

**Casting a Little More Light... Do We Really  
Know What Enterprise Bargaining has meant  
for Women's Wages in Australia?**

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## **Casting a Little More Light... Do We Really Know What Enterprise Bargaining has meant for Women's Wages in Australia?**

Debates about the magnitude of and reasons for the apparently stubborn gender wage gap in Australia persists. Despite numerous detailed studies which have attempted to pin down both the magnitude of the pay gap and the reasons for the “unexplained variance” (eg Wooden, 1998) the arguments are still far from settled. Even the recent NSW Pay Equity Inquiry did not finally resolve these specific issues, but did conclude that at least part of the “unexplained variance” could indeed be explained by the historical and persistent “undervaluation” of women’s work.<sup>1</sup> Relatedly, and of increasing significance in Australia since the early 1990s, is the role that decentralised and individualised bargaining has had on widening or compressing this gender pay gap. This concern has emerged due to the move away from a relatively standardised system of wages determination, where most of the non-managerial workforce had their earnings determined by awards and national wage cases towards a more fragmented workplace level determination of wages and conditions (ACIRRT, 1999a:75).

However, despite early, deep concerns about the impact that decentralised bargaining would have on women’s wages and other conditions (eg NSW DIRETFE, 1993, Bennett, 1994), there has been surprisingly little detailed empirical analysis of the dynamics of bargaining *within* the enterprise bargaining stream.

Reliable data have been difficult to generate. The recent NSW Pay Equity Taskforce Final Report (1997:15) noted that there had been a number of concerns expressed about the potential impact of decentralised bargaining due to women’s low level of unionisation and representation in union structures, their high level of part-time and casual employment, the impact of family responsibilities and the concentration of women in service sector industries. They saw this as a cause for concern given that Australia’s centralised wage fixing system had been credited with closing the gender pay gap compared to countries with more decentralised systems. However, the report could draw on only a handful of submissions together with the 1996 report produced by DIR. This is hardly sufficient evidence with which to properly assess the impact of such a profound move away from Australia’s traditional wage fixing mechanisms, mechanisms widely argued to have been associated with Australia’s relatively reasonable record on pay equity throughout the 1980s (eg Whitehouse, 1992;).

Since the NSW Pay equity Inquiry, some additional research has been added to the store of relevant contributions to the debate (for example, Crocket and Preston, 1999; Pocock and Alexander, 1999, ACIRRT 1999 and 1999b; Reiman, 1999; DWRSB 1998, DEWRSB 1998, Wooden, 1997, Boreham et al 1996). However, while none of these could be described as definitive, some of the findings suggest that decentralised bargaining has - and is - impacting on the gender wage gap in a detrimental way. For example, Crockett and Preston (1999:20) in their review of research to date conclude that:

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1 See NSW DIR web site for further details about the pay equity enquiry at:  
<http://www.dir.nsw.gov.au/pubs/equity/report/index.htm>

Since 1991 Australian policies to decentralise the level of bargaining have been introduced throughout Australia. Drawing on the range of authors...there was a general concern that this would result in deterioration in gender wage equality (consistent with trends overseas). Early indications appear to support this view.

On the other hand research undertaken by and on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (and its antecedents) has been rather more sanguine about the impact of enterprise bargaining on women's pay. Despite evidence suggesting a deterioration in the gender pay gap in the 1990s the Department's most recent report on the impact of enterprise bargaining concludes that the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* "has not adversely affected" the gender pay gap (DEWRSB 1998: 9). Beyond the Commonwealth Department's research one of the few recent attempts to directly compare the gender wage gap in the enterprise bargaining stream with other streams (Reiman 1999) utilised data from AWIRS95 and found a larger gender pay gap amongst employees in enterprise bargaining workplaces than amongst employees in other workplaces.

Other than the research presented by the Commonwealth Department in its annual reports and some case studies of the enterprise bargaining experiences of women in particular industries and regions (eg. Boreham et al 1996) there has been very little analysis of the dynamics of bargaining *within* the enterprise bargaining stream. In analysing enterprise bargaining outcomes and assessing their implications for women, research must be sensitive to divergent patterns across industries, the extent to which wage outcomes are highly dispersed or relatively concentrated around industry averages, the influence of unions and the working conditions and provisions that are associated with particular wage outcomes. Many of the problems in achieving this degree of sensitivity are, of course, associated with the quality and limitations of available data. Crockett and Preston (1999:49) in attempting to assess the factors associated with a decline in gender pay equity in WA, argued that in order to obtain a better picture they required "detailed information to be gathered *on the full range* of wages *and conditions* covered in agreements, broken down by the extent of coverage of males versus females" (emphasis added).

This paper uses comprehensive data on enterprise agreements collected and maintained by ACIRRT. We examine trends in agreement making with particular reference to the relations that exist between: industry feminisation, union involvement in agreement making, key outcomes including both average annual wage increases and the inclusion of provisions relating to various aspects of working time flexibility. It is our contention that a better understanding of the impact of enterprise bargaining on the gender wage gap requires an analysis of what is happening *within* agreements. While aggregate level data on the gender wage gap can be informative, it tells us little about the actual dynamics and long term consequences of the bargaining process for women. In particular we need to understand the extent to which terms and conditions of employment are being 'traded-off' for the wage increases gained under enterprise bargaining.

## ***Why more heat than light?***

Why has the debate over the impact of enterprise bargaining on the gender pay gap generally generated more heat than light? Part of the explanation may lie in the fact that aggregate level data on wage outcomes for males and females may be serving to obscure quite different trends in the different streams of wage bargaining that are now a feature of the Australian system. Wage outcomes for women are likely to differ depending on the segment of the wage bargaining structure in which they are located. Table 1 provides a matrix of the wage bargaining streams presently existing in the Australian wages system.

**Table 1: Different approaches to determining employment-based earnings**

<b>Basis of earnings</b>						
		<b>Award</b>	<b>Collective agreements</b>		<b>Individual contracts</b>	
<b>Level of earnings</b>	<b>High</b>	1. Over awards	3. Certified agreements (high wage)		6. Executive professional contracts	7. Independent contractors
	<b>Low</b>	2. Safety net adjustments	4. Certified agreements (union)	5. Certified agreements (non-union)	8. Minimalist individual contracts	9. Dependent contractors

Source: ACIRRT (1999: 85)

Analyses of the gender pay gap in Australia have customarily relied on wages data generated through the Average Weekly Earnings Survey or the Employee Earnings and Hours Survey conducted by the ABS. These aggregate level data are amenable to disaggregation by state, sex, public/private sector and industry (and by full-time/part-time, occupation, public institutional sector, managerial/non-managerial, firm size and adult/junior in the case of the latter survey). However, those data do not readily allow analysis of wages trends within and between most of the segments identified by our previous research as being quite distinct. Thus those surveys tend to include all employees as one homogeneous group (with some exceptions) drawn from sectors 1 to 8 shown in Table 1. Estimates of the gender pay gap based on these aggregate level data may therefore be failing to recognise marked and significant differences in male/female earnings patterns between, say, those reliant on award safety adjustments and those with access to certified agreements or individual contracts.

In attempting to analyse the impact of enterprise bargaining on wages outcomes, it has therefore been necessary to rely on data from other sources (such as AWIRS as in Reiman 1999 and ACIRRT 1999b) or to collect data on wages outcomes in particular bargaining sectors. ACIRRT maintains a comprehensive database of certified agreements known as ADAM (Agreements Database and Monitor) that collects and codes information on wages and employment conditions in state and federal certified agreements (both union and non-union). The ADAM database was launched in 1993 and includes information on enterprise agreements since 1991. It currently holds information on 6183 enterprise agreements registered in the Federal, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australian and South Australian jurisdictions. In 1999, the database was expanded to include federal Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) and currently holds information on 212 AWAs covering different employers.

These data provide us with a detailed picture of collective agreements made in sectors 3, 4 and 5 of the bargaining matrix (see Table 1) and the federal AWAs that fall into sectors 6 and 8.

The ADAM Database is one of only two databases<sup>2</sup> in Australia that collects information on state and federal, collective and individual bargaining streams (ie. federal AWAs). Equivalent streams of individual bargaining are present in Western Australian (Individual and Collective Workplace Agreements - IWAs) and Queensland (Queensland Workplace Agreements – QWAs). However, access to these forms of agreement is not available to the public due to the secrecy provisions of the relevant Acts. This is also the case with collective industrial or enterprise agreements in Tasmania.

Just as the processes and structures for bargaining have become more complex and fragmented, so too, has the related wages data. As wage determination becomes devolved to the workplace level, our ability to rely on aggregate wages data such as that generated by ABS has also diminished. As a result, the ADAM Database is used for the purposes of this paper as it examines the content of agreements in considerable detail using a coding framework consisting of approximately 500 variables.

In the analysis that follows, we use data derived from the ADAM Database to investigate the dynamics of enterprise bargaining with particular reference to bargaining stream, industry feminisation, high wage and low wage outcomes and union involvement. The other principal source for comprehensive data on enterprise bargaining is provided by DEWR's Workplace Agreements Database (WAD). The WAD contains information on federal enterprise agreements certified by the Commission since 1991 and has provided the basis for the Department's annual reports on enterprise bargaining, and its fulfilment of its statutory obligation under s. 358A of the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* to report on the impact of agreement making on particular designated groups: women, part-time employees, persons from a non-English speaking background and young persons.

The WAD, unlike ACIRRT's ADAM Database, has been able to consistently code a large portion of agreements for employee coverage (including male and female breakdown).<sup>3</sup> As such, the WAD data should be best equipped to provide a very accurate picture of the impact of enterprise bargaining on female employees because it can move beyond simply using industry or occupational feminisation as a proxy for gender. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the WAD data suffers from significant limitations when it comes to estimating the impact of agreement making on women.

First, in terms of employee numbers and gender breakdown, the Department acknowledges that it only reports where *actual* employee numbers are known. This is estimated to be around 70% of all agreements. The gender numbers are estimated to be available for approximately 50-70% of all agreements. This means that anywhere

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<sup>2</sup> The other is the National Institute of Labour Studies' Australian Workplace Agreements Database developed for the 1997 DWRSB Report.

<sup>3</sup> The lack of available information on employee and gender numbers for certified agreements from various jurisdictions are mainly due to the different internal reporting requirements between government departments.

between 30% and 50% of agreements are not included in the analysis of gender trends. The figure falls further when we consider how wages data is coded on WAD. Unlike ADAM, where wages data that is not explicitly expressed as an annual percentage wage increase in the agreement is collected by contacting the workplace, WAD codes only where the wage increase is deemed to be “quantifiable”. As can be seen from Table 2 below, drawing on unpublished data provided by DEWRSB, the figure for agreements where *both* gender and quantifiable wage increases are known falls even further.

**Table 2: Characteristics of the Workplace Agreements Database**

	1996	1997	1998
Total number of agreements on database	4239	5091	6960
Number and percentage of agreements with gender information	2590 (61.1%)	3849 (75.6%)	4855 (69.7%)
Number and percentage of agreements with gender information and quantifiable wage information	1917 (45.2%)	2257 (44.3%)	3164 (45.4%)
Number and Percentage of those agreements that are male dominated (>60% male)	1229 (64.1%)	1828 (80.9%)	2411 (76.2%)
Number and percentage of those agreements that are female dominated (>60%)	449 (23.4%)	212 (9.3%)	499 (15.7%)
Those female dominated agreements as a percentage of total agreements	10.5%	4.1%	7.1%

Source: DEWRSB, 1999, July, WAD, unpublished data

Consequently, the number of agreements used by the Department for the calculation of the enterprise bargaining gender pay gap is around half the total number of agreements on WAD. The situation is even more problematic when it comes to conclusions that rely on an analysis of ‘female dominated agreements’. Over the past three years those agreements have constituted between just 4.1% and 10.5% of the total database.

The DEWRSB reports (DIR 1995, DIR 1996, DWRSB 1998, DEWRSB 1999) provide data on average annual wage increases (AAWI) for male dominated and female dominated agreements and for males and females for 1994, 1995, 1997 and the first half of 1998 (DIR 1995, 1996, DWRSB 1998, DEWRSB 1998). As noted above, the reports have been remarkably unexcited by the possibility that enterprise bargaining may be having a negative effect on women’s relative pay. This is despite data that appear to show that women have, more often than not, been faring worse than men in enterprise agreement wage outcomes. The results of the Department’s analysis of relative wage outcomes are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: AAWI (%) per employee for male dominated and female dominated agreements 1994, 1995, 1997, and 1998 and for males and females 1997 and 1998**

	1994	1995	1997	1998 (Q1-2)
Male Dominated (>60%)	4.3	4.7	5.0	3.8
Female Dominated (>60%)	4.0	4.6	3.6	3.5
Males	4.1	4.4	4.7	3.9
Females	4.1	4.3	4.1	3.7

Source: WAD as reported in DIR 1995: 234, DIR 1996: 141, DWRSB 1998: 70 and DEWRSB 1998: 8.

While acknowledging that these findings confirmed some of the concerns raised by several organisations consulted by the Department, the 1997 Report (prepared with the assistance of the National Institute for Labour Studies) was at pains to argue that the differences in enterprise bargaining wage outcomes for men and women could be explained by a range of demographic, human capital and social factors (DWRSB 1998: 69). Nevertheless, an enterprise bargaining gender pay gap was clearly evident. In the Update Report for the period January to June 1998, the smaller enterprise bargaining gender pay gaps of 0.3 percentage points (for female dominated versus male dominated agreements) and 0.2 percentage points (for females versus males) passed with little comment. The report also reviewed male-female AAWIs under enterprise bargaining for each quarter since June 1993. Despite arguing that these data indicated that there had been “little if any difference between average annual wage increases secured by men and women over most of this time period”, for 14 of the 19 quarters in which the AAWI had differed, men had higher increases than women. Perhaps more importantly, the female AAWI has been lower than the male AAWI for six of the last seven quarters.

Without digressing fully into debates about the relationship between enterprise bargaining and the overall gender pay gap two important points emerge from the data presented by the Commonwealth Department. First, given what we know about the enterprise bargaining gender pay gap and the fact that average annual (or annualised) wage increases under enterprise bargaining will tend to have a cumulative effect over time, it is perhaps surprising that the aggregate gender pay gap has not widened further than it has over the 1990s (see Wooden, 1997). This has had much to do with the countervailing effects of developments outside enterprise bargaining, especially in lower paid jobs in the award stream (sector 2 in Table 1). Here, increasing numbers of men in low paid jobs combined with relatively ‘improved’ wage outcomes for low paid female employees over the period have combined to see a lower gender pay gap at the bottom (ACIRRT 1999: 72-78). In one sense this observation underlines the limitations of a single aggregate figure such as an estimate of the gender pay gap based on average weekly ordinary time earnings ratios or hourly wage ratios. It again points to the importance of looking behind aggregate level data and trends in an increasingly diversified and complex bargaining environment. Wooden’s (1997) conclusion that decentralised bargaining has had little impact of the gender wage gap may be a little premature until better data is available.

Second, in speculating about the possible reasons for women’s average lower wage outcomes under enterprise bargaining, the most recent DEWRSB Report raises the critical question of ‘trade-offs’. According to the Report: “[a]n issue for further consideration is whether women may be more prepared than men to trade-off higher wage increases for enhanced employment conditions” (DEWRSB 1998: 9). Unfortunately, the Report fails to provide a detailed analysis that links wage outcomes and employment condition provisions for females. The data from the WAD that *is* provided does not provide sufficient detail about the employment conditions provisions to enable reliable evaluation. For example, “hours of work” provisions are present in enterprise agreements for 61.6% of women (and 63.0% of men) (DEWRSB 1998: 11). However there is no indication as to whether these provisions can be regarded as “enhancing” women’s employment conditions or increasing the hours female workers can be called on to work at ordinary time. In short, the departmental

data provides no evidence of the quality or implication of specific provisions. Further there is no evidence of the relationship between these provisions and pay outcomes which may indicate whether women are ‘trading-off’ higher wage increases for conditions, or whether they are missing out on both wages and conditions under enterprise bargaining. An analysis of wages alone is no longer sufficient to understand trends emerging in agreements. Wage increases do not operate in isolation from the range of other changes emerging in agreements, often with profound implications for overall remuneration and compensation.

The following empirical analysis of the ADAM database attempts to pursue the two points raised by the government analyses by moving beyond aggregate level wage increases and broad trends in the incidence of generally defined provisions. The first section examines average annual wage increases (AAWI) in terms of bargaining stream, the role of unions, and evidence of patterns across highly feminised and lowly feminised industries. In the second section we take a closer look at high wage and low wage agreements and consider whether unions and the level of industry feminisation appears to be relevant. The third section considers the possible relationship between wage outcomes and conditions of work and again consider the possible role of unions.

### ***Emerging trends within agreements***

This section of the paper examines three main areas associated with wage increases in enterprise bargaining. First, the ADAM Database is used to examine trends in average annual percentage wage increases (AAWI) in currently operating collective agreements and federal Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) by industry and union status. A disaggregated breakdown of 20 industry groups is used, allowing industry to act as a proxy for gender (in the absence of gender numbers). While not a wholly satisfactory approach, and in the absence of comprehensively coded data which provides an accurate breakdown by gender, the feminisation rates for each industry can be used to identify those industries which hold a higher than average concentration of women. The wage outcomes for these industries are analysed to determine whether male or female dominated industries are more likely to provide for higher wage increases.

Second, an attempt is made to move beyond average wages outcomes by identifying high and low wage agreement ‘clusters’ within industries. Because the wide wages dispersion within industry seemed to be masking a more complex story associated with the clustering of high and low wage agreements it was important to tease out in more detail what the intra-industry wages dispersion looks like within and between bargaining streams. To add to this complexity, it was anticipated that the characteristics of each individual workplace with agreements (such as union influence, nature of the business, male/female ration) also influenced the wage outcome, and as a result required consideration when attempting to explain wage outcomes.

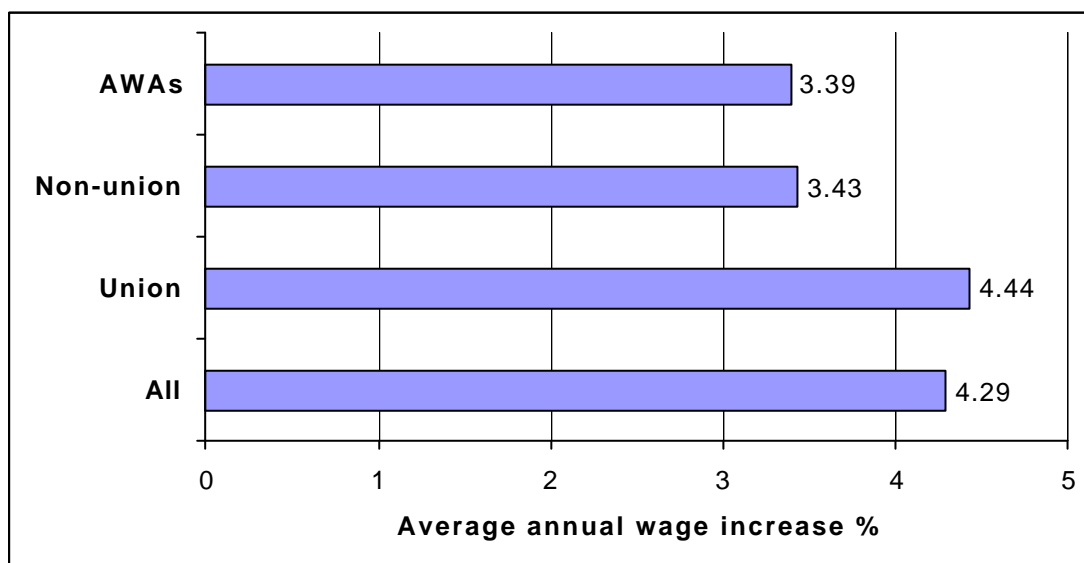
Thirdly, the paper explores the relationship between non-wage provisions such as hours of work and other work practices that appear to be associated with high and low wage agreements and also with union and non-union agreements. The relationship between wage increases and the ‘trading away’ of conditions is one that has been, to date, overlooked in much of the analysis of wage increases in enterprise agreements.

## Average annual wage increases in collective and individual agreements

A general sense of average wage increases is gained by observing broad trends within the bargaining streams. We noted earlier that wage determination is becoming increasingly fragmented with the rise in the bargaining options available such as collective, individual, union/non-union and individual contractual agreements. The promotion and growth of non-union agreements has accelerated both at federal and state levels. While the uptake of Enterprise Flexibility Agreements introduced under the federal *Industrial Relations Reform Act 1993* was slow, the uptake of s.170LK agreements under the *Workplace Relations Act 1996* has seen an acceleration in the use of non-union bargaining.<sup>4</sup> The take up rate of AWAs has also progressed at a steady pace where 1,500 individual employers were covered by AWAs at the end of May 1999.

Wage outcomes vary considerably between collective union and non-union agreements and also between AWAs. Figure 1 highlights these differences in wage increases under the three streams of agreement making. The figure shows that the average annual wage increase for all currently operating certified agreements is 4.3%. However, at a closer level, union agreements provide for average annual wage increases of 1% higher than non-union agreements (3.4%) and AWAs (3.4%).

**Figure 1: AAWI by bargaining stream**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data

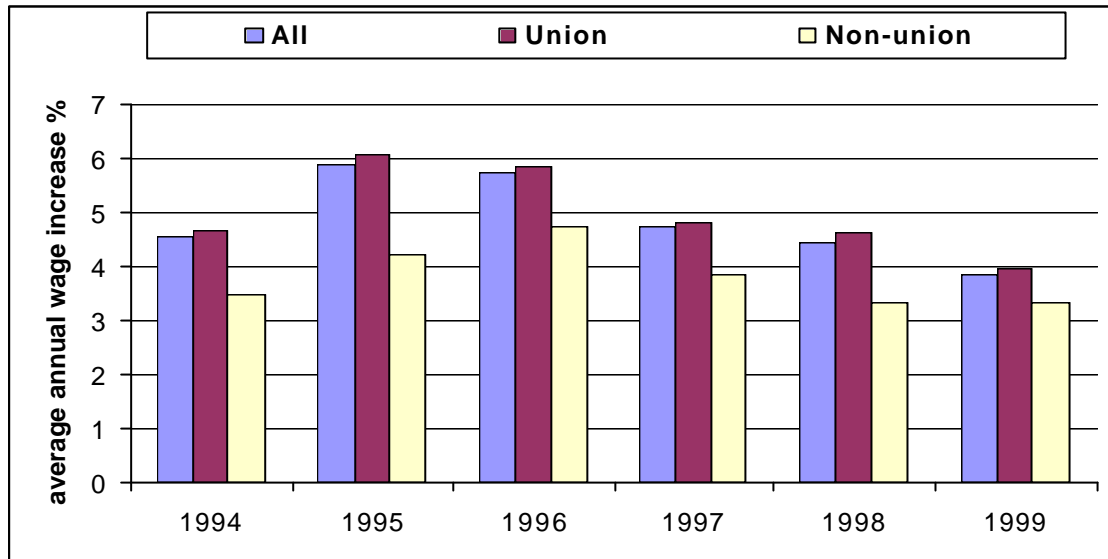
Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

An overview of wages trends between the union and non-union agreement streams since 1994 illustrates how union agreements have consistently provided above average annual wage increases, while non-union agreements remain below average (see Figure 2 below). This suggests that the average wage difference detected between union and non-union agreements may be a constant rather than a cyclical

<sup>4</sup> For example, while only 10 s.170LK agreements were made during the March quarter of 1997, ten times as many were made in December quarter 1997 and in the first six months of 1998, 295 non-union agreements were struck (DWRSB, 1998:15-16).

trend, and that the difference is more closely associated with the union status of the workplace rather than the industry influence which is known to fluctuate according to economic cycles or bargaining rounds. This is explored in detail through industry level observations and the industry characteristics of current agreements.

**Figure 2: AAWI in enterprise agreements, 1994 –1999, by bargaining stream**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data.

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

### Industry trends in average annual wage increases (AAWI)

Table 4 shows that there are no strong industry patterns emerging in wage outcomes. Most industries fall below the average with the exception of construction (a male dominated industry) which provides for well above average annual wage increases (6.4%). Hospitality at 2.84% and recreational and personal services at 3.13% are industries with average wage increases well below the average of 4.3%. According to the DEWRSB convention, hospitality and recreational and personal services industries are not considered ‘female dominated’ however over 50% of employees in these industries are female. Table 4 also demonstrates that, in many cases, industries with a higher feminisation rate (such as banking, health and textile clothing and footwear manufacturing) were more likely to provide for annual wage increases well below the ‘all industry’ average while male dominated industries were more likely to provide for wage increases closer resembling the mean.

**Table 4: Average annual wage increases (AAWI) for all current agreements and feminisation rates by industry**

Industry	Proportion of agreements with no wage increase granted (%)	AAWI (%)	Feminisation rate (%)
All agreements	25.0	4.29	43.4
Agriculture	26.9	3.43	31.2
Mining	42.5	3.48	9.9
<b>Construction</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>6.40</b>	<b>13.4</b>
Food, beverage and tobacco mfg	23.2	4.04	32.4
Metal manufacturing	13.3	4.23	12.6
Textile clothing & footwear manufacturing	25.0	3.38	58.0
Other manufacturing	14.7	4.39	22.7
Electricity, gas, water	19.4	3.99	17.6
Wholesale trade	32.8	4.26	31.0
Retail trade	38.5	3.62	51.4
Transport/storage	19.6	4.11	23.0
Communication	0	3.74	34.8
Banking	7.7	3.89	60.4
Insurance and other finance services	37.8	4.21	44.9
Public administration	18.6	3.64	45.1
Health Services	25.5	3.76	77.0
Education	37.4	4.17	68.0
Welfare & community services	57.6	4.34	78.2
<b>Hospitality</b>	<b>37.1</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>55.5</b>
<b>Recreational and personal services</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>50.6</b>

Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data; ABS Cat. No. 6202.0

Note: a) Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

b) Range is calculated by one full standard deviation from the mean above and below to find the average "range" rather than the just the average

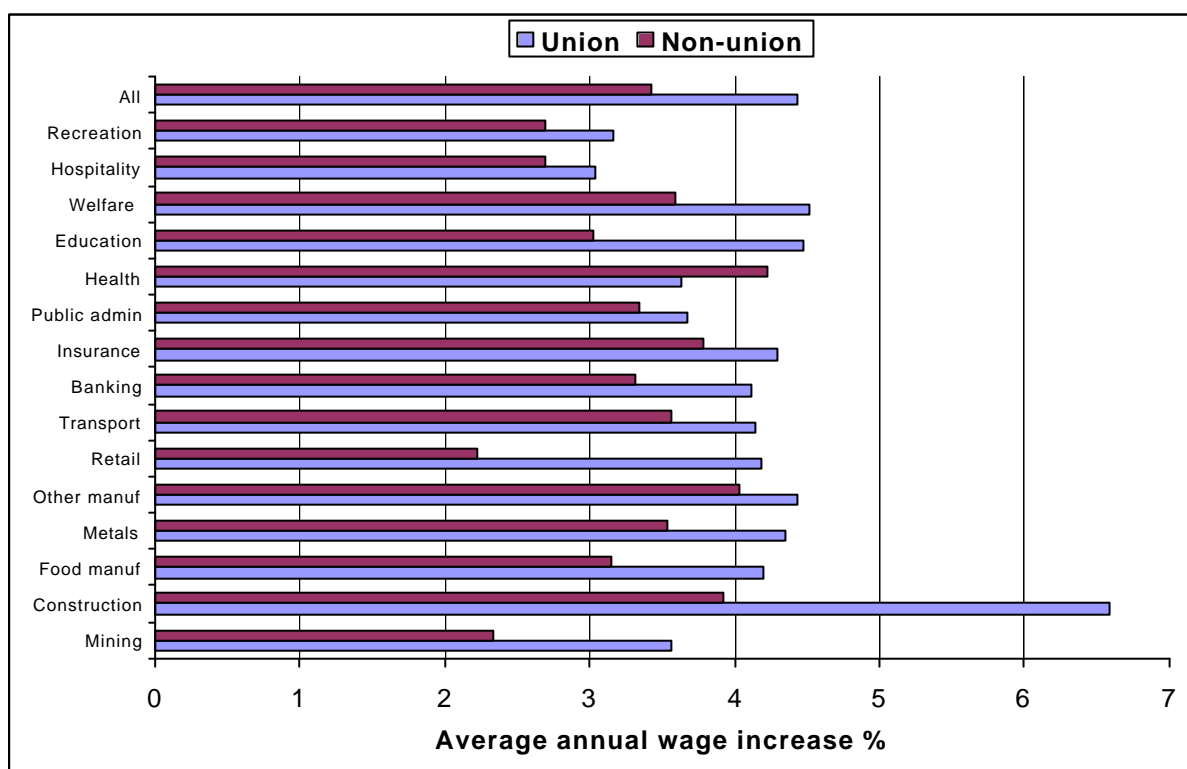
A further analysis of these industry trends by year, using data from ADAM, revealed that between 1996 and 1998, only one industry – construction - consistently provided above average wage increases each year. The manufacturing industries provided for wage increases slightly above the all industry average. Those industries that provided wage increases well below average over these years included mining, public administration, health services, hospitality and recreational and personal services. All of these industries had annualised wage increases below average for the three consecutive years. What was striking about these trends was that all of these industries, with the exception of mining, are either heavily female dominated or cover a large number of women.

How do the average industry trends hold up when we control for unionised agreements? Our earlier finding - that non-union agreements are more likely to provide for lower wage increases - holds true for all industries with the exception of the health industry. A closer inspection of these health agreements revealed that two non-union agreements were responsible for providing a higher than average AAWI. One particular agreement (Graylands Selby-Lemnos and Special Care Health Service Building and Engineering Enterprise Agreement 1998) covered workers conducting construction related work in a hospital, while the other agreement (Nurses Board SA Enterprise Agreement 1998) covered 23 employees of whom 17 were males.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Graylands Selby-Lemnos and Special Care Health Service (Building and Engineering Enterprise Agreement 1998 (WA Agreement No. 82 of 1998) and Nurses Board SA Enterprise Agreement 1998 (SA Agreement No. 501 of 1998).

Generally, the trends showed that in some industries, the union agreements far outstrip the non-union agreements in terms of wage increases. For example, unionised construction agreements have an AAWI of around 6.5% while non-union agreements provide for an AAWI of more than two percentage points lower. In education, union agreements are running at around 4.5% while non-union agreements are delivering average wage increases of just over 3%. Overall, for all industries with the exception of health, the differences in wage increase *between* the union and non-union agreements was larger *within* each industry than *between* industries.

**Figure 3: Non-union bargaining effects on wage increases by industry – all current agreements**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

### High and low wage clusters

Further trends emerge when examining high and low wage trends within industries. ACIRRT (1999a) noted that there is increasing wages dispersion both between and within industries that may be accentuated by enterprise bargaining. Given that actual wage increases within each industry range anywhere from 0.6% to 22%, dispersed ranges like these imply that average wages data may be masking important trends within each of the industries. For this reason, it is important to understand the ‘clustering’ of agreements across industries. Do some industries have large clusters above the average AAWI range of agreements? Do other industries have large clusters below the industry average range? An exploration of these patterns moves beyond the aggregate level and allows a better sense of where these high and low wage clusters lie and also in explaining the factors driving this divergence.

Table 5 below highlights the range of wage increases granted in the 20 industry groups. However, the ranges *per se* do not capture the extent of the cluster of agreements around the high and low ends of the spectrum. For this we have calculated the average range of agreements and estimated the proportion of agreements that clusters above and below this average range?<sup>6</sup> The ‘average range’ of wage increases for all industries fell between a low of 1.83% and a high of 6.75% per year. Any agreement, which provided for a wage increase above this range was considered a ‘high wage agreement’ while any agreement which provided for a wage increase below this range was considered a ‘low wage agreement’.

**Table 5: AAWI, highest and lowest average annual wage increases, standard deviation and feminisation rates, by industry**

Industry	AAWI (%)	Lowest average annual wage increase (%)	Highest average annual wage increase (%)	Proportion of agreements 1 SD above AAWI (>6.75%)	Proportion of agreements 1 SD below AAWI (<1.83%)	Feminisation rate (%)
<b>All agreements (n = 2120)</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>7.92</b>	<b>7.48</b>	<b>43.4</b>
Agriculture	3.43	1.5	5.4	0	15.79	31.2
Mining	3.48	1.0	9.5	4.76	16.66	9.9
<b>Construction</b>	<b>6.39</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>25.34</b>	<b>3.62</b>	<b>13.4</b>
Food, beverage and tobacco mfg	4.05	1.0	10.3	3.77	4.72	32.4
Metal manufacturing	4.23	0.7	15.6	4.91	6.75	12.6
Textile clothing & footwear manufacturing	3.38	0.6	6.3	0	16.66	58.0
Other manufacturing	4.39	1.0	15.0	7.85	5.76	22.7
Electricity, gas, water	4.00	1.0	15.0	3.45	10.34	17.6
Wholesale trade	4.26	1.3	10.9	4.88	2.44	31.0
Retail trade	3.62	1.1	15.1	4.17	8.33	51.4
Transport/storage	4.11	0.9	10.0	6.94	5.56	23.0
Communications	3.74	1.0	7.0	16.67	16.67	34.8
Banking	3.89	2.0	5.5	0	0	60.4
Insurance and other finance services	4.21	0.6	13.5	5.97	7.25	44.9
Public administration	3.64	0.3	9.6	7.29	5.21	45.1
Health Services	3.76	.6	8.0	3.95	5.26	77.0
Education	4.18	.6	12	11.11	9.72	68.0
Welfare & community services	4.34	1.0	8.3	9.52	2.38	78.2
<b>Hospitality</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>2.56</b>	<b>23.08</b>	<b>55.5</b>
<b>Recreational and personal services</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>0.3</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>31.82</b>	<b>50.6</b>

Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data, ABS Cat. No 6202.0

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

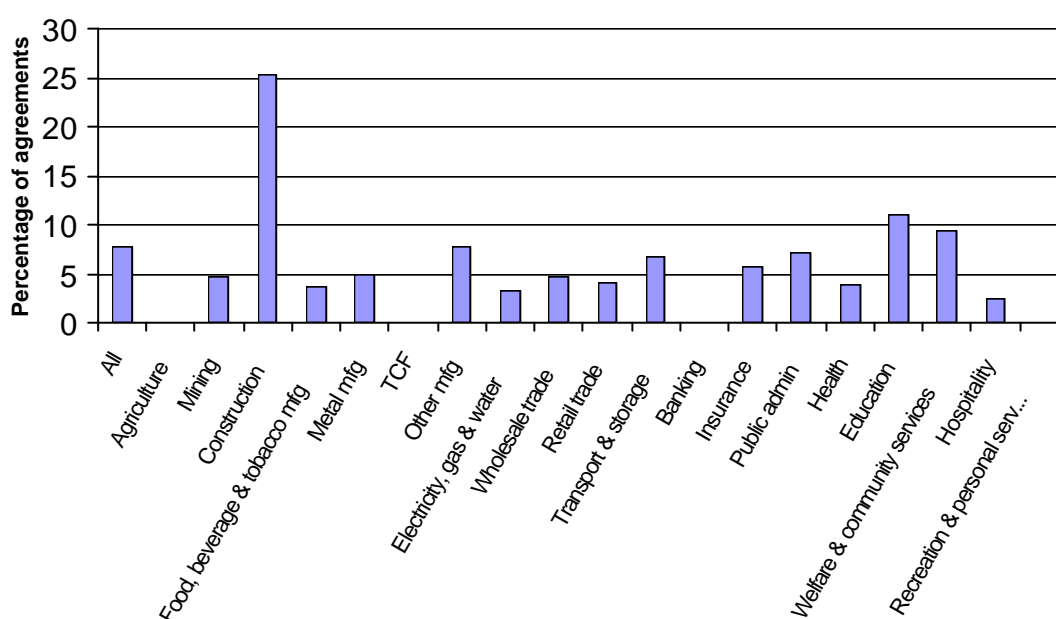
<sup>6</sup> The ‘average range’ is defined as being within one standard deviation above and below the all industry mean.

An examination of these clusters revealed some interesting trends. Around 7.9% of all agreements fell above the average range while 7.4% of agreements fell below. These initial findings prompted the following issues: How do the various industries fare and what industries have high and low wage clusters? Does the 'union factor' play a role in these wage trends?

### Industries clustering above the wage increase range

Of all agreements on the ADAM Database, 7.9% provided high wage agreements (see Figure 4). At the industry level, construction emerged as the only industry with a large cluster of high wage agreements (25%). This was followed by education (11.1% of agreements), welfare and community services (9.5% of agreements), and other manufacturing (7.9% of agreements). Most other industries were more likely to provide wage increases similar to the all industry average. Of greater concern was the higher number of industries that recorded no high wage agreements. These industries included agriculture, textile clothing and footwear manufacturing, banking, and recreational and personal services. Interestingly, three of these industries have high feminisation rates.

**Figure 4: Proportion of current agreements with high wage agreements, by industry**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data

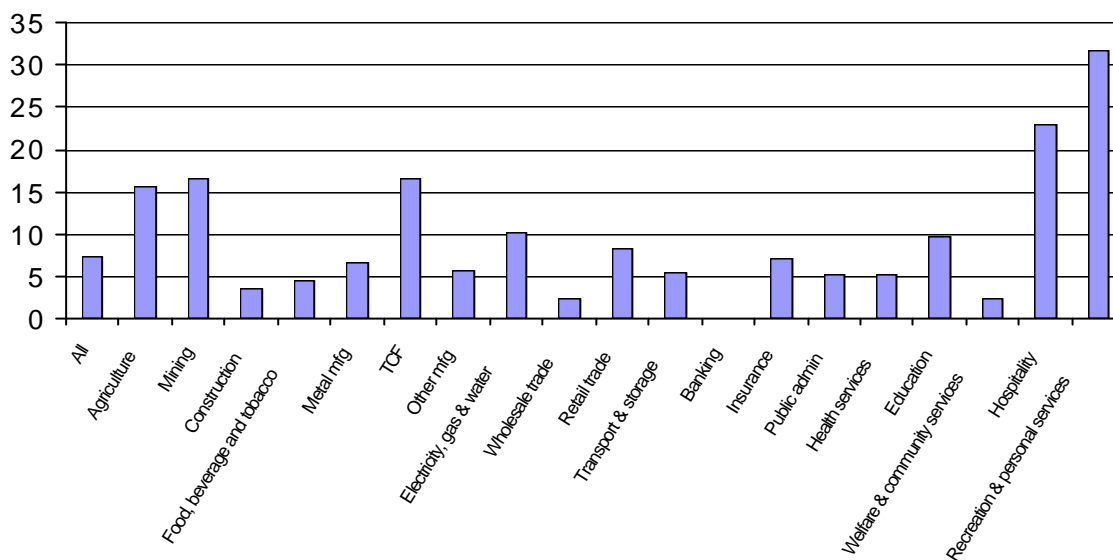
Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

### Industries clustering below the wage increase range

On the other hand, different industry patterns emerge with respect to the low wage clusters. Figure 5 below demonstrates that some industries are more likely to have a higher proportion of low wage clusters than others are. Of all agreements on the ADAM Database, 7.5% provided low wage agreements. The industries with a high proportion of low wage agreements include recreational and personal services (32% of agreements), and hospitality (23%), textile clothing and footwear (16.7%) and mining (16.7%). These industries are associated with relatively higher feminisation

rates with the exception of mining, which may be explained by the dramatically weakened bargaining power of workers in some sections of the industry in recent years due to falling commodity prices. The manufacturing industry is a good example in this case of how higher feminisation rates in certain sectors (such as TCF) are more likely to provide low wage agreements, than in other sectors of the industry (such as metal manufacturing).

**Figure 5: Proportion of current agreements with low wage agreements, by industry**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

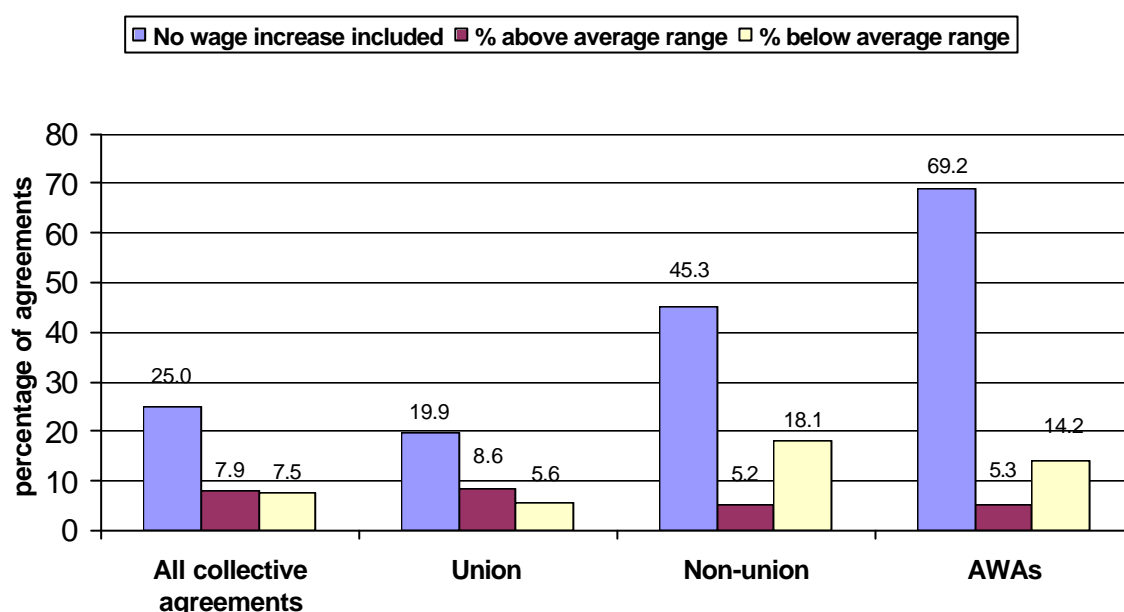
An overview of these observations suggest that, with the exception of mining and agriculture, industries where large numbers of women are employed are more likely to produce low wage increase clusters than male dominated industries. The lack of comprehensive data on employee coverage and gender breakdowns makes it difficult to confirm the existence or significance of the relationship between gender and high and low wage agreements. We can only speculate that the feminised nature of an industry may increase the likelihood of producing low wage agreement clustering, but cannot rule out the possibility of other industry or bargaining specific effects. These data do not, however, discount that gender may be to some extent implicated in the different industry outcomes.

### **Union/non-union wage dispersion**

We also examined the overall concentration of high and low wage clusters between currently operating collective union and non-union agreements and AWAs. Figure 6 highlights the proportion of agreements on the ADAM Database which provide for no wage increases, low wage agreements and high wage agreements, under three bargaining streams. The results show that, while there is little difference between the high wage clusters by bargaining streams, non-union agreements and AWAs are more likely to contain low wage clusters than union agreements.

The figures show that the individual bargaining stream (AWAs) and non-union agreements were far more likely to provide for no wage increase (69% and 45% respectively) than collective union agreements (20%). Further, they were also more likely to have a higher proportion low wage agreements (14% and 18%) than union agreements (6%). Conversely, a higher proportion of union agreements provided for high wage agreements (9%) than non-union agreements (5%) and AWAs (5%). Based on this data, we can conclude that union influence has an effect on wage outcomes.

**Figure 6: Proportion of high and low wage agreements and agreements with no wage increases, by bargaining stream**



Source: ACIRRT, 1999, ADAM Database, July, unpublished data

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

## Wages and conditions

One of the most significant features of enterprise agreements since 1993 has been the focus on changes to hours of work. The implications of the use of agreements to facilitate increased numerical and functional flexibility at a workplace level has been explored to some extent by Heiler (1996; 1998), who examined the impact on occupational health and safety, and the rise in extended hours work; Campbell (1997) who raised some issues for trade union strategy and Boreham et al (1996) and Charlesworth (1997) who examined their implications for women workers.

Still, to date, the impact of these provisions on wages outcomes has been underplayed. There has been little appreciation of the impact that the cumulative effect of working time provisions such as reductions in penalty rates, increased ordinary span of hours, increased ordinary span of days, annualising wages and hours and replacing paid overtime with time off in lieu (TOIL) provisions all might have on the overall package of remuneration. The combining of these provisions also makes it difficult to ascertain exactly how wages are being calculated and how additional or non-standard

hours are being kept in check and compensated. Finally, these provisions tend to reduce the nexus between time paid for and time worked, thus potentially reducing the significance and value of annualised wage increases. For example, we cannot assume that a 3% wage increase has the same value across all agreements. Some agreements may be trading away previously compensated working time provisions for wage increases, while others may not.

In addition, the impact of these changes on working time conditions tends to be cumulative.<sup>7</sup> Changes to hours of work made in early agreements are not necessarily re-stated in second or subsequent agreements unless there are further changes made to those specific provisions. Thus, changes to hours of work ideally need to be assessed over time with each set of changes in agreements analysed in light of changes made to the previous agreement. This kind of longitudinal assessment of agreements cannot be undertaken here, however we can explore the incidence of working hours provisions that appear to have pay implications in current agreements.

The relationship between conditions of work and wages cannot be over-stated. With respect to hours of work, Australia has historically relied upon a comprehensive set of protective mechanisms in industrial awards to both regulate hours and also to compensate for non-standard working hours (Heiler, 1998: 266). Not only does the removal or erosion of these provisions have implications for the regulation of working time, but it also has implications for the total compensation package received by workers. Thus an assessment of wages trends in agreements is incomplete without an examination of these kinds of conditions. Crockett and Preston (1999) appreciated the importance of remuneration-related conditions in their recent report where they noted that the full impact of bargaining on the gender wage gap in Western Australia could not be identified without examining the package of “relative compensation” included in enterprise agreements. They realised that the changes to remuneration related conditions of work had been so profound in agreements that it was likely to be affecting the overall package of compensation.

Since these hours of work provisions also appear to be more common in services industries where women are concentrated, their proliferation points to another critical dimension to the enterprise bargaining gender pay gap. For example, an analysis of working time provisions by industry found that more ‘open-ended’ working time provisions, such as extended span of ordinary hours and reduced penalty rates for weekend and evening work, were strongly associated with service sector industries such as retail/wholesale trade, financial services and recreational and personal services, including hospitality. However, more “structured” working time provisions such as 12 hour shifts, shiftwork and the specific removal of allowances and penalties for shift work and overtime were more strongly associated with industries such as mining and construction, and transport and storage (Heiler 1998: 273-276). Thus both male and female dominated industries were being affected by the erosion of working time conditions, but in different ways.

In this paper we look more closely at the relationship between these provisions and other wages outcomes, as well as other agreement characteristics. We have selected a

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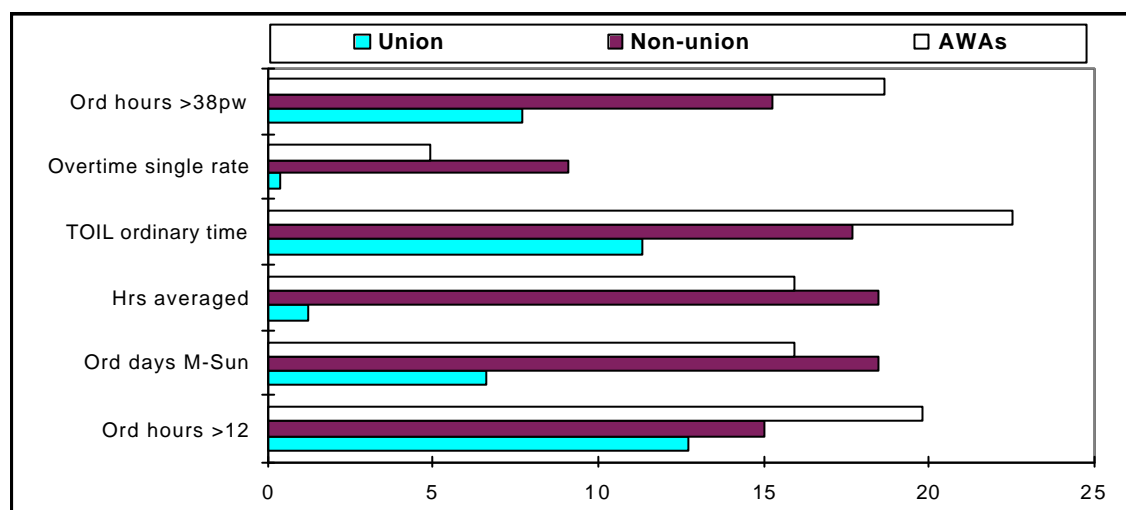
<sup>7</sup> Thanks to Stephanie Mayman from the Western Australian Trades and Labour Council who pointed out the significance of the cumulative impact of changes to working time over subsequent agreements.

range of flexibility clauses that are likely to have potential remuneration implications. Since the union/non-union status of agreements has emerged as the most significant factor associated with wages outcomes, we first examine these characteristics across union and non-union collective agreements and AWAs. Second, we examine these provisions by the high and low wage clusters identified earlier to see whether the clusters are more or less likely to be accompanied by particular flexibility provisions. In this way we can gain a sense of what might be being “traded off” for wage increases and provide a preliminary test of the hypothesis that women may be trading higher wages for advantageous working time provisions.

### Hours flexibility provisions with remuneration implications.

A comparison of union and non-union collective agreements and individual agreements shows some marked differences. Figure 7 shows the incidence of provisions that have obvious pay implications or, in the least serve to break the nexus between hours worked and hours paid.

**Figure 7: Hours provisions with monetary implications by bargaining stream**



Source: ACIRRT, ADAM 1999 (unpublished data)

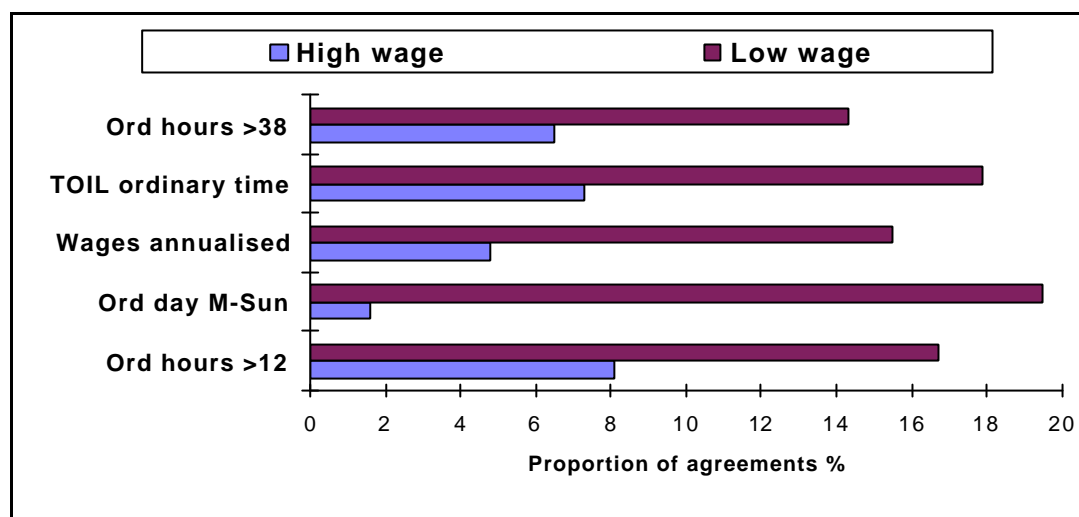
Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

Overall, it is clear that that non-union collective and individual agreements are far more likely than union agreements to contain provisions which reduce the compensation for non-standard working hours. For example, while only 0.4% of union agreements contain provisions that pay overtime at a single rate, over 9% of non-union agreements do. Similarly while 6.6% of union agreements specify ordinary days of the week as Monday-Sunday (in other words there are no penalties for weekend work), 18.% of non-union and 15.9% of AWAs contain this provision. Non-union agreements are more likely to specify ordinary hours of work in excess of 38 per week and almost a quarter of non-union agreements award Time off in Lieu (TOIL) at ordinary time, compared to 11.3% of union agreements.

It should also be noted that many agreements contain a combination of these provisions where a clause increasing the ordinary span of hours to 12 may be combined with a clause that also pays overtime at a single rate. Just as it is important

to appreciate the cumulative effect of these provisions, so too is it important to understand how they combine and how, in their combination, they may impact more significantly on overall remuneration. We can gain some sense of this by testing to see if high or low wage agreements are more or less likely to contain these provisions.

**Figure 8: Conditions with remuneration implications: high and low wage agreements**



Source: ACIRRT, ADAM 1999 (unpublished data)

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

We found that low wage increase agreements were far more likely to contain these provisions - even more likely than non-union agreements. Note, in particular, the provisions that stipulate ordinary days of the week to be Monday through to Sunday. This effectively means that no additional penalty payment is provided for weekend work. While only 1.6% of high wage agreements contain this provision, 19.5% of low wage agreements do.

We know that low wage agreements tend to be more common in more highly feminised industries (recreational and personal services, hospitality, textile, clothing and footwear manufacturing) and that those same industries typically have below average AAWIs. Low wage agreements and below average AAWIs are also associated with non-union agreement making. Constructed in this way women are clearly located at the crossroads of reinforcing disadvantage - they are more likely to be in industries with lower than average AAWIs and with a higher than average proportion of low wage agreements. Further they are more likely to be in lowly unionised workplaces and industries. Therefore, the link we find between low wage outcomes and the incidence of hours of work provisions that tend to adversely affect working time and compensation appears to refute the suggestion that women may be trading off pay for better working conditions. Rather, we conclude that women in enterprise bargaining are more likely to be bound by agreements that are *both* lower paying and more likely to involve the trading away of advantageous hours of work conditions.

However it may be argued that the apparent link between adverse working hours provisions and pay is in fact masking an industry or union effect. Once industry or union involvement is controlled for, the links between adverse working time

provisions and low pay may disappear. In order to test for this possibility we estimated a simple multi-variate model that sought to establish the relative influence of union involvement and industry in the mediation of the links between adverse working time provisions and low pay outcomes. Although the model does not purport to be a fully specified model of wage outcomes under enterprise bargaining, AAWI was used as the dependent variable. The other variables of interest – union involvement in the agreement, a series of working hours provisions variables and a series of industry variables – were included as the independent variables. All the independent variables were constructed as dummy variables with the dependent variable (AAWI) left as an interval level variable.

**Table 6: OLS regression coefficients for model of average annual wage increases (AAWI) for all current agreements**

Variable	Unstandardised Coefficients	Standardised Coefficients
Constant	3.655**	
<b>Working Time Provisions</b>		
Flexible hours	-0.220	-0.037
Weekend as ordinary day(s)	-0.452*	-0.068*
Hours averaged over weeks	-0.422**	-0.081**
TOIL at ordinary time	-0.109	-0.016
Annualised wages	-0.394#	-0.046#
Other labour flex for employers	0.602**	0.116**
Shiftwork	-0.368**	-0.079**
12 hour or longer shifts	-0.363	-0.044
Overtime at single rate	0.596	0.022
Longer than 38 hour week	-0.232	-0.028
Span of hours over 12hrs or more	0.307	0.068
<b>Union Variable</b>		
Union party to agreement	0.456**	0.072**
<b>Industry Controls</b>		
Mining	-0.014	-0.001
Construction	0.674	0.104
Food, Bev, Tobacco Manufacturing	0.413	0.046
Metals Manuf'g	0.424	0.060
Textiles, Cloth, Foot Manufacturing	-0.384	-0.022
Other Manufacturing	0.649	0.096
Electricity, Gas & Water	-0.052	-0.076
Wholesale Trade	0.462	0.033
Retail Trade	0.155	0.012
Transport & Storage	0.268	0.034
Communications	0.408	0.012
Banking	0.247	0.014
Insurance and Other Business	0.689	0.058
Public Administration	-0.227	-0.033
Health Services	0.173	0.017
Education	0.247	0.021
Welfare & Other Comm. Services	0.689	0.044
Hospitality	-0.395	-0.023
Recreational & Personal Services	-0.572	-0.042

Interaction Variable		
Union*Construction Industry	1.441*	0.216*

Source: ACIRRT, ADAM 1999 (unpublished data)

Note: a) Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

b) Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.173, \*\* sig. at 0.01 level; \* sig. at 0.05 level; # sig. at 0.1 level.

The results of the regression shown in Table 6 indicate that even controlling for industry, there continues to be a notable and statistically significant relation between many of the adverse hours of work variables and low pay – all but two of the working time provisions variables have negative coefficients and five of them are statistically significant. Three of the variables most likely to imply adverse working conditions for workers (provisions that class weekend days as ordinary days; averaging of hours over 4 weeks or 52 weeks; annualising wages) emerge as strongly and negatively related to pay and as significant. The coefficient for the shiftwork variable is also negative and significant. Two of the other variables that normally imply disadvantageous working time conditions for employees (flexible hours and TOIL at ordinary time) are also negative but are not statistically significant in these data. One possibly surprising result is that the “other labour flexibility for employers” variable is in fact associated with higher pay. This variable, however, is a measure of numerical flexibility rather than working time flexibility and picks up on provisions that allow employers to use labour hire, agency workers and other methods to vary the number of employees with relative ease.

Not one of the 19 industry dummy variables used in the model emerged as statistically significant. This demonstrates that, for our data at least, the relations between working time provisions and low pay are not simply an artefact of industry; in fact they hold regardless of industry. The only exception to this result was in the case of the construction industry dummy. In an earlier version of this model construction emerged as positive and statistically significant. In order to test the extent to which the construction industry effect was associated with union involvement an interaction variable was created (Union\*Construction). As can be seen from the Table when that variable is introduced the construction variable loses statistical significance. In other words it is the *combined* fact of an agreement being in construction and having union involvement in the agreement that results in a high wage outcome rather than the fact that it is a construction agreement *per se*.

The failure of any of the industry variables to achieve statistical significance might be seen to say something about gender. As discussed above, given the characteristics of our data-set we have – at the present time - no variable that can directly measure gender. Given the distinctive rates of feminisation in many industries, some of the industry dummies could be interpreted as weak proxies for gender. Before concluding that gender is less important in the explanation of low wage outcomes under enterprise bargaining than other variables (such as union involvement) it should be remembered that industry is only a weak proxy. Second, while none of the industry dummies are statistically significant, it is instructive to consider the signs of the coefficients. Most of the industries with negative coefficients are more highly feminised than the average – textiles, clothing and footwear manufacture, public administration, hospitality and recreational and personal services. Nevertheless, the evidence here appears to clearly indicate that, to the extent that industry can be taken as a proxy for gender, union involvement is more important than gender in the explanation of the size of wage increases contained in agreements.

## *Conclusions*

In considering enterprise bargaining and its implications for women's pay this paper has endeavoured to move beyond aggregate wages data and explore the dynamics of wage outcomes within particular bargaining streams and industries. Our analysis highlights a number of key findings.

First, the increasing fragmentation of the bargaining processes in Australia is leading to increased wages dispersion within the various bargaining streams and industries. Moreover, the increased complexity of wage determination casts doubt on the utility of highly aggregated wage measures such as male-female earnings ratios or average wage increases. Increasingly we need to access more disaggregated wages data that allow for analysis *within* industries and which take account of the various union/non-union, collective and individual bargaining environments.

Second, longitudinal data and analysis of current agreements by industry and wage clustering showed strongly that higher wage outcomes were far more likely to be associated with union involvement in agreement making and that low wage clusters were more often found to be associated with non-union agreements. Our analysis of trends within agreements and our multivariate modelling of wage increases under enterprise bargaining suggest that union involvement is a more important factor than industry location in the determination of wage outcomes.

Third, we found an important emerging relationship between the trading away of particular working time conditions, unionisation and low wage outcomes. Low wage agreements (also more likely to be non-union agreements) are far more likely than high wage agreements to trade away conditions associated with compensation for non-standard working hours. This appears to refute claims that employees receiving lower wage outcomes (such as women) may be trading higher wages for more advantageous working conditions. On the contrary, employees receiving lower wage outcomes under enterprise bargaining are *also* more likely to be losing previously compensated working time conditions.

Finally, our analysis may have implications for the longer-term impact of bargaining on women's wages and the gender pay gap. We conclude that because of women's industry and occupational location and low levels of trade union membership, that they are clearly located at the crossroads of "reinforcing disadvantage". They are more likely to be in industries with lower than average AAWIs, a higher proportion of low wage agreements, and a larger number of agreements where working time compensation is being eroded. These findings highlight the need to improve the quality of available data on gender coverage in agreements so that reliable and comprehensive information about the magnitude and character of the enterprise bargaining gender pay gap can be more readily accessed.

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## Appendix

**Table A1: Conditions by high and low wage agreements**

Provision	Proportion of all agreements (%)	Proportion of high wage agreements (%)	Proportion of low wage agreements (%)
Any hours flexibility provision	80.7	79.0	96.4
<b>Span of ordinary hours:</b>			
12	25.6	42.7	25.0
more than 12	13.1	8.1	16.7
<b>Span of ordinary days:</b>			
Mon-Saturday	5.4	1.6	9.5
Mon-Sunday	8.9	1.6	19.5
<b>Hours averaged over:</b>			
4 weeks	14.5	4.8	23.8
52 weeks	3.6	.8	1.2
<b>Wages annualised</b>	7.3	4.8	15.5
<b>TOIL</b>			
Overtime equivalent	8.1	.8	7.1
Ordinary time equivalent	12.5	7.3	17.9
Ordinary hours of work more than 38 per week	9.1	6.5	14.3
Other functional flexibility provisions	21.9	36.3	22.6
<b>Shiftwork provisions</b>			
12 hour shifts	7.2	3.2	11.9

Source: ACIRRT, ADAM 1999 (unpublished data)

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.

**Table A2: Conditions by union/non-union**

Provisions	Proportion of all agreements (%)	Proportion of union agreements (%)	Proportion of non-union agreements (%)	Proportion of AWAs (%)
Any hours flexibility provision	80.7	79.4	86.1	87.4
<b>Span of ordinary hours</b>				
12	25.6	27.2	19.0	12.1
more than 12	13.1	12.7	15.0	19.8
<b>Span of ordinary days</b>				
Mon-Saturday	5.4	4.6	8.8	4.9
Mon-Sunday	8.9	6.6	18.5	15.9
<b>Hours averaged</b>				
4 weeks	14.5	13.7	18.0	11.0
52 weeks	3.6	1.2	13.9	2.7
<b>Wages annualised</b>	7.3	7.5	6.2	10.4
<b>TOIL</b>				
Overtime equivalent	8.1	8.0	8.2	2.7
Ordinary time equivalent	12.5	11.3	17.7	22.7
Overtime at a single rate	2.1	.4	9.1	4.9
<b>Ordinary hours of work</b>				
More than 38 per week	9.1	7.7	15.3	18.7
Other functional flexibility provisions	21.9	23.8	13.7	12.1
<b>Shiftwork provisions</b>				
12 hour shifts	7.2	7.5	6.2	12.1

Source: ACIRRT, ADAM 1999 (unpublished data)

Note: Current agreements include all agreements on the ADAM Database which have not reached their nominal expiry date as at end March 1999.