



Library and Information Association of New Zealand
Te Rau Herenga O Aotearoa

July 31, 2025

ABOUT TE RAU HERENGA O AOTEAROA LIANZA

Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa ([LIANZA](#)) has provided leadership to the wider library and information profession for over 123 years.

With a strong national network, active member communities and volunteer base, an established profile, and strong international connections, LIANZA spans all parts of the diverse library and information sector. This includes public, school, tertiary, health, prison, tertiary, special libraries and information services. LIANZA is the peak body for the library and information sector.

LIANZA works closely with [Te Rōpū Whakahau](#), the professional body for kaimahi Māori in libraries. LIANZA also maintains a strong relationship with Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, The National Library of New Zealand. We have strong links to the wider GLAMMIR sector and are a member of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA).

Our networks and support extend to the Pasifika library community. We work closely with our LIANZA Pacific Information Management Network and with libraries in the Pacific.

INTRODUCTION

Pay equity is one of the most pressing issues in the library and information sector. A lack of pay equity has a ripple effect on libraries' ability to provide effective services, as it impacts their capacity to attract and retain staff.

Pay equity claims for university librarians and assistant librarians in public and tertiary libraries were affected by [changes to the Equal Pay Act in May 2025](#).

Amendments to the Equal Pay Act (1972) came into effect on November 6, 2020 and introduced a new process for individual employees and unions to raise a pay equity claim directly with an employer for work which may be subject to systemic sex-based discrimination.

Historical studies (*Library and Library Assistants' Pay Equity Claim Evidence Report ; December 2022; p10*) show that the librarian workforce in New Zealand is occupationally segregated by gender. Census data shows that 80% of people working in New Zealand libraries are women.

In 2019, pay equity claims were made with six different councils on the basis that the work of librarians and library assistants is historically and currently undervalued as it is performed

predominantly by women. An arguable case was made for a claim for tertiary education library workers and library administrators in 2022.

Te Rau Herenga o Aotearoa LIANZA were deeply concerned at the [recent dismantling of Pay Equity Legislation in May, 2025](#). Of particular concern was the urgency with which this legislation was passed and the lack of robust consultation undertaken as a result.

These changes effectively take all claims related to library kaimahi back to ground zero. A key outcome of these changes is that all claims (including the library assistance, library advice and library services, and clerical and administrative claims with the universities, and the teachers' claim with the Ministry of Education) have been discontinued.

The librarian role has historically been a female-dominated role and, in most cases, but not all, would qualify for consideration under the Amended Equal Pay Act. However, many hours have already been spent establishing these claims.

IMPACT OF LOW PAY ON LIBRARY KAIMHI AND THE SECTOR

LIANZA believe that the amended Equal Pay Act will have considerable flow on affects for our sector. There is already a high staff turnover rate among kaimahi in their first two years of library work, and these changes will only exacerbate the issue. This has an impact for the services libraries are delivering in their communities, for organisations, ākona/students and workplaces.

"With the change in legislation enacted under urgency prior to the 2025 budget, neither of these pay claims can now progress and will need to be refiled under stricter criteria. This decision will have a significant impact – especially on morale and recruitment." Toi Mai [Torona Kaupekatia](#), p40, 2025

We have heard many times before – why would someone with a Master's degree continue to work in a position that does not recognise their skill and qualification level and where they earn significantly less than others with the same skills and qualifications.

Wellington City librarian and union delegate Tessa Bowler made these [commented to RNZ](#) recently about the importance of fairly paying librarians for the significant value they provide for the community:

"But we're being discriminated against every single day because we aren't getting the money that we deserve.

"Every day we make it so information and entertainment is accessible to everybody. We are there when you need to print out documents, or you can't figure out why your device isn't working. We're there creating story times to give children a love of libraries and a love of literacy that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

"We're there for the elderly, with drop-in sessions. We're there for lonely people with lots of events and activities. We're there... we are just always there for what you need. We provide so many things for the community and we deserve to see that reflected in our pay rates."

Bowler said rates for library assistants varied across the different councils, but it was likely to be around the living wage rate or just above.

She said many were struggling to make ends meet. *"I do know that my co-workers with children struggle with the basics - dentists, doctors, all the stuff you need."*

COMPARATORS

The amendments alter the comparators for claims, and this will affect future claims for library kaimahi.

There are few comparator roles for a library worker outside of other traditionally female-related roles eg teaching. It will mean examining industries with unusual skill sets. Many library workers have master's qualifications and are involved in complex or multi-faceted work, and there are few comparable industries that require the same skill level.

These changes reduce the possibility of reliable comparators with equal value and the same level of qualifications and professionalism, thereby effectively diminishing our professional standards.

Libraries employing new staff want to be able to pay what staff with training and qualifications are worth – and this will be even harder to establish with the revised comparator requirements.

SKILL LEVEL OF LIBRARY WORKERS

Many library workers have spent 4-6 years in tertiary education and are undertaking highly skilled and demanding roles.

Librarians are information managers, researchers and programme deliverers. They manage a massive public resource, and sizable budgets aimed at educating and enhancing the knowledge and skill levels of New Zealanders across the community and various sectors.

Selecting, purchasing, and maintaining these assets requires skills and a wide knowledge base. In many libraries, it also means dealing with stressed community members, teaching and providing programmes, being digital enablers and providing social as well as education and knowledge support.

Evidence collected for the library assistant claims revealed that the skills required for this work are categorised into 22 distinct areas, ranging from information technology to communication, cultural sensitivity, legal expertise, teaching skills, and financial management.

With responsibilities being extremely broad ranging, they include responsibilities for the well-being and safety of others, information technology, management, books and collections, and events and programmes.

With such broad-ranging responsibilities, library work can involve the need to rapidly switch between different tasks and skillsets and bring varying situational assessment and communication skills into play depending on the individual visitor who walks through the door.

Previously, employers could only give notice discontinuing a claim if they did not consider there was an arguable case the claim relates to female-dominated work that is or has been historically undervalued. Under the new legislation, employers can give notice that discontinues the claim if they consider the comparator workforce selected for the claim is not appropriate.

In the case of library kaimahi claims, this addition could effectively make finding a comparator even more difficult.

SCHOOL LIBRARY CLAIMS

LIANZA is pleased that a [pay equity claim for school librarians](#) was settled in November 2022 delivered 10- 40% pay increases for many school library kaimahi.

The successful pay equity claim that NZEI and school librarians settled for school librarians is affected by this new legislation, although current pay rates cannot be taken away.

However, school librarians were in the process of reviewing that settlement, as all previous pay equity settlements have found their pay rates don't keep pace with the male comparators, so a review and adjustment is necessary to ensure the gender-based inequity is corrected again. This review clause (agreed by both NZEI and the Ministry of Education) in the settlement will be unenforceable.

Settled claims can only be re-raised 10 years after settlement - so in November 2032 - and only if the claim meets the new requirements.

OTHER AMENDMENTS

In effect, the addition to the Equal Pay Act of the amendment of *'Employers being able to meet their pay equity obligations in a way that is sustainable for their business'* provides a loophole for not addressing these historic shortfalls.

The purpose of the Act has been changed from there being a *'low threshold to raise a claim'* to a requirement for *'evidence of systemic sex-based undervaluation'* to raise a claim. This puts a significant onus on staff and their representatives to seek more and more evidence with no threshold of when sufficient evidence has been provided.

Given that many of the library kaimahi claims were already provided for arguable cases, LIANZA believes these should be able to be used and that care should be taken to ensure this clause is not used to deter claims progress.

Changes to the gender percentage threshold and enabling employers to opt out of multi-employer pay equity claims without reason further restricts access to pay equity litigation for library kaimahi.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LIANZA believes that the changes in the 2025 Equal Pay Amendments are a regressive step in addressing pay equity in this country and that they will have a negative effect on any future claims for levelling the pay for library kaimahi. LIANZA would like the People's Select Committee to note:

- Acknowledge that fast-tracking the amendments to the Equal Pay Act in May 2025 was not a robust process.
- Acknowledge that significant effort had already been made for library-related claims, and the playing field has now been changed.

- Review the application of ‘comparators’ so industries where comparators are difficult to find, like library and information work, are not unduly discriminated against.
- Clarify what is ‘sufficient evidence’ and allow previous claim data to be used if an ‘arguable case’ was already established.
- Acknowledge that the 10-year review period will be detrimental to many claims, in particular the already settled claim for school library kaimahi.
- Allow multi-employer pay equity claims.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[New Zealand universities’ pay equity claims | Universities New Zealand - Te Pōkai Tara](#)
6 May 2025; [Changes to improve pay equity process | Beehive.govt.nz](#); NZ Government

[Pay Equity Settlement For School Librarians And Science Technicians Reached | Scoop News](#);
NZ Government (6 March, 2023)

Tessa Bowler, 16 March 2025; RNZ <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/544995/all-library-workers-deserve-a-fair-wage-union>

Toi Mai [Torona Kaupekatia](#), p40, 2025