

## **YOU ARE INVITED TO AN AIRAANZ SYMPOSIUM on**

### **The persistence of Inequity at Work: Examination of the impact of almost 50 years of anti-discrimination and equity law, policy and practices**

**ON: Thursday 15 November, 2018**

**AT: Macquarie University, Sydney**

**From: 9.15 am for 9.45 am start**

**Location: Room 110 — Finance Lab, Building 4ER,  
Macquarie University, North Ryde Campus.**

The aim of this symposium is to bring AIRAANZ scholars together with other colleagues and practitioners, to examine the persistence of workplace inequity after four decades of public discourse, legal and policy interventions which have aimed to create equity (or EEO) at work. The symposium will provide an opportunity for inter-disciplinary discussion, incorporating IR, HRM, public policy and legal perspectives on what has been achieved and the continuing barriers to workplace equity.

Public policy and law in Australia and New Zealand have long made clear that workplace inequality is not acceptable. Employment discrimination on a broad range of grounds including gender and ethnicity has been illegal in Australia and New Zealand for half a century. Periodic media coverage of discrimination cases since the late 1970s, and the incorporation of discrimination into industrial laws such as the *Fair Work Act*, has delivered a clear message that employers and managers will be held responsible for employment decisions which disadvantage women and minority groups at work.

Since the 1980s, Australian law has required medium and large private sector employers to implement HR policies to eliminate gender discrimination. Similar legislation requires the public sector in New Zealand and Australia to review and revise policies that discriminate on gender and other grounds.

It is now over 40 years since the first discrimination laws were enacted in Australia and more than 20 years in New Zealand. Yet discrimination persists. Despite (often) extraordinarily thorough equal employment opportunity (EEO) reforms in public sector organisations and pro-active organisational policies on gender equity in the private sector, bias and unequal outcomes continue to flourish.

The symposium is a combined initiative of the Centre for Workforce Futures (CWF), Macquarie University and the Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing (WOW), Griffith University. The Organisers are Louise Thornthwaite (Macquarie University) and Glenda Strachan (Griffith University).

The symposium will provide a forum for discussion on why this issue of workplace inequity persists and policy strategies to spur progress. The aim also is to provide a basis for publications, the formation and enriching of research networks and collaborations, and the scoping of larger research projects to tackle the central problem of the persistence of workplace inequality despite comprehensive state and employer measures to eliminate it.

The following questions will be used to frame the symposium:

- What happened to the EEO achievements of public organisations in the 1980s and 1990s and why are we reinventing the wheel again and again?
- Is the *unconscious bias* caravan helping or hindering equity?
- What has been the impact of the shift to *diversity* and *inclusion* policies for workplace equity?
- Does merit remain a useful concept?
- Are current legal and policy models still 'the best for the job'?

We are calling for expressions of interest to present papers which address the central theme and these key questions at the symposium. Please send an abstract of (max) 150 words to the conference organisers (contact details below) by Friday 21 September. Abstracts should indicate clearly which aspect of the theme/questions the paper would address. \

To register for the symposium, please complete the form (see next page) and return to Louise Thornthwaite ( [louise.thornthwaite@mq.edu.au](mailto:louise.thornthwaite@mq.edu.au) ) for catering purposes. Please also spread the word among colleagues who are not on the mailing list but might have an interest in attending.

### **Louise Thornthwaite**

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### **Glenda Strachan**

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**REGISTRATION FORM**

**AIRAANZ Symposium**

**The persistence of Inequity at Work: Examination of the impact of almost  
50 years of anti-discrimination and equity law, policy and practices**

**Friday 16 November 2018**

Last Name: .....

First Name: .....

Organisation: .....

Address: .....

State .....

Country .....

Phone contact: .....

Email: .....

Are you a PhD student? .....

**Will you be submitting an Abstract?            YES            NO**

**Please indicate if you have special dietary requirements:**

Vegetarian    Vegan            Gluten Free            Halal            Kosher Dairy Free.

I have an allergy to .....

**Please list any special requirements:**

Wheel Chair Access    Hearing Impaired    Other .....