



On the 13th July I travelled to Wellington to attend the CTU Women's conference Wahine Toa: Organising for Change. 180 union women attended.

Over the two days I got to hear from amazing keynote speakers. I was able to participate in two workshops and group discussions. I also got to meet other women representatives within TEU.

Day one

First speaker : Minister for Women Julie-Anne Genter

Julie-Anne has worked in predominately male working environments, she is passionate about addressing the barriers that women face working in these environments, as well as addressing the gender gap. Julie-Anne talked also about closing the pay gap between Maori and Pasifika women, she explains that there is a 20% pay difference between Maori and Pasifika to other women.

I found her speech was interesting, Julie-Anne gave us facts about the differences between the pay gap but did not discuss how the government is going to work on closing the gap.

Second Speaker was Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner Saunoamaali'i Karanina Sumeo

Saunoamaali'i has worked as a public advisor and social worker, advocating for the interests of children, women, families, the rainbow community, social protection.

She believes pay equity and equal employment opportunities are key avenues for youth empowerment, women's empowerment, reduction of family poverty, freedom from gender-based violence and community well-being.

Saunoamaali'i also talked about her plan that she is putting to the government for an Independent pay transparency agency to close the gender gap for women and for Maori and Pasifika women.

Then she went on to talk about how employers are using Algorithms for CV's where they use a computer to search for specialized words, which is an unfair disadvantage for our Maori and Pasifika women.

Third speaker was Principal of Te Whenua Law and Consulting, Tania Te Whenua

The Principal of Te Whenua Law and Consulting, Tania Te Whenua, heads an organisation that assists with organisations to realise a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and to engage confidently with Maori culture, clients and key stakeholders. Tania has specialist legal expertise in Waitangi Tribunal and Maori Commercial Law and is acting legal counsel to New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and the Public Service Association.

Tania talked about the pay gap between Maori and Non-Maori and how we need to come together to help change the gap. She also talked about the different funding levels between Kindergartens and Kohanga reo for example: Kindergartens get \$12 per child for funding and Kohanga reo get \$8 per child, to which everyone was shocked.



Workshop One

Putting our values into action: Campaigning to win for working women. The workshop looked at successful campaigns like 26 for babies (26 weeks of paid parental leave). The workshop unpacked this campaign and then identification and how to plan for other campaigns for working women. I found this workshop interesting, listening to all the women's different stories.

Day Two

The day started off with reflections on day one, where I was asked to say a few words on my thoughts on day one in front of 180 women. Anyway, I got up and said that I didn't realise there was so many different unions in New Zealand and it was great to see so many passionate women in one room. I also went on to say that I was shocked with the figures of the big gap between Maori and Non-Maori, I was one of those stats of pay difference and looking back at my career on how much harder I have had to work compared to others. To date, I am still trying to get treated fairly within my workplace.

Fourth speaker : Mich-Elle Mayers Unionist and Australian Labour Party Vice President.

Mich-Elle is involved in all the industrial, growth and policy campaigns of the union. Her key responsibilities are the policy areas for women, youth and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, management of Seafarer employment and the Australian Shipping Campaign.

She talked about how it is important that women find their voices to be able to speak up. She also talked about how often she was the only female in a male industry and how much harder she had to fight for equal rights. Her fundamental beliefs centre around a fair deal for all, fairness for young workers, help for the unemployed, support for campaigns of indigenous brothers and sisters, rights at work and the right to education and healthcare for all Australians.

I have to say I really enjoyed listening to Mich-Elle's speech because it was good to hear her perspective as someone not from New Zealand, but facing similar issues.

Workshop two

Women's rights at work:

This workshop was run by the PPTA, we call it a WRAW chat.

It stands for Women's Rights at Work and it's a silent W. A WRAW chat is a step by step series of activities designed to identify the challenges that we face as women at work. The purpose of a WRAW chat is to help us develop a collective agenda for change at work and inform campaigns and policy for the movement, so we're taking actions on the issues that matter. I found this work very interesting and could see how this could work at NorthTec.

I would like to take opportunity to thank the TEU NorthTec branch for allowing me to attend this conference. I thoroughly enjoyed it and enjoyed getting to meet other women from other polytechnics and universities within TEU.

Kia ora rawa atu Sharlene Nelson