



EQUAL PAY



Sir Richard Clarence Kirby AC
President of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission
1956-73

The second of the two major Equal Pay Cases provides for equal pay for work of equal value.

Before 1972 male and female jobs are compared to see if they are basically identical.

After 1972 work is compared to see if it is very similar in content or tasks.



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The 1972 Equal Pay Case was the second of the two major Equal Pay Cases provides for equal pay for work of equal value.

The Full Bench heard that in relation to the 1969 Equal Pay case “only 18 per cent of females in the work force have received equal pay as a result of that decision”.

The Full Bench noted that broad changes of significance had occurred since 1969 and that these changes were reflected in the attitudes in Governments in Australia, and in developments in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and elsewhere.

They decided that “the concept of ‘equal pay for equal work’ is still too narrow in today’s world and we think the time has come to enlarge the concept to ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. This means that award rates for all work should be considered without regard to the sex of the employee.”

The increase to 100 per cent of the male wage was phased in over the following three years.

Some employers sought to avoid the equal pay rulings by reclassifying, or renaming, women’s jobs. This was particularly widespread after the 1972 decision, with one survey finding that over 60 per cent of employers have reclassified women’s jobs onto a different (and lower) scale to men in similar work.

1972

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‘The Women’s Liberation Movement interprets “equal pay for work of equal value” to mean, quite simply, that all workers performing jobs of comparable work value should be remunerated equally, regardless of the workers’ sex.

However, “equal pay for work of equal value” only bridges the gap between minimum award wages for males and females. It does not come to grips with the fact that the vast majority of women are in the lower paid, lower status jobs. We maintain that one rate of pay should be established for each job and be paid to all workers performing that job. Pay should be proportionate to efficiency, so that sex *per se* is not a cause of wage inequality.’

Submitted as evidence by Ms Shaw for the Women’s Liberation Movement
Transcript Vol 2 at p.429

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