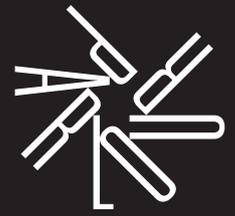


# 01. Pay equity:



: women,  
equity,  
architecture.

Equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in Australian law since 1969. Despite this – and despite the best intentions of many – gender-based pay gaps still occur in architecture, as in most industries.

This guide offers simple suggestions to assist practices in evaluating, establishing and maintaining pay equity, and to help employees seeking to achieve gender pay equity. It also makes suggestions as to how the profession as a whole can assist in addressing the issue.



**PARLOUR GUIDES  
TO EQUITABLE  
PRACTICE**

[www.archiparlour.org](http://www.archiparlour.org)

PUBLICATION PARTNER



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

**msd**

Melbourne  
School of Design

FACULTY OF  
ARCHITECTURE,  
BUILDING AND  
PLANNING

[www.msd.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.msd.unimelb.edu.au)



---

# What is a gender pay gap?

---

Pay equity has two different but related components – equal pay for equal work, and equal pay for work of equal or comparable value. A gender pay gap occurs when women and men are remunerated unequally in either of these situations. The gender pay gap is a national issue. In Australia in 2013 the average woman needed to work 64 extra days annually to earn the same salary as the average man.

In architecture, a gender pay gap could be an outcome of a female architect being paid less than a male colleague performing a similar role with the same degree of competence (equal pay for equal work). Alternatively, it could be a result of different roles being rewarded differently due to perceptions of the ‘value’ of the work – rather than an actual difference in the required levels of skills, experience and expertise (equal pay for work of equal value).

Most architectural practices are clear about the concept of equal pay for equal work, but the concept of equal pay for work of equal value is less understood.

Data on architectural salaries is scarce. Nonetheless, recent census data and substantial anecdotal evidence (from both employees and employers) indicate that gender pay gaps occur within the profession.

There are also indications of sometimes-substantial pay differences between similar roles within different types of practices. This may also contribute to the gender pay gap across the profession, and is much more difficult to tackle than pay gaps within individual practices.

Pay gaps are caused by a range of factors, many of which are cumulative and accrue over time. Pay inequity can creep into a practice via the following:

- Differing starting salaries
- Uneven pay rises and opportunities for promotion for employees with similar experience and performance
- Different pay rates for roles requiring similar levels of expertise, skill and experience
- Different negotiation skills and expertise
- Different levels of pay for part-time employees who are performing the same work as their full-time counterparts
- Uneven access to opportunities for professional development
- Uneven access to bonuses or performance pay
- More limited employment or promotion prospects for those with family responsibilities

Maintaining pay equity requires vigilance. Architectural practices can evolve and change rapidly, and this often translates into changing personnel and roles, project sizes and the type of work undertaken. All of these changes can allow inequity to creep in.



---

## Why does it matter?

---

Pay inequity has significant negative impacts for practices, individual architects and for the profession as a whole.

Pay corresponds to perceptions of power, influence, credibility and esteem, and is an important signal of how a person is valued in their work and professional environment.

The consultation undertaken during the development of these guidelines indicates that pay equity is seen as a major issue in the profession. The good news is that it was also identified as an area that is relatively open to change.

### **Practices**

Pay equity is good for business. In addition to meeting a practice's legal and ethical obligations, it helps to achieve fairness, respect and equality in the workplace, which is important for contributing to a motivated and productive workforce.

In contrast, pay inequity can have a big negative impact on the morale, commitment and productivity of employees. Those who feel undervalued are more likely to leave, and practices that are rumoured to be unfair may have difficulty attracting the best people. Remember, pay gaps can be revealed accidentally (a sheet left on the photocopier, a casual conversation), and can be alienating and destructive to staff morale.

### **Employees**

Pay gaps contribute to the economic insecurity of women in architecture.

Pay is also an important way of indicating value, responsibility and ability, and inequitable pay leads to a loss of individual confidence and a dissatisfied workforce.

### **The profession**

Pay inequity is a problem for the profession as a whole. Low pay and the concomitant search for better economic security is one of the key reasons women leave the profession. This loss of talent and experience is a significant issue, and a less diverse profession leads to reduced opportunities for all.



---

## What can we do?

---

Pay inequity is complex and needs to be tackled by everyone – practices, employees and the profession as a whole.

Employers and employees need to be mindful of the ways in which gender pay gaps can occur, and ensure that they have processes and strategies to counter these.

Professional organisations can play important roles in providing industry-wide information and support.

## Practices

There are many things that practices can do to ensure pay equity and many resources available. The following steps will help a practice identify and address any existing problems, remain alert to issues that may develop over time, and identify areas where equal opportunity may be improved more broadly.

### **Know your responsibilities**

All employers have obligations to pay equal remuneration for equal work or work of equal value.

- Be aware of your obligations as an employer under the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* and the *Fair Work Act*. • See ***Rights and responsibilities*** at the end of this guide.
- If you have more than 100 employees, make sure you submit an annual report to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.
- Don't use your practice's reputation as an excuse for exploiting employees – this includes paying under-Award wages, participating in unpaid 'internship' arrangements that are not part of an approved educational program, and expecting employees to work excessive overtime that is not remunerated. These are all likely to be unlawful, may attract hefty fines and lead to inequity across practices.

### **Do a pay equity audit**

An annual audit is a good start to ensuring equity. This fairly straightforward process involves assessing employees' tasks, responsibilities, experience and pay in relation to each other.

- Remember, one pay equity audit is not enough. Pay inequity often develops over time due to 'pay creep' and changing circumstances in the practice and broader economic environment.



- Keep an eye out for signs of a gendered division of labour. If women are differentially represented in certain types of roles, check that these roles are not undervalued.
- If your practice has HR staff, ensure they conduct regular pay equity audits – audits are often seen as non-urgent and are therefore not given priority.

The scale of your practice will determine the best way to proceed with a equity audit.

### **Large practices**

A number of online tools can be used to conduct a pay audit within larger businesses. These are listed in the resources section at the end of this guide.

### **Medium and small practices**

Online tools may be too complex to conduct an audit within a small practice, but it can be done manually with relative ease. The following steps provide a guide:

1. Draw up a list of employees and their salaries, with information on seniority, responsibilities, years with the firm, experience and years post-graduation.
2. Adjust part-time income to the full-time equivalent (where the roles are comparable).
3. Check for disparities and outliers – either high or low – and determine whether these differences are reasonable. That is, are the different pay levels the genuine outcome of different levels of performance and contribution, or has bias crept in?
4. Address any disparities that do not directly relate to actual roles and performance.
5. If you use past payments as a benchmarking guide, remember to correct for inflation.

## **Have a transparent pay scheme**

Secrecy is unhelpful to pay equity. A lack of transparency around pay rates can cause problems in two ways: first, it allows actual inequity to continue unchallenged;

and second, it allows potentially destructive perceptions of inequity to persist. A clear, transparent and consistent pay scheme avoids these problems, and also establishes a fair basis for negotiation.

A transparent pay system is one that is understood by everyone, and that enables employees to understand all the components of their pay and its relation to their job and performance.

This is not necessarily a recommendation that all employees know each other's salaries in detail. For example, transparency could be achieved by having identified pay bands and clearly articulated requirements and eligibility for promotion and pay rises.

This does not mean a more complex or administratively onerous system. In fact, the simpler the system, the easier it is for it to be transparent and objective.

- Make sure you are aware of the relevant Award rate minimums as a starting point and comply with them. The broad classification structure might help you evaluate positions in your firm.
- If other forms of payment – such as bonuses or performance pay – are used in the practice, establish simple written guidelines about targets and eligibility, and make them freely available to all staff.
- Performance pay fluctuates with performance. Use objective criteria and monitor them.
- Larger practices should be particularly careful where a number of different people are making decisions about pay for similar staff.
- Be open about how you determine pay and when it can be renegotiated, and educate employees about why charge-out rates are significantly higher than paid rates.
- Always discuss any changes to the payment structure with staff well in advance. Be frank, fair and open.



## Check salaries on entry and at promotion

Practices may inadvertently introduce pay gaps via unequal starting salaries. This can be difficult to remedy later. Pay gaps can also be compounded (or introduced) over time through pay increases and promotion procedures.

Anecdotes from architectural employers and employees, and research in other areas, suggests that men are more likely to negotiate or over-estimate their previous salary, while women are more likely to accept an initial offer. Being mindful of this will help ensure pay equity in your practice. ● See *Parlour guide: Negotiation*.

- When a new employee commences, check their salary against others in the practice, comparing required tasks, level of experience and responsibility.
- When an existing employee reaches an important milestone (such as registration), check their salary against others.
- Where relevant, check pay against available salary guides and benchmarking tools, and the current Architects Award minimums.
- Ensure your recruitment and promotion processes are fair and equitable.  
● See *Parlour guide: Recruitment*.

## Analyse roles in terms of equal value as well as equal work

Equal pay for work of equal value is one of the more complex aspects of pay equity. Different roles that require similar levels of skills and experience are sometimes perceived as having different worth. This often reflects historic or cultural biases, which are also often gendered and can easily result in gendered pay inequity.

Technical documentation, for example, may be valued more highly than ‘softer’ work, such as interiors or practice

management, even when the levels of skill and experience required are similar. These kinds of assumptions are beginning to be broken down, but still persist in some parts of the profession.

- Ensure that you assess the value of different roles in relation to the level of skills and experience required for each, not historic or preconceived notions of worth.

## Schedule pay reviews together

Conducting pay reviews for all staff at the same time helps to ensure fairness and equity as comparisons of growth and performance are easily made.

However, small practices may find it more viable to review salaries at two or three points a year (that is, in smaller staff groups). This helps to spread out financial increases and may provide more manageable time commitments for those conducting reviews.

- Where possible, have all pay reviews conducted by the same person or people, using consistent criteria, and keeping an eye specifically on pay equity. This helps to avoid pay creep and assists less assertive employees in being paid a fair wage.
- If it is more practical to review salaries at two or three points over the year, ensure that you have processes in place that allow comparisons to be easily made.
- Document all decisions and the rationale for them.

## Conduct annual performance reviews, separate to pay reviews

Performance reviews are required as part of the Architects Award and can help maintain equity, but they should be conducted separately from pay reviews.

- See *Parlour guide: Career progression*.



- Ensure your performance reviews are associated with clear, objective criteria for assessing performance and promotion, and that there is feedback from all directors/principals on the kinds of skills/experience they are looking for. Clarity for staff and management makes decisions easier and more equitable.

## Factor in other types of payment

Not all payment comes in the form of salary or wages. Other kinds of payment include bonuses, profit sharing, service increments, support for training, membership fees for industry organisations, registration costs, salary sacrificing or work-provided items such as computers and phones.

Bonuses and other additional payments can play an important role in recognising good performance and other contributions. However, these discretionary payments should also be considered when assessing pay equity.

- Have clear criteria for awarding bonuses and other additional payments.
- Be aware that bonus payments that are only available to senior staff, or for which certain positions in the business are not eligible, may inadvertently contribute to gender inequity.
- Consider setting up 'pro rata' bonus conditions for part-time staff, or extending a bonus scheme to junior staff. Where there are sound business reasons for excluding certain positions from performance payment schemes, make sure all staff understand the rationale.

## Reward output and productivity, not just visibility

'Being there' does not always translate into productivity. It's easy to notice the employee who turns up early, stays late and organises Friday drinks. It can be harder to remember the employee

who works part-time with minimal supervision, or works efficiently without socialising because they have to leave promptly at 5 pm. Nonetheless, less visible employees may well be making substantial contributions to the practice.

- When reviewing for pay and performance, check against the requirements of the role and productivity rather than visible presence. Look out for 'presenteeism' and don't reward it.
- Ensure that pay, promotion and professional development structures recognise and reward competence and contribution, not just overt confidence or hours in the office.

## Treat full-time, flexible and part-time employees equally

One of the hidden ways that pay inequity can sneak in is through alternative employment arrangements. Part-time employees (who are disproportionately women) are often not paid at the same rate as full-time employees, even if their role is comparable, and they may not have access to the same promotion and performance pay opportunities.

The dearth of 'quality part-time work' is another big issue for many employees, with many being assigned low-skill, low-responsibility work, with little opportunity for advancement or promotion.

This is a missed opportunity for practices – who are unlikely to be getting the best out of their employees – and it is frustrating for employees not developing and improving their skill set.

- Be creative and flexible in how you assign work to part-time employees. Look for ways to make the most of their skills and expertise and don't limit them to menial tasks with little possibility for development. ● See *Parlour guides: Part-time work and Flexibility.*



## Offer equal training opportunities

Pay inequity can build up over time as employees are given differing opportunities to develop skills and knowledge.

Research in other sectors suggests that men are more likely to be given the ‘hot’ jobs that help advance careers and are more likely to be seen as potential leaders.

Access to training is particularly important for part-time staff as gradual de-skilling is one of the hidden risks of part-time work.

- Ensure training opportunities are evenly available, including to those working in non-traditional ways. Publicise opportunities to help avoid inequitable assumptions about suitability, interest and availability.
- Ensure that employees are getting an appropriate mix of experience – this is particularly important for younger staff, but should be kept in mind for all.
- Avoid making assumptions about who might be interested in a particular topic or skill – and thereby denying opportunity to someone who might be keen. For example, interest in colour, structure, domesticity or highly technical aspects of architecture have been seen as gendered in the past. Don’t inadvertently perpetuate this stereotype.

## Use a professional

HR professionals can help practices to meet their legal obligations by establishing clear policies and identifying any pay anomalies. Just as clients sometimes think they can save money by avoiding using architects, practices may try to find savings by doing HR and legal work themselves. In both cases there’s usually a hidden price. For many practices, it’s a risk management investment, which is sure to be cheaper than a lawsuit.

## Employees

Employees can’t fix the pay gap, and they shouldn’t have to shoulder the burden of responsibility for this. Nonetheless, they can play an important role. How they regard and present themselves can have an impact on pay equity.

### Do your homework

Knowledge is power. Make sure you are well equipped for conversations about pay and promotion.

- Be proactive about keeping abreast of your practice’s expectations and guidelines for promotion and pay. Ask questions.
- Learn as much as you can about pay rates in the profession. Research industry rates via employment sites and professional bodies.
- Talk to friends and colleagues about pay rates – make sure you talk to men as well as women. If you only discuss pay with women, you are likely to come up with lower figures.
- Know your rights and articulate them in a clear, unthreatening way. See *Rights and responsibilities* at the end of this guide.

### Check out potential employers

Inform yourself about potential employers before taking a job. An employee has more room to move in a buoyant economy, but in any economic circumstances you should find out as much as you can so you are going in with your eyes open.

- Ask around about potential employers and their reputation on gender equity. What is the gender balance across the practice? Are there women in senior positions? How are flexible or part-time workers treated? Do women employees feel valued? Is there a high staff turnover? (A revolving door can often serve as a red flag.)



## Keep track of your own performance and development

Think about how you can prepare for and assist the performance review process.

- Make a list or record examples of your progression and value to the company.
- Consider keeping a detailed diary of your employment history so you have everything at your fingertips – details of career milestones, the acquisition of new skills, key achievements and personal aspirations within the firm.
- Try to address major work-related concerns along the way. Keep the lines of communication open with the practice director or principal responsible for HR so problems can be dealt with as they arise, rather than saving them up for the performance review.

## Learn to negotiate effectively

Research indicates that women are less likely than men to ask for a pay rise, and will often ask for smaller increases.

This is one way for gradual pay disparities to accrue, even if the commencing salary is the same – but it needn't be this way.

- Expand your negotiation skills and strategies through the many resources available.
- If you are uncomfortable talking about money, arm yourself with some strategies to help do it regardless.

• See Parlour guide: **Negotiation**.

## Step up and be visible

Impressions do count, even when your employer follows best practice and seeks to reward and recognise productivity over presence – and much more so if they don't! No one wants to be the office braggart, but do find ways to ensure your work is known and recognised.

- Be bold. Ensure that your efforts and achievements are visible. Speak up when you can make a productive contribution.
- Make sure you let your project leader and director or principal know what expertise you have, and what areas you would like to develop. This is especially important in the lead-up to registration, but is also vital for overall career development.
- Try to say 'yes' to new opportunities or projects if they are offered to you, even if you are not 100% certain you have all the skills needed. You can learn them.

## Look for opportunities

It is important to keep building your knowledge over the course of your career. This can be difficult if you are time-poor, so you may need to be strategic.

- Keep an eye out for professional development opportunities – remember you may find these in unexpected places.
- Research available training opportunities in fields of particular interest.
- Make sure you can clearly articulate the business case when discussing potential training with your employer. Outline how it will benefit your role within the office as well as you as an individual.



## The profession

Some aspects of pay inequity are difficult for individual practices and architects to tackle. Professional bodies and organisations are in positions to conduct research and provide resources relating to salaries, and to advocate for pay equity across the industry.

### **Research and publish pay rates**

A lack of broad knowledge about salaries in architecture is a significant impediment for both employers and employees. The Architects Award provides minimum wages for students, graduates and those newly registered, but remember that these are a minimum – salaries for more experienced architects are often harder to benchmark.

Research and reporting on salaries, salary bands and skill milestones across the profession would provide a stronger base for employees and employers alike.

### **Campaign for pay equity**

Pay equity will take some time to achieve. Industry organisations have an important role in ensuring the issues continue to be pursued over time, and to assist in educating architects and practices in how to achieve it.

### **Rights and responsibilities**

The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides for equal remuneration for equal work or work of equal value. Aggrieved employees can apply to the Fair Work Commission for an equal remuneration order to be made, requiring that they be paid fairly and equally. An employer who contravenes an equal remuneration order can be liable for a penalty.

The *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* requires all non-public sector employers with more than 100 employees to report annually to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), outlining their adherence to some key gender equality indicators. These include equal remuneration of men and women, along with the gender composition of the workforce and any governing bodies of relevant employers; availability of flexible working conditions; and consultation with employees on issues concerning gender equality in the workplace. Noncompliance can lead to significant consequences, such as ineligibility to tender for Commonwealth contracts, to apply for Commonwealth grants or other financial assistance. The WGEA offers advice and assistance to employers (including smaller employers who are not required to report) about improving gender equality in their workplace.

**Note: This is offered as an overview only. Readers are reminded that legislation may change and they are advised to check current legislation at the time of reading.**



### Credits

The Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice are an outcome of the research project 'Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership' (2011–2014), led by Naomi Stead of the University of Queensland.

The development of the guides was led by Justine Clark and Naomi Stead, working with Susie Ashworth and Neph Wake. The guides were designed by Catherine Griffiths. Full credits can be found in the introduction to the guides. The guides are published with the support of the Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne.

### Disclaimer

The Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice are offered as a guide and overview only. They may be of assistance to individuals, practices and organisations, but the authors, Parlour, the University of Queensland and University of Melbourne exclude, to the extent permitted by law, all warranties, express or implied, including without limitation warranties of merchantability, fitness for a particular use, safety or quality in relation to the use of the information contained in this publication, and disclaim all liability for any loss no matter how incurred, which might arise from relying upon the information contained in this publication. Individuals and practices should seek advice regarding employment and human resources policy and particular situations from their legal, HR or other business adviser as appropriate.

### Copyright

© 2014, Parlour, University of Melbourne and University of Queensland. You are permitted to download, display, print and reproduce this material in an unaltered form only for your personal, non-commercial use or for use within your organisation. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, all other rights are reserved.

## Further resources

There are substantial resources available on pay equity, many of which are relevant to architecture.

### Pay Equity Fact Sheet

Department of Social Services

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/economic-security/pay-equity>

### Best Practice Guide – Gender Pay Equity

Fair Work Ombudsman

<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/BestPracticeGuides/06-Gender-pay-equity.pdf>

### Gender Equity in Performance Payments

Department of Commerce,  
Government of Western Australia

[https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labourrelations/PDF/FlexibleWorkplaces/Pay\\_equity\\_factsheets/Solution\\_sheet\\_two\\_Gender\\_equity\\_in\\_performance\\_payments.pdf](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labourrelations/PDF/FlexibleWorkplaces/Pay_equity_factsheets/Solution_sheet_two_Gender_equity_in_performance_payments.pdf)

### Attitudes to Gender Pay Equity in Smaller Firms

Economic Security for Women and  
Edith Cowan University

[http://www.security4women.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Attitudes-to-Gender-Pay-Equity-in-Small-Firms\\_Final-Report\\_v2\\_Feb-20122.pdf](http://www.security4women.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Attitudes-to-Gender-Pay-Equity-in-Small-Firms_Final-Report_v2_Feb-20122.pdf)

### Behind the Gender Pay Gap fact sheet

Workplace Gender Equality Agency

[http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/behind\\_the\\_gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_branded.pdf](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/behind_the_gender_pay_gap_branded.pdf)

### Checklists: Equal Pay in Practice

A series of excellent, clear checklists from the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission, including Ten Top Tips for Equal Pay. Although the legal jurisdiction is different, these also offer very good general advice that is broadly applicable.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/tools-equal-pay/checklists-equal-pay-in-practice/1-ten-top-tips-for-equal-pay/>

### ACA National Salary Survey

Association of Consulting Architects

<http://aca.org.au/article/aca-national-survey->

## Further reading

### 'The Graduate Gender Pay Gap – What Do the Numbers Mean?'

Justine Clark, Parlour, 2013

<http://www.archiparlour.org/the-graduate-gender-pay-gap-part-1-what-do-the-numbers-mean/>

### 'More on the Gender Pay Gap'

Justine Clark, Parlour, 2013

<http://www.archiparlour.org/the-pay-gap/>

See Parlour  for further articles about pay equity in Australian architecture.

<http://www.archiparlour.org/topics/workplace/pay-equity/>

[www.archiparlour.org](http://www.archiparlour.org)



msd

Melbourne  
School of Design

FACULTY OF  
ARCHITECTURE,  
BUILDING AND  
PLANNING

[www.msd.unimelb.edu.au](http://www.msd.unimelb.edu.au)



Parlour :

: women, equity, architecture.



Australian Government

Australian Research Council

This guide is an outcome of the research project 'Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership' (2011–2014), funded by the Australian Research Council through the Linkage Projects scheme.

Project LP100200107. The views expressed herein are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Australian Research Council.



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA



Australian Institute of Architects