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## **Employment Info Series**

### **Info Sheet No.1.2 NSW Local Government Employment**

- **How many male and female employees work in local government?**
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## About this Info Sheet

The following information is based on analysis of a range of sources including data obtained as customised tables from the Australian Bureau of Statistics from the 2001 and 1996 Census of Population and Housing. It should be noted that the coverage of Census data and Labour Force Surveys differ. For the purposes of this study, Census data is considered more accurate than the Labour Force statistics, the latter being based on sampling methods and estimates of populations.

This Info Sheet explores gender segmentation in NSW local government. The document is designed to give a general overview of gender segmentation, by focussing on areas where employment numbers are relatively high for men and women. In doing so, the scope is limited and does not investigate occupations that are not included in the top 15 occupations of either male or female employees. However, this will provide opportunities for further research in later editions of this series.

### How many male and female employees work in local government?

The ABS 2001 Census data showed that 41,199 workers were employed in local government in NSW, 26,615 were male and 14,584 were female.<sup>1</sup>

The proportion of female workers employed in local government in NSW has increased significantly over the last few decades. In 1985 women constituted 26% of employees in NSW Local Government.<sup>2</sup> By 1996, the percentage increased to approximately 34% and continued to rise.<sup>3</sup> Data from the 2001 Census indicated that women now constitute 35% of the workforce.

However, it must be noted that the "growth" in the proportion of women in local government in more recent years has less to do with women making inroads into male dominated occupations, and more to do with the significant declining employment numbers in male dominated occupations. Comparisons of the 2001 Census with the 1996 Census indicate that the number of males employed declined by approximately 2,440 workers. The number of female employees declined by approximately 630 workers. While some female dominated occupations, such as child care workers and nurses experienced significant decline, the overall impact of employment decline has largely been experienced in a range of the male dominated blue collar occupations.<sup>4</sup>

## Gender Segmentation

In 1980 Australia was reported to have the highest gender occupational segmentation of 12 OECD countries.<sup>5</sup> Despite inroads women have made into some 'traditional male areas', local government continues to have many occupations that are highly gender segmented.

<sup>1</sup> Based on 2001 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, customised tables. Note that cells in tables provided by the ABS have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data and can result in some minor variations in tables, affecting comparative data.

<sup>2</sup> NSW Department of Local Government, *The Largest Minority: Employing Women in Councils*, produced by the EEO Advisory Unit, Dept. Local Gov., compiled by Casandra Traucki & Anne MacNeille, Sydney, 1989, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> Based on 1996 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, customised tables.

<sup>4</sup> See United Services Union Info Sheet 1.1 for more detail growth and decline in local government employment.

<sup>5</sup> ABS & Office of Status of Women, *Australian Women's Yearbook 1997*, ABS Canberra, 1997, Cat. No. 4124.0 p 6.

Of the 14,584 females employed in local government, 71% were located in only 6 broad occupational categories (out of a possible 44). These included: Intermediate Clerical Workers (4,208); Business and Information Professionals (1,595); Intermediate Service Workers (1,463); Social, Arts and Miscellaneous (1,187); Secretaries and Personal Assistants (1085); Business and Administration Assoc (802).

Of the 26,615 males employed in local government 69% were located in 10 broad occupational categories (out of a possible 44). These included: Other Labourers and Related Workers (3,324); Intermediate Plant Operators (3,065); Road and Rail Transport Drivers (2,333); Intermediate Clerical Workers (1,934); Science, Building and Engineering (1,601); Social, Arts and Misc (1,395); Skilled Agricultural and Horticultural (1,395); Specialist Managers (1,131); Science, Engineering and Related (1,087); Business and Information Professionals (1,025).

Three of the major groupings appear in both the male and female lists (Intermediate Clerical Workers; Business and Information Professionals; Social, Arts and Miscellaneous). However an analysis of disaggregated figures (breaking down the major groupings into over 400 individual occupations) reveals a clearer picture of the extent to which particular occupations are dominated by one gender.

### What occupations are held by male employees?

Approximately 45% of males employed in NSW local government are employed in 15 occupations. The table below enables us to examine these 15 occupations.

<b>Top 15 occupations held by male employees in NSW Local Government,</b> by number of males employed - in descending order, total number of employees in each occupation and males as a percentage of each occupation.			
<b>Occupations</b>	<b>No. of Male Employees</b>	<b>Total No. of Employees</b>	<b>Males as % of Employees in Each Occupation</b>
Truck Drivers	2008	2025	99.16%
Mobile Construction Plant Operators	1650	1655	99.70%
Gardeners	1079	1200	89.92%
Labourers and Related Workers, nfd	981	1010	97.13%
Civil Engineers	938	999	93.89%
Paving and Surfacing Labourers	849	849	100.00%
Cleaners	719	1069	67.26%
Nursery and Garden Labourers	675	718	94.01%
Other Intermediate Stationary Plant Operators	646	652	99.08%
Building, Architectural & Surveying Assoc. Prof.	635	690	92.03%
Intermediate Inspectors and Examiners	622	706	88.10%
Urban and Regional Planners	590	957	61.65%
Project and Program Administrators	510	914	55.80%
Occupational & Environmental Health Professionals	467	595	78.49%
Motor Mechanics	422	422	100.00%

Source: Based on extracted data from ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing, customised tables.

The list above, shows that large numbers of the male workforce are employed in a mix of white collar and blue collar positions. Another significant feature is that the occupations tend to be highly male dominated. Indeed, in nine of the fifteen occupations males account for over 90% of the total number employed. Project and Program Administrators is the most gender balanced with 55.8% but there are no indications of the type of projects which might be included in this group.

## What occupations are held by female employees?

Approximately 60% of females employed in NSW local government are employed in 15 occupations. The table below enables us to examine these 15 occupations.

<b>Top 15 occupations held by female employees in NSW Local Government, by number of females employed - in descending order, total number of employees in each occupation and females as a percentage of each occupation.</b>			
<b>Occupations</b>	<b>No. of Female Employees</b>	<b>Total No. of Employees</b>	<b>Females as % of Employees in Each Occupation</b>
Secretaries and Personal Assistants	1085	1095	99.09%
General Clerks	1061	1443	73.53%
Children's Care Workers	935	969	96.49%
Librarians	841	1001	84.02%
Library Assistants	794	928	85.56%
Inquiry and Admissions Clerks	630	793	79.45%
Keyboard Operators	531	576	92.19%
Welfare and Community Workers	482	650	74.15%
Project and Program Administrators	404	914	44.20%
Accounting Clerks	384	551	69.69%
Urban and Regional Planners	367	957	38.35%
Library Technicians	364	414	87.92%
Cleaners	350	1069	32.74%
Registry and Filing Clerks	299	368	81.25%
Receptionists	257	268	95.90%

Source: Based on extracted data from ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing, customised tables.

As can be noted from the above table, the occupations tend to be highly female dominated. Four of the occupations are almost exclusively female with over 90% of the employees being female – Secretaries and Personal Assistants, Children's Care Workers, Keyboard Operators and Receptionists. Almost all of the remaining occupations have a majority of employees being females, with the exception of cleaners (only 32.7% female), Urban and Regional Planners (38.35% female) and Project and Program Administrators (44.2% female). Urban and Regional Planning has traditionally been a male dominated industry in local government but it is clear from the statistics that women are making inroads in this area.

Four of the occupations listed have the word "clerks" in the title and three of the occupations are library related. The combination of secretaries, clerks and library workers appear to make up a significant proportion of the female workforce in local government in NSW.

In conclusion, it would appear that gender segmentation continues to characterise the workforce in NSW local government and women are still concentrated in a smaller range of occupations compared with men.

Nevertheless, the overall proportion of women has increased in the last few decades. Unfortunately, however, in recent years it appears that this increase has largely (or at least partly) been due to the shrinking of male dominated blue collar occupations (see Info Sheet 1.1 May 2003).