

# Restructuring employment: the case of female academics

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### Abstract

The Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP) developed in the National Wage Case of 1988 was introduced to reduce labour costs, increase productivity and efficiency and create a more flexible workforce. Since its introduction, SEP was the impetus behind award restructuring and enterprise bargaining. In Australia, it has been widely recognised that these processes will impact differently on women and that special strategies need to be adopted to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. This article addresses how universities fared in giving academic women better working conditions through award restructuring. In a research project that studied the implementation of award restructuring in two universities (Murdoch and Edith Cowan) from 1991 to 1993, Jan Currie interviewed a wide range of staff including academics, administrators, Vice-Chancellors and union and employer officials. It appears that award restructuring benefited some women, particularly those at the lower level. A career ladder has been opened to more women. However, at the same time it has become much more competitive to climb the ladder. More women are obtaining tenure than in the past and more are being promoted. The gains that have been made in these two Western Australian universities show the importance of having women involved in union/employer negotiations. To achieve the desired ends, women must be aware of equal opportunity strategies and be willing to take risks in ensuring that some of these strategies become more embedded within university procedures.

It is difficult to disentangle how much the restructuring of Australia's economy and other government initiatives have affected workplace practices which happened to coincide with award restructuring. This is especially true of universities which entered into award restructuring negotiations at the same time that many of the White Paper (Dawkins 1988) initiatives were affecting the way universities operated. The amalgamations of universities and colleges of advanced education that resulted in the creation of a unified national system, and the introduction of the relative funding model were initiatives that have had a major impact on universities. The Labor Government's underlying philosophy of economic rationalism and its push for micro-economic reforms has not bypassed universities. Universities have been forced to adopt more user-pay strategies, commercialise their services (e.g. marketing courses overseas) and forge research links with industry. Into the thick of these dramatic changes, the unions and employers introduced award restructuring. This was the beginning of the movement from a centralised to a decentralised industrial relations system which has run into major obstacles with enterprise bargaining.

In reviewing the literature on award restructuring and enterprise bargaining, considerable scepticism has been expressed concerning the benefits to workers and, in particular, to female workers. This article investigates, through case studies conducted at Edith Cowan University and Murdoch University, whether award restructuring has achieved improvements in the working lives of female academics. The award restructuring process for universities began in 1989 and is still

continuing in 1995. For this study, the local negotiations from September 1991 to September 1993 were monitored.

Through the presentation of segments of interviews and responses to surveys on the implementation of award restructuring, this article examines how academic women benefited from the award restructuring process, mainly in the areas of tenure of Level A staff, promotion and staff development. (As I was writing this article, other aspects of award restructuring were still being negotiated and general staff had not yet completed their restructuring.) This article speculates on why academic women benefited and looks specifically at the role of women unionists in the consultative process. It also points to some dangers lurking in the current enterprise bargaining negotiations.

### Case study background

The two universities, Murdoch and Edith Cowan, differ substantially in both their philosophies and structures: Murdoch is a pre-1987 university and Edith Cowan is a post-1987 university. Murdoch University began teaching with its undergraduate program in 1975 and was seen to offer an 'alternative' type of tertiary education from that of the traditional university. Its first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Stephen Griew, said '*...there was no excuse for a new university to make the same mistakes as the older universities which had been handicapped by tradition*' (Bolton 1985, p. 23). He predicted that all members of the university, including students, would have a say in its administration and he stated that he would encourage participatory decision-making rather than control by senior administrators.

Murdoch University was established as a university from its inception. On the other hand, Edith Cowan University, recently converted from a college of education to a university, is an amalgamation of four, previously autonomous, teachers' colleges. Moses (1989) noted that Australian colleges tend to be more hierarchical and universities tend to be more collegial. Responses given by staff in interviews conducted at Edith Cowan tend to bear out these observations. In discussing promotion during the former Director's time, one staff member commented that: '*...there was often intervention by the Director*'. Another stated, '*...the Director said whom he didn't like*'. It was also described as '*...a straight-out case of jobs for the boys—or should I say jobs for certain boys*'.

Since these staff were interviewed, a new Vice-Chancellor has been appointed who is recognised as being more responsive to staff participation within the university and more sympathetic to affirmative action. Both the universities, however, have been affected by the push towards corporate managerialism which is altering the notions of collegiality that may have existed to varying degrees in these universities prior to the 1990s (Miller, 1995 and Currie and Woock, 1995).

### Methods

To get the views of the administration of both universities regarding award restructuring in 1993, I interviewed on each campus the Vice-Chancellors, Personnel Officers and University Industrial Officers and at the national level, the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association's (AHEIA's) Chief Industrial Officer. To gain the per-

spectives of the union and academic staff members, I interviewed the Industrial Officers at the state level and National level of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) and the Presidents of the Academic Staff Associations in 1991 and again in 1993, and individual staff members (12 at Edith Cowan and 10 at Murdoch) in 1991 (most were females in Level A positions but a handful were in more senior positions and some were males). I also talked with the Equity Officers in 1991, who could be seen as being located somewhere between the administration and staff in their perspectives.

In 1993 I surveyed a cross-section of 24 women from the four universities in Western Australia. The purpose of that survey was to gauge how much female academics knew about the implementation of award restructuring on their campuses and how satisfied they were with the process. Several open-ended questions focused on promotion procedures and affirmative action. Although key individuals have been interviewed who would have been knowledgeable about award restructuring, the size of the total group surveyed (24) and interviewed (36) is small and is not representative of the views of all academics, administrators or union officials but the research provides useful pointers to a range of views and highlights the way women, in particular, saw the process benefiting them.

### **Benefits for women in industrial relations changes?**

The National Wages Cases (NWC) of 1988 and 1989 introduced various measures aimed at improving the efficiency of industry and providing workers with access to more varied, fulfilling and better paid jobs. The Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP) developed in the NWC of 1988 was introduced to reduce labour costs and increase productivity and efficiency (Mulligan and Baldock 1994).

Since its introduction, SEP can be said to be the impetus behind award restructuring and enterprise bargaining. Roxon (1991) asserts that the central aim of the Structural Efficiency Principle is micro-economic reform and to attract the employers: the procedure promises increased flexibility, a rationalisation of respondents to awards and elusive productivity and efficiency gains" (p. 4). McCreadie in 1989 foreshadowed the movement toward enterprise bargaining and warned of the dangers for women:

*While the commission has endorsed the Australian Council of Trade Unions' (ACTU's) argument for a co-ordinated reshaping of the award system and rejected the employers' more decentralised company-by-company approach, fears persist that the enterprise bargaining begun under the second tier will be further entrenched. Due to inferior industrial muscle, women will find it harder to extract the benefits of restructuring and may even be forced to trade off real conditions."* (McCreadie, 1989, p. 14)

Rosewarne (1988) made similar predictions and noted how the wage system has become structured around a particular conception of productivity and pointed out how the "Arbitration Commission has ignored the need to define more precisely what is actually meant by the notion of productivity" (p. 72).

In universities the notion of productivity has become a bigger obstacle in the current enterprise bargaining negotiations. It is paradoxical that the author of the Green Paper, *Transforming Industrial Relations in New South Wales* (Niland, 1989) who advocated enterprise bargaining to increase 'flexibility' in the system is now finding it difficult to negotiate such an agreement within his own university. The idea of developing a 'flexible' workforce and the minimum rates award have already led to differential salary levels between departments and to some individual academics obtaining higher salary packages.

As in other industries, women in universities are more likely to be in part-time positions at the bottom of the hierarchy and not as likely to be in areas where they get market-loadings or can negotiate salary packages (Castleman et al., 1995). Their traditionally inferior position in the workforce (low status, lower paid, non-permanent) means that they are more vulnerable to moves by employers to streamline their

workplaces in their attempts to become more competitive internationally.

Flexibility in the workforce gives employers greater capacity to shed labour. The decision of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (20 April 1995) on the Academic Dismissal and Redundancy Award will allow this greater flexibility for Vice-Chancellors. This has already happened at the University of Melbourne where 59 staff in education were targeted for redundancies. The Melbourne strategy reflects the situation in the United States where writers (Slaughter 1993; Gumpert 1993; Kerlin and Dunlop 1993) have found that retrenchments have affected female academics in greater numbers than males. According to these authors, the schools of nursing and education in the United States are usually the first ones attacked for retrenchments.

It has been pointed out repeatedly by the ACTU and the Labor Government that centralised systems offer more protection for women employees. Senator Peter Cook (Minister for Industrial Relations in 1990) remarked that "women's award based earnings, which are centrally fixed, are around about 85% of those for men. By contrast, their over-award earnings, which are set at the enterprise level, are not much more than 50% of those for men (1990 p. 4). It has been widely recognised that award restructuring which began the move away from a centralised wage system could impact more severely on females than on their male colleagues (Beaton 1989; Bolton 1989; Hall 1989; Baldock 1990; Robertson 1992) and that special strategies need to be adopted to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the process (see as examples Windsor 1991; Cox & Leonard 1991; Short 1993). Some writers believe that the potential for women is in the reassessment of institutionalised barriers and prohibitive structures which have locked many of them into inferior positions within the workforce (Roxon 1991). However, the literature indicates a variety of assessments as to whether award restructuring can remove the barriers and lead to benefits for women.

Sue McCreadie, for example, begins an article on 'Awarding Women' with this comment: 'For many feminist critics, award restructuring, like the industry restructuring which spawned it, is a boy's game, tailor-made for the metal industry and imposed on the rest of us' (McCreadie 1989, p. 12). Despite these observations, she suggests that it can create a framework for reforming work organisation and if women are drawn into the consultative mechanisms then it can make a difference. She says that it is crucial to involve women workers and shop stewards to shift the balance of power in the workplace from management to workers and from men to women workers, especially in those areas where there are more women in the lower levels of an industry.

Val Pratt, Director of the Affirmative Action Agency in 1990, expressed similar concerns that the award may be to the detriment of women. She stated that, 'fears run counter to enthusiastic claims by the union movement that award restructuring will offer female employees new opportunities for promotion, career paths, training and higher wages' (reported by Neals 1990, p. 7).

Baldock (1990), in a review article titled 'Award Restructuring for Women, Tool of Change or Stagnation?', is pessimistic about the process. The works reviewed in Baldock's article suggest that trends in the restructuring of work are making a mockery of the notion of a career path. Increased casualisation, more part-time workers who are not deemed to be in need of training, suggest a move to a workforce consisting of core and peripheral workers. This has left most women in the peripheral areas of the work force. Mulligan and Baldock (1994) also noted in their study of home care workers that a large number of women workers, mostly in the periphery, have never even had an award.

Other studies (Brown and Gardner 1991; Runciman 1989) suggest similar problems with implementing award restructuring and changing discriminatory practices against women. In examining the Queensland public sector, Brown and Gardner (1991) concluded that '*The bottlenecks of the old systems are not easily eliminated in the new*' (1991, p. 9). In the retail trade, Runciman (1989) notes that award

restructuring has resulted in increased cost-cutting measures and the employment of a greater number of juniors in the workforce.

Hall (1989) and Burton (1990) identify the pitfalls of award restructuring as well as the areas where changes can be made that may benefit women. Burton quotes a colleague as saying: *'award restructuring is ... a crisis for equal opportunities. What we have is a dangerous opportunity to break down barriers and open up careers — or to see the blinds cover the missed window of opportunities for a long time'* (p. 1).

She goes on to say that *'with award restructuring, employment structures can be reviewed and redesigned comprehensively. Equally simply, there is a danger that new structures can incorporate restrictions from the old and impose new barriers and constraints'* (Burton 1990, p. 1).

As award restructuring has varied in its implementation so too has enterprise bargaining and workplace agreements, partially because of the different legislation at the State and Federal level. Lewis and Thomas (1994) review this legislation which has led in some states to bargaining at the individual level. The Federal 1992 and 1993 Enterprise Bargaining agreements provided a framework for the employers and unions to be involved at the enterprise level. The Industrial Relations/Employee Relations/Workplace Agreements Acts in New South Wales (1991), Victoria (1992) and Western Australia (1993) vary from the Federal Acts in providing greater scope for individual contracts and less union involvement. Lewis (1992) reported that the Victorian legislation "endeavours to place unions on the fringes of the industrial system and eradicates automatic access to an 'industrial empire' like the Commission" (p. 11).

New Zealand introduced legislation that went the furthest towards deregulation. Lewis and Thomas (1994) state that "Of all the Australian states, the reforms introduced into Victoria most resemble those of New Zealand" (p. 116). However, an important difference remains that employees in Victoria (as opposed to those in New Zealand) may still have access to award coverage via the Federal system.

A 1993 study of NSW enterprise agreements shows that the new system of industrial regulation delivers less to women (Gale, 1994). The Department of Industrial Relations study revealed that "Only 58% of 'female' agreements delivered wage rises at all, compared with 86% of 'male' agreements. In addition 46% of the 'female' enterprise agreements removed penalty rates without any compensatory salary rises while this was true of only 27% of 'male' agreements (Gale, p 16).

The evidence from New Zealand's experience of enterprise bargaining indicates that although women may have benefited in terms of flexible working hours and leave arrangements, they have not done as well as men in negotiating wages, overtime and penalty rates, especially in the service sector (Harbridge and Robinson 1993) where individual contracts are more prevalent. Several writers (Bennett and Quinlan 1992; Murphy 1994) predicted that enterprise bargaining in Australian universities may lead not only to variations between universities but also within the same university, reflecting faculty differences or gender segmentation.

Hall (1989) made a firm connection between award restructuring and equal employment opportunities in her article which could be extended to enterprise bargaining negotiations:

*It is no fortunate accident that getting award restructuring right requires getting it right for women. The requirements for a more skilled and flexible workforce go to some of the major employment issues for women—access to and recognition of training, access to career paths, removal of unnecessary rigidities in employment, and evaluation of work in terms of the demands of the job and the merits of the workers are crucial for equal employment opportunities, award restructuring and productivity improvements.* (Hall 1989, p. 15)

To what extent did the academic unions and university administrators connect award restructuring and equal employment opportunities? Did the employers feel that it was important to 'get award restructuring right for women'? This is one of the questions I posed to a number of academics, administrators and union officers.

## Potential of using affirmative action

### Award restructuring generally

When interviewed in 1991, the Equity Officers at both institutions were uncertain how much affirmative action could be applied within award restructuring but they felt that it should have a role. The former Equity Officer at Edith Cowan had difficulty getting notions such as affirmative action raised within the university.

*This is the place that time forgot. Nothing has happened here for decades in the way of equal opportunity.*

Another issue she identified was that *'There is no forum for affirmative action within the university.'* She also suggested that because the university does not operate in an industrial context, it is more difficult to raise certain issues. *'We operate on the basis of personalities. Decisions are made in an ad hoc manner.'*

In contrast, Murdoch has been seen as a place where affirmative action has taken root and is more integrated within the policies of the university. However, the university has been slow to appoint women into senior positions and has often had only the token woman on important decision-making committees. In fact Edith Cowan has a higher number of tenured female staff (28%) than Murdoch (18%) according to DEET (1993). Murdoch's Equity Officer described the situation in this way:

*I believe that this place is seen as a hotbed of radical feminists and that scares the hell out of the men. They, therefore, do not want any more women on staff who are going to cause them trouble. It is a reactionary movement. Probably the administration doesn't even see gender imbalance in the top positions as a problem.*

When interviewing 22 academics in 1991 about the potential for using affirmative action, some of the same scepticism emerged. As one academic from Edith Cowan said *'Affirmative action is a joke. The university produces a fancy document but doesn't get anything done.'*

Despite this kind of negative impression of affirmative action held by some within the universities, most academics I interviewed (14 females and 1 male or 68% of the group) felt it could be applied within the award restructuring process. These were some typical responses:

*Of course, affirmative action for academics was well and truly part of the award restructuring process. For example, industrial officers in FAUSA were women and the whole underpinning of award restructuring is a product of the efforts of these women to promote affirmative action, such as giving women a career structure and allowing for promotion.* (Female Academic, Murdoch)

*I think there should be affirmative action for women but also and more importantly for ethnic members and Aboriginals.* (Female Academic, ECU)

Besides the few (3 males and 1 female or 18% of the group) who said they really did not know enough about affirmative action to judge, there was also a small group (2 males and 1 female or 14% of the group) who agreed with affirmative action but then questioned the kind of policy that might be implemented.

*I am not against it but policy needs to be interpreted in a much more satisfactory manner. I feel it disadvantages people in my position. We are taking the rap for older academics! In saying this, I know that women are disadvantaged—I'm not saying they're not. The decisions made have tended to disadvantage junior untenured men. The drive to increase the crude overall numbers of women doesn't help me. I have a PhD but the job market for the last four years has been bad. I'm the wrong age (considered too young) and the wrong gender to get a job.* (Male Academic, ECU)

*I'm all for equity and equality but I'm not sure about the category 'all things being equal you should appoint a female'. As a woman, I'd rather compete equally and gain on my own merit.* (Female Academic, Murdoch)

The employers' industrial officer in Melbourne assured me that it was *"...the employers' position that affirmative action can be applied*

and the employers would hope it would be taken into account on all issues, not just applied in the tenuring of level A academics." One of the industrial officers at Edith Cowan University mentioned that the administration was working with the union to reach an agreement on setting a quota for the promotion of women and felt that there were other aspects of policy that could have affirmative action guidelines written into them. Overall there was a positive feeling towards incorporating affirmative action procedures into policies but also an awareness, as mentioned by Edith Cowan's union official, that "...affirmative action gets watered down at the edges as it moves through the system."

### Tenuring of Level As

Only female academics discussed using affirmative action for the tenuring of academics, mainly at Level A. They all (9 females) were in favour of using some sort of equity measures but they often qualified their answers, with good reasons.

*Regarding affirmative action in confirming tenure—I have mixed feelings about the reduction of contract positions and the increase in the percentage of tenure. Contract people bring new energy and enthusiasm into the institution. Those who have been around a long time have given up, can't cope. They give in to the internal culture of this institution, the constant monitoring by the Vice-Chancellor wears them down. (Female Academic, ECU)*

They also distinguished between affirmative action and equal opportunity and they tended to prefer the latter, not wanting quotas and preferring to be judged on merit.

*At Level A, there would be a case for clearly defining the criteria and putting more emphasis on teaching. But I probably would go more for EO than for AA. I would then throw it open, define the criteria carefully and then allow the procedures to work. Of course, you could define the criteria to benefit the women and you could give the women training, assertiveness training for presentations and preparation of CVs. (Female Academic, Murdoch)*

*I think that increased tenure at Level A is good but I think that tenure should be done on the basis of the proportion of females to male, I'm not happy with more women getting tenure, or with all the positions going to women. I support equity as opposed to affirmative action. (Female Academic, Murdoch)*

No one suggested some of the more radical strategies such as women-only tenuring rounds or having only one basic criterion, teaching, for this level of tenuring. There have been attempts at other universities to try some of these strategies. The most publicised was the attempt by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) to have a women-only tenuring round. The aim of this was to right past inequities. Their union began with a resolution to seek an affirmative action agreement within the award structure.

No sooner had these moves toward a female-only tenure round been publicised than the backlash began. And the reaction came, not only from within USQ but from other campuses as well. A lengthy letter was published in the *Campus Review* from a male physicist at the University of Tasmania which concluded: 'Rather than accomplishing their stated goals such policies breed resentment and foster the suspicion that promotions made under them were given for reasons other than merit. Such policies also punish all the members of one sex for the past actions of a few of their members' (July 29-Aug 4, 1993, p. 8). Only two weeks after the initial publication of the initiative, it was reported that USQ had shelved the idea because the Vice-Chancellor had received legal advice from the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association that a women-only tenuring round would attract the operation of anti-discrimination legislation at a State and Federal level (*The Australian* Aug 4, 1993, p. 13).

The Academic Staff Association at USQ reacted with a stop-work meeting and the threat of industrial action. The staff also got support for their action from the former Minister for the Status of Women, Senator Margaret Reynolds, who had recently visited the campus.

*There is a culture of the old boys' network which still operates and the only way to break down that culture is to discriminate in favour of the old girls if you like. Until we take some creative steps as have been taken in other parts of the world, this culture will prevail and it will be an ongoing battle for women to reach the upper echelons of decision-making or, in this case, academia. (The Australian August 18 1993, p. 29)*

The union finally negotiated a compromise with the Vice-Chancellor on the qualifying period to apply for tenure which may benefit women who have had breaks in their academic service. The eligibility requirements for female staff applying for tenure were relaxed to a minimum of four semesters of academic service that did not necessarily have to be continuous.

### Outcomes of award restructuring for women academics

Matheson (1993) asserts that award restructuring in Australian higher education institutions has provided women academics with many benefits. The first area noted is in creating a career structure for academics at all levels. She recommends that Level A staff should be eligible to apply for promotion even if they are in a non-continuing position and that applicants should be allowed to nominate weightings in each of the four areas specified, which usually include research, teaching, university administration and professional/community contributions. The second area is the agreement that 30% of Level A staff should be in continuing employment. Some universities (eg Macquarie and Flinders) have adopted an approach in which all Level A appointments are 'convertible' five year minimum appointments, reviewed during the fourth year to determine whether the position will continue. If it is deemed to be continuing, the individual has the right to apply for tenure. The third area is in the participation of women on the negotiating teams. The article concludes with the comment:

*I ask whether it is just coincidence that universities like Macquarie (where three union women negotiated opposite three management men) and James Cook (where the union team of four had three women on it and the management team none) have seen some of the quickest and most thorough implementation of the award restructuring agreement? (Matheson 1993, p. 12)*

These three areas of tenure, promotion and female negotiators that Matheson mentioned will be looked at and in addition, staff development. In each of these, women have made gains.

### Granting of tenure

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (1993) reported that university-tenured positions for women Australia-wide were just 14% in 1991. It was expected that the award restructuring process might make an improvement in this figure through the tenuring of Level As. This turned out to be the case for 3 out of the 4 universities in Western Australia which had begun their tenuring process.

When granting tenure to Level A staff in 1992, Murdoch University tenured 15 women (or 48%) out of a total of 31 staff at Level A. In 1993 University of Western Australia had even better results (11 women out of 16 staff or 69% became either tenured immediately or were designated tenurable within a two year period). Edith Cowan University has not had an official tenuring of Level A round according to the award restructuring procedures but has had two rounds of tenuring of staff at different levels and of these 9 out of 19 or 47% were women. Two comments from Murdoch staff members attest to the difference this makes in their careers:

*The prospect of getting tenure is quite mind blowing. It takes a lot of the uncertainty away. It really is totally changing my life. (Murdoch Female Associate Lecturer)*

*Award restructuring has improved my potential salary by \$10,000 once my PhD is in and awarded. This is something to work for. There is the possibility of tenure at the junior level and a career path. (Murdoch Female Associate Lecturer)*

There appears to be quite a difference between the pre-1987 and the post-1987 universities in their reaching agreement on the tenuring process and actually implementing it (according to documentation gathered by the National Tertiary Education Union in 1994). Only one pre-1987 university (ANU) out of 19 has not negotiated or implemented a tenuring agreement. Out of the post-1987 universities, only 4 out of 17 had reached agreement and only 3 (Queensland University of Technology, Canberra and University of Central Queensland) had implemented it. Another four had already reached the Award ratio of 30% tenured at Level A.

### Promotion

The promotion procedures have been altered at Murdoch to include weightings which allow areas, such as service in the community and industry experience, to be counted as valid evidence in promotion applications. Staff can also weight teaching more than research although an acceptable standard in each area would have to be achieved to gain promotion. Staff who are untenured are also eligible to apply for promotion if they are in the second period of a renewable contract of three or more years. The results of the 1993 round of promotions showed that although three times as many males (40) as females (13) applied for promotion, females (8 or 61%) were more likely to be promoted than males (19 or 48%) and it appears that greater account was taken of teaching and administration. This indicates an improvement in the chances for female academics to gain promotion at Murdoch University although the numbers are still fairly small.

The Award Restructuring Implementation Committee (ARIC) at Edith Cowan took longer to negotiate their promotion procedures but managed to implement an historic affirmative action process for 1994. This was the first round of internal promotions based on merit for all staff (from Level A to D) in the university's history and it made a significant move to redress the fact that there were very few women above lecturer level and reserved some positions (a minimum of 2 out of 5 for each faculty) for the promotion of women.

In a small (24) survey of female academics in September 1993 who were from the four WA universities and ranged from Level A to Level D, the majority responded that they were dissatisfied with the promotion procedures. In response to this question 'How do you view the promotion system?', these were a few of their comments.

*Still biased towards counting papers. I am beginning to think that is unlikely to change until certain professors retire.*

*There has been an attempt to shift the system to a more equitable balance between research/teaching and administration. But I need proof that the shift is real and that promotions are being made on the basis of teaching and administration in fact and not just in theory.*

*Not sufficiently supportive of excellence in teaching and insufficiently sensitive to different types of research.*

*With scepticism born of experience.*

*As a huge hurdle. That promotions are 'sponsored' unevenly across staff; males are actively encouraged while women are assumed to be satisfied.'*

### Staff development

Another positive move towards equality for women has been through the Staff Development Fund which includes in its guidelines a provision for targeting programs for women to increase the goals of equity within the institution. Both Murdoch and Edith Cowan have used this guideline to the advantage of women. At Murdoch a program to give female academics at Level A, a semester's leave to work on their PhD, has enabled ten women to have a concentrated period of time to further progress on their dissertations. Several women have completed their PhDs during their semester's leave. Edith Cowan also funded staff for time release to engage in further studies. In 1992, 9 staff of whom 5 were women in the School of Nursing were granted time release of 3 hours each week for two semesters and in 1993 a total of 44 staff, 33 of whom were women were granted between 3 and 9 hours per week

time release for a semester. Also, a very successful, Women in Leadership Program (funded by National Staff Development Funds from 1992 to 1995) at Edith Cowan has assisted women in *Finding a Voice, Building Strategies* and *Creating an Environment* to change a culture that was previously hostile to them (Widdess, 1994). Conferences were held in each year to investigate ways of increasing female participation in the university's decision making structures and speakers were brought to campus with the aim of empowering women within universities. This program has provided a focus within the university to consider new management practices and a strong women's network has emerged from the process which has permitted more input into policy formulation (Howard, 1994).

### Award restructuring implementation committees

At both Murdoch and Edith Cowan, there were at least two women involved on the union side in the negotiations to implement award restructuring. There were no women on the management side of Murdoch and just one at Edith Cowan. According to a comment by one of the union's Industrial Officers in Western Australia, '*...the women tend to be more single-minded in their negotiations and appear so reasonable in their demands that they have been able to achieve more than the men, who tend to treat it more as a game where they run the risk of wanting to be seen as good fellows rather than keeping their eyes on the goal*'.

Leveratt (1993) tells of a woman who negotiated for James Cook University and demonstrates the importance of having women who had experience of inequity on the committee. Marie-France Mack had been teaching French Literature at James Cook for over twenty years and as a result of award restructuring was granted tenure and promoted to Lecturer Level B in 1993. When discussions ensued on the Award Restructuring Implementation Committee about situations that were discriminatory, the administration could not ignore arguments about discrimination at James Cook because Marie-France Mack was there to give evidence of what she experienced and to argue for the needed changes.

### Concluding comments

It appears that award restructuring in Murdoch and Edith Cowan universities has benefited some women, particularly those at the lower level. A career ladder has been opened to more women. However, at the same time it has become much more competitive to climb the ladder. Women now have a foot on the career ladder but the climb to the top appears to be getting ever more hazardous, notwithstanding some benefits arising from award restructuring. More women are obtaining tenure than in the past and more are being promoted. Programs have targeted women for staff development enabling them to pursue higher studies during paid leave from the university. These have all been positive benefits for women gained through award restructuring.

At the same time, however, the overall culture of universities is changing in both the older and newer universities and it is changing for both male and female academics, not only as a result of award restructuring, but due to the push toward corporate managerialism and leaner, more efficient institutions. The restructuring which has emerged from the ideology of economic rationalism imposed on universities by the Labor Government in 1988 has meant, among other things, higher teaching loads, retrenchments in some areas, devolution of budgeting with the concomitant development of a layer of middle management and a more powerful senior executive that has become more engaged in strategic planning, the commercialisation and internationalisation of university services and a greater reliance on a user-pays philosophy.

With this corporate-type culture has come a greater emphasis on quality and accountability which is resulting in a more competitive academic environment. Older universities have been nudged into considering teaching to be slightly more important than it was in the past. It is evident that the culture of promotions and recruitment into universities is slow to change and research publications still appear to be paramount for promotion within the university. The added criterion

of having a research profile for the newer universities has meant that it may become more difficult for women to advance within these universities than it has been in the past. Many women academics interviewed felt that they put more energy into teaching than their male colleagues.

It would seem that if the cultures of universities are going to be more conducive to women's advancement, then women must become more actively involved in policy-making within their own institutions. The gains that have been made in these two Western Australian universities show the importance of women's involvement in the award restructuring negotiations. At the same time, to achieve the desired ends, women must be aware of equal opportunity strategies and be willing to take risks in ensuring that some of these strategies become more embedded within university procedures.

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