of these problems would alleviate stress and cause increased efficiency. As the number of mothers who are working increase so do the number of fathers who share responsibility for family matters. Therefore it is not only women's efficiency which suffers from the stress of unsatisfactory resolutions to family difficulties, but increasingly men also, although this responsibility still falls largely to women.

Principles under scrutiny

At this point it is useful to consider the principles laid down by the Commission and suggest how they may be used by negotiators to impact on the status of women's employment. In doing so consideration will be given to the fact that industries fall into three major categories as far as the patterns of women's employment are concerned. First are industries which predominantly employ women, second are those which are predominantly employers of men and last those which have both men and women.

Traditional female occupations are low-paid and usually characterized as unskilled or semi-skilled. The skills employed are not formally recognized or accredited. Most training takes place on-the-job and the trainee receives no recognition for the new skills learnt and the trainer gets no remuneration or recognition for teaching.

Whilst one of the general aims of award restructuring is to increase multi-skilling and crossbanding of skills, in traditional female employing industries this is often already the case. The problem as stated above is that the skills are not recognised or acquired through formal training. The best example is clerical work, where workers answer phones and enquiries, keep appointment books, budgets, use a range of technological equipment, have a broad knowledge of computer programmes, edit writing, bookkeep ledgers.

The main problem in the traditional male employing areas is one of access for women. These awards need to be reviewed with the intention of removing any barriers that may exist which deny women access to promotion or employment such as a need to provide changing or washing facilities. At the same time when deciding on training programs, job redesign improving access for women workers can be a feature.

Industries which have a mix of men and women are likely to have a combination of both problems. Women in the industry are unlikely to be in the same occupations as the men, but will most probably be confined in occupations which have all the characteristics of traditional women's occupations. Even if they are in the same occupations they are most likely to be concentrated at the lower end of the hierarchy. An example of this is of primary school teachers, the large majority of whom are women and yet the large majority of school Principals are men.

The following suggestions made will provide issues which can be taken up as award amendments in the restructuring process.

Women's skills are often not recognised.

Access to men's jobs is one answer.

'ESTABLISHING SKILL-RELATED CAREER PATHS WHICH PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR WORKERS TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN SKILL FORMATION'

In traditional women's employment:

List all skills used in each job.

a The development of a career path requires a listing of tasks in order of complexity and skill employment. The difficulty with this is that many of the skills used are unrecognised as acquired skills. Such examples are child care where the skill of nurturing is unrecognised as a workplace skill because it has traditionally been done as part of the unpaid labour of housework. Another example is the skill of communicating especially between conflicting interests. Numerous receptionist jobs for example rely on skills of 'diplomacy'. Nevertheless courses have now been established and this skill is gaining recognition, but it is typical of many of the skills employed by women in their work.

Assess each skill identified.

b The identification of all skills involved in a task needs to be undertaken. Skills need to be assessed. This will involve a skills audit which should be developed with caution as skills audits are likely to rely on an historically determined hierarchy of skills, a hierarchy which is gender biased and which traditionally has undervalued the skills of women. Job evaluation systems have also been predominately gender biased, for example they may reward the use of muscle power, but not the employment of dexterity. Credit may be given for the ability to drive a vehicle but not for the ability to care for the sick.

Ensure skills assessment is free of gender bias.

c The first step may well be to develop a suitable skills audit. The award restructuring process is going to be a long one, the important thing is to build in processes to ensure upgrading and reclassification as skills are identified. Such development may take some time, and it is important that it is done thoroughly.

Wide consultation will increase accuracy.

d Because we are dealing with defining skills which have previously been taken for granted wide consultation will be necessary to establish what skills are used. This will involve consultation with workers themselves who have the greatest familiarity with the tasks they perform and the skills they use. However workers may need some training to help them to isolate and enumerate their skills. Some unions are beginning this work with some success, for example the metals trades and the hospitality unions.

e Once the skills have been identified, they need to be regulated and to receive formal recognition. To do this assessment procedures need to be developed both to assess the progress made by workers in training schemes and to assess the existing skills of workers under the award. Some forms of assessment will be more applicable than others, but in assessing existing skills the use of a performance based assessment provides proof of ability to do a task without need to establish training procedures.

Establish skill assessment procedures.

f The assessment and accreditation of skills is also necessary to provide skill portability to enable workers to follow a career path across enterprises. For women, confined in low-paid occupations with little career development potential, the more portable the skills the more the gender segmentation could be overcome.

Develop consistent structures for accreditation and recognition of skills.

g The situation for women workers would be considerably improved if skills could be transported across industries and occupations. Achieving consistency between awards with respect to the training requirements for particular levels is the first step in achieving greater transferability of skills between sectors. The issue is achieving consistency in the accreditation of training courses, and therefore minimal upgrading of training upon transfer between industries. The focus should be on the training rather than the skills. For example a clerk may have many skills in common with a printer. Greater flexibility would be created if the training in both industries was consistent and could be transferred from one to the other. This would help to break down gender segmentation and provide a wider range of career paths for workers in both industries.

Design for the widest possible portability.

In traditional male employment:

Efforts need to be made to provide access for women to these industries. Here it is not so much a question of disadvantage but of non-starting. It is a question of overcoming social biases which may inhibit women's entry. In terms of award conditions this would involve clauses designed to ensure the promotion of women into jobs, and once employed, equity of access to career development procedures.

Affirmative action is part of award restructuring.

In mixed industries:

Two situations are involved here:

1 Industries where men and women share occupations: Here it is largely a question of affirmative action measures to make sure that

women have equal access to career paths and that the work they do receives equal recognition.

To ensure that award amendments facilitate this equity, Equal Employment Committees where they exist should be involved in the negotiations of changes to awards.

b Industries where men and women have different occupations:

These industries should offer the greatest opportunity for women to break out of their traditional occupations. If this is to happen their occupations and the skills they employ will need to be incorporated as part of an overall career path which involves all occupations and classifications in the industry. Such developments need to take account of differences in the male and female workforce apart from gender, for example the age of workers coming into the industry, the amount of family and domestic responsibility they have and the flexibility of training and assessment that would be required to provide equity.

'ELIMINATING IMPEDIMENTS TO MULTI-SKILLING AT APPROPRIATE LEVELS AND BROADENING THE RANGE OF TASKS WHICH A WORKER MAY BE REQUIRED TO PERFORM'

Women's occupations often already involve elements of multi-skilling, for example clerical work, where the problem is that neither the skills nor the broad range of tasks are recognised or rewarded. Clerical work is typical of much women's work, although it often involves complex skills which have been developed in training course, these courses are not recognised or accredited. Traditional women's skills are rarely gained in any formal training situation, they are skills acquired by experience on or off the job. This leaves them unrecognised and therefore devalued. For women the problem is not 'eliminating impediments to multi-skilling' it is recognition for the skills used at work. The Commercial Clerks Award for example currently has only three classifications despite the broad range of skills involved. In this situation a career path will only exist if the number of classifications are increased and flexibility across classifications as well as the development of a career path is incorporated. In other circumstances whole work processes have been broken down in a Taylorist fashion into numerous processes each performed by different workers separately and each requiring a narrow range of skill which offers no possibility for career advancement.

The removal of impediments to multi-skilling in the trades area could advantage women working in industries employing tradeworkers as it could

Women's skills need to be incorporated into career path.

Increase job flexibility with job redesign

increase their access to jobs where little or none existed. But this will only be realised if other measures are taken to ensure their entry into the jobs area and their access to the necessary training structures.

'CREATING APPROPRIATE RELATIVITIES BETWEEN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF WORKERS WITHIN THE AWARD AND AT ENTERPRISE LEVEL'

The gender segmentation of the workforce is so rigid that the wages and conditions of women workers are relative only to each other and not to those of male workers. In this way the depression of women's wages continues. Women's wages in traditional women's occupations were relatively unaffected by the Equal Pay Legislation of 1972-74. Equal Pay was awarded for 'work of equal value' and that was interpreted in the narrowest way to mean only identical work. In some cases women were removed from classifications which included male clerical or administrative workers to separate their work and prevent them receiving the increased 'male' rate. An historical review of the rates compared to the traditional benchmark of the fitter may be useful in assessing the progression of the relative wages and a review of what happened at the time of Equal Pay legislation may help. But the major task is the development of appropriate relativities which incorporate gender-free measures of skill, and work-value which could be used in both male and female environments.

If accurate relativities were established this in itself would go some way toward breaking down the gender segmentation of the workforce. If women's work were revalued and there was no inherent difference in the pay rates of men's work and women's work there would be no incentive for men to remain in the industries they currently dominate, it would facilitate a breakdown of disproportionate gender components on all industries and occupations. In some ways it is as important that men are encouraged into women's occupations as well as women into men's occupations.

'ENSURING THAT WORKING PATTERNS AND ARRANGEMENTS ENHANCE FLEXIBILITY AND THE EFFICIENCY OF THE INDUSTRY'

Increasing the flexibility of work patterns and arrangements is a necessary part of developing a workforce which provides for the needs of workers with family responsibilities would include:

- a The work patterns of women are different from those of men when they leave the workforce to have children. To decrease the hindrance caused by these interruptions to career development and access to career paths,

Equal pay narrowly interpreted for many women's jobs, and they lost relativity.

'Women's work' should be valued.

Flexible work time aids continuity of employment and protects experience gained.

**Language skills
necessary for further
training**

the necessary skills acquisition must take account of it. Women must be able to pick up their careers where they left off without barriers. This involves ensuring the utmost skill portability over time and may involve revision or short update courses. These measures in turn can only increase the efficiency of industry for it would ensure continued access to the skill of women workers often gained over years of work and with considerable training;

- b consideration of hours of work should include flexible options such as permanent part-time work, job sharing with full pro-rata benefits and flexitime. At different times the demands of family responsibilities on workers make it desirable to be able to adjust the number of hours worked without loss of benefits. Workers need to be able to move from full-time to part-time and back to full-time. This may prevent high staff turnover in some industries with inflexible working patterns;
- c leave provisions to prevent discrimination against workers with family responsibilities and to enhance flexibility would include; maternity leave provisions including paid maternity leave, paternity leave, leave for either parent to attend the education needs of children or to care for sick dependents; parental leave;
- d women workers from non-english speaking backgrounds may require english training if they are to benefit from other courses being offered. This is not just a question of basic language skills to carry out the tasks which have been learned, but enough english to undertake further training to develop career opportunities. The restructured awards will place more emphasis on training and qualifications than in the past and language becomes vital to ensuring that workers from non-english speaking backgrounds do not suffer any discrimination. In Victoria in June 1988 16.6% of employed women are in this category.⁽¹¹⁾

'INCLUDING PROPERLY FIXED MINIMUM RATES FOR CLASSIFICATIONS IN AWARDS, RELATED APPROPRIATELY TO ONE ANOTHER, WITH ANY AMOUNTS IN EXCESS OF THESE PROPERLY FIXED MINIMUM RATES BEING EXPRESSED AS SUPPLEMENTARY PAYMENTS'

The minimum rate for jobs in areas of traditional women's employment needs to be assessed in relation to those fixed in male occupations. Women are much more likely to work under minimum rates awards and are much less likely to get any over award payments.

11. Ibid.

'ADDRESSING ANY CASES WHERE AWARD PROVISIONS DISCRIMINATE AGAINST SECTIONS OF THE WORKFORCE'

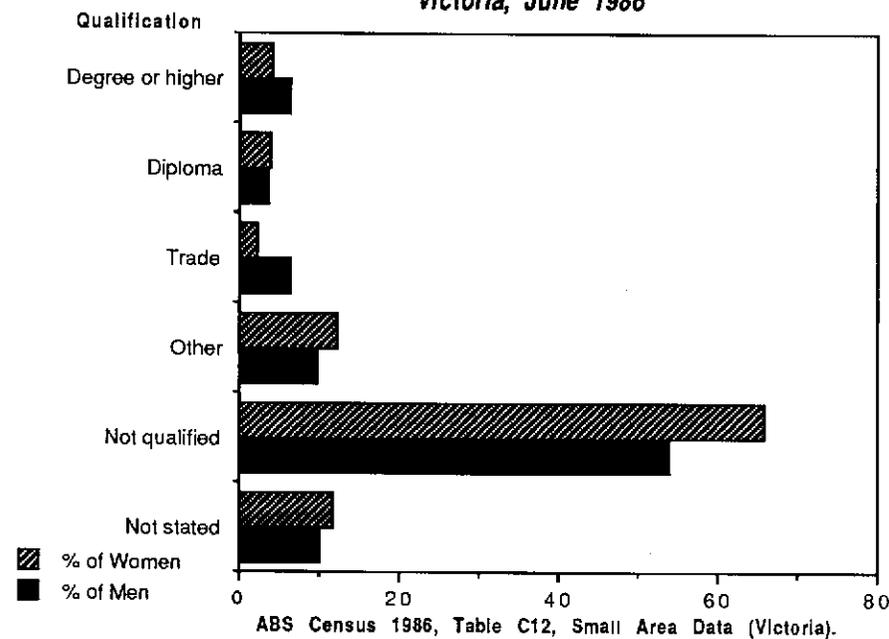
To assist in the removal of any discriminatory clauses in awards, the Department of Labour has produced a booklet listing all discriminatory clauses in Victorian awards. This is an opportune time to ensure all discriminatory references are removed. Federal awards also need to be monitored for sexist language, gender specific clauses or other discriminatory references.

What are the training needs?

The Federal Minister for Employment Education & Training, Mr. Dawkins makes it clear in the Government's April 1989 statement that reform of training structures and programs are vital at this time of changing demands. This relates directly to changes demanded by award restructuring and the greater emphasis put on skill acquisition and competence than on time served.

This is especially relevant to the female workforce whose need for training and retraining is pivotal to the success of measures designed to alleviate their disadvantage. The provision of access to broader career options for workers and the development of the required skill base for industry will hang on the success and appropriateness of training schemes. Training is also one of the factors that distinguishes female employment from male employment. That is, most traditional male occupations involve formal, accredited training and most traditional female occupations do not, and are therefore seen to be unskilled or semi-skilled.

Table 1. Qualifications by Gender (Population Aged 15 and Over) Victoria, June 1986

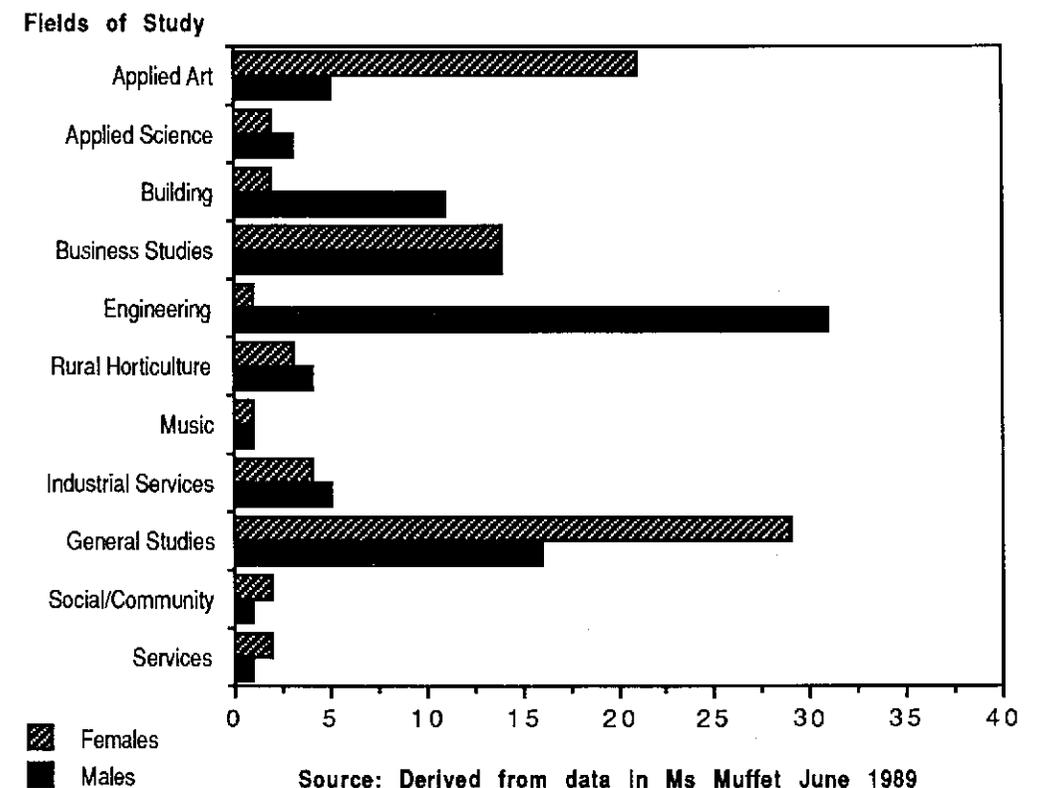


Because training is so pivotal to the effectiveness of award restructuring and the increased access that it will give to workers now in jobs without any career paths, we will here discuss the training needs for women. Unless training is made available, and unless women are encouraged to take full advantage of the openings award restructuring brings, little will be gained.

The figures in table 1 give a picture of the differences between male and female qualifications, and the contrast is even sharper if the categories are further broken down, for example the career oriented degree courses attract mainly males and in apprenticeships half of all women apprentices are in hairdressing.

The distribution of university students is shown by the figures in *Victoria - Working for Women*. Of all enrollments at Victorian Universities in 1986 women comprised just over 50% an increase of 12 percentage points from the 1976 figure of 38%. 62.6% of women were enrolled in Arts and Education compared to 33.4% of men. Women were 43% of all enrollments in Science, Economics and Commerce they are 36.5% of all enrollments and in Engineering they are only 10.2%. In TAFE the same trends are revealed. Women comprise 39.8% of TAFE students but only 6.1% of these are undertaking apprenticeship courses as compared to 28.9% of males.

Comparison of Female:Male Participation in Fields of Study 1987



To broaden the range of skills

A barrier to women undertaking retraining is a pervasive view that it is not necessary to train women. Thus:

- a Courses and training programs need to be widely publicised. They need to be designed to attract women and to make them feel that the particular course will cater to their needs;
- b Advertising and educative material encouraging women into courses can be backed-up by special plans, targets and other strategies to ensure women have the access they require;
- c Trainers need educating also; when courses are offered they must contain measures of support for women participants. Course structure and course presentation must be reviewed to ensure there are no elements which would discourage women or cause them disadvantage. Some of the pilot schemes to encourage girls into apprenticeships have encountered problems because the training environment has been hostile to the young women recruits;
- d Employers providing in-house training may need to be alerted to these issues. Information about courses must be made available to women and they must be encouraged to attend. Employers must also be encouraged to target a wide range of courses to women employees. Employers who are alert to the career potential and skills base of their male employees or young recruits may not recognise the career potential of mature women returning to work;
- e Many married women returning to the workforce after having children see themselves as providing supplementary income for a limited time, they see their jobs as temporary and they are often not career oriented. Employers often view them in the same way, yet it is increasingly the case that women returning to work stay in the workforce for an increasing period, and that in the 45-54 age group 58.8% of women are still participating in the labour force;⁽¹²⁾
- f If training were more accessible to women it would change their attitudes and attachment to their work. Statistics show that women with higher qualifications and more highly paid jobs stay in the workforce longer. The most satisfying work, both in terms of quality of work and pay and conditions, the greater will be the incentive for increased labour force participation and increased skill development.

12. ABS, *The Labour Force, Vict.*
Cal. 6201.2 (November 1988)

The interrupted patterns of women's working lives with a decreased participation rate in the main child bearing age range of 25-34, require special consideration in developing training schemes, recent figures also confirm that women are staying in the workforce for longer and longer. As stated in the Victorian Government policy document, *Victoria - Working for Women*:

'The major change in women's employment is occurring in the length of time women leave the workforce and the nature of the employment to which they return. The stereotypical view of women remaining in full-time employment only until the birth of the first child is not supported by the statistical profile of working women.'

'Women are having fewer children, are leaving the workforce for shorter periods and are returning to work intermittently between children.'

To overcome structural differences in the workforce, training schemes must strive to accommodate women who are returning to the workforce as adults and adults with family responsibilities. Issues which must be considered include:

- a Hours of training must not provide a barrier to participation. Training which is out-of-work hours is likely to be difficult for many women and evening classes are often not an option;
- b There needs to be an increase in the flexibility of training schemes offered, for example many skills can be self-taught and these could be adequately assessed with performance based testing;
- c Age restrictions on training in federal awards are a significant barrier to women returning to work and must be removed;
- d Men with trade training have a high rate of attrition, their training often forms the basis for further career development for which the trade training is not necessary in a practical sense. Courses must be developed and offered which give women access to the positions which have trade training as a formal or informal prerequisite but for which it is not vital in practice;
- e The duration of many training courses needs to be reviewed if the participants are to include mature women. Most initial training including apprenticeship caters to young school leavers, and is inappropriate for women who have some work experience. Courses could be condensed for mature participants and other work experience credited;

- f Many women returning to the workforce may have several skills which have been acquired in a variety of ways. It is desirable that some method to accredit these skills as parts of new courses be introduced to avoid unnecessary retraining and to maximise skill development which already exists. Competency-based assessment would achieve this end;
- g The remuneration for most trainees and apprentices is low and for many trainees there is no wage. This is often because of assumptions that participants are young and wages are set relative to youth wages which are often inappropriate for mature age students. This further disadvantages women when we consider that in April 1988 57% of married women who left the labour force intended to return.⁽¹³⁾
- h To ensure that training is equitably spread, all workers in an enterprise need be offered equal time for training;
- i On-the-job training which is taking place needs to be recognised and accredited and the trainers to receive a rate for training which recognises the skill involved.

13. ABS, 'Persons Who Have Left The Labour Force, Australia, Cat. No. 6267.0, April 1988

Checklist

Principle 1 Establishing Career Paths

Assess Skills

- Identify skills
 - hold training designed to teach identification of skills
 - consult with workers
 - establish committees in each area

Accredit skills

- Evaluation of skills
 - ensure that no gender bias exists in skill measures
 - competency based assessment

Training Facilities

- Accessibility
 - provision of child care
 - no prohibitive cost
 - convenient location
 - ensure gender equality in selection of trainees
 - suitable course content

Principle 2 Eliminating Impediments to multi-skilling

Redesign jobs

- establish skills in each task
 - accrediting skills
 - developing order of skills which range across occupations
 - arranging cross-over of tasks
 - arrange tasks to include continuity of work

Recognition of skills

Principle 3 Establish Relativities with other Occupations

- develop job evaluation
- choose occupations of similar worth

Principle 4 Working patterns and increased flexibility

- Develop work patterns which take account of the demands of family responsibility
 - Ensure easy and efficient return after work interruptions
 - Provide access to permanent part-time work
 - Ensure leave provisions are appropriate
 - Provide English language classes where necessary

Principle 5 Properly adjusted minimum rates

- Ensure that minimum rates are fixed which represent the true value of work

Principle 6 Addressing discriminatory clauses

- Ensure that no discriminatory clauses remain in awards
- Look for indirect discrimination
- Ensure that where amenities are required they exist for both genders