

Professor Marilyn Waring

Professor Waring was named on March 8 as one of New Zealand's women of achievement. Zonta said she had "dedicated her career to advancing the status of women internationally ... [and] is known as the principal founder of feminist economics, which argues that women's work has not traditionally been factored into economic study".

Reflecting on women in academic life, Professor Waring said: "Much of New Zealand's research funding is a merry go round of the old boys network. They have looked after each other very well for years. The gendered numbers for Fellows (sic) of the Royal Society, for example, is a disgusting 422 men (a suffocatingly pakeha list), compared with 42 women. They nominate each other as Fellows, as peer reviewers for funds, and for peer esteem PBRF points". Professor Waring called for a ten year moratorium on any more boys on the list, with appointments restricted to the extraordinary scholarship of women academics. "And while they are about it, they might like to find a gender neutral term so women are not expected to be Fellows", she said.

Professor Waring says it is frustrating that despite innovative, qualitative research approaches, using post patriarchal methodologies such as phenomenology, appreciative enquiry and Pacific and Maori epistemologies, the findings continue to be seen as a second cousin to quantitative approaches. "Some of this stuff is so full of abstractions, and so lacking of the consideration of externalities, that it is meaningless". She called on the Prime Minister's Office to ensure the next Science Advisor is a woman. "Then we might find some of the issues in the 'too hard' basket, where women are key researchers, becoming a priority".

Despite her career-long dedication, Professor Waring says she is tired of it always being women's job to drive equality and reject discrimination.

"It should be important to everyone, regardless of their gender or their ideological persuasion. It should be important from a human rights' and social justice perspective."

For those driven by business and economic concerns, Professor Waring observed that they should be motivated by the strong evidence that gender inequality acts as a barrier to economic growth.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently acknowledged that gender inequality has a negative impact on female labour force participation rates, which in turn has a negative effect on macroeconomic growth and stability.

World Bank Group has long argued that removing the barriers that women and girls face in participating in the economy would have positive effects on economic growth and poverty reduction.

Professor Waring says the Zonta list reflects the activists and advocates who have contributed to real changes but there are more names that could be added to that list including AUT academics Professor Peggy Fairbairn Dunlop, Professor Jane Koziol-McLain, Professor Edwina Pio, Professor Elaine Rush, Professor Judy McGregor and political activist and AUT doctoral graduate Sue Bradford.

"Any woman who drives legislation that makes it an offence to assault a child should make that list."

Professor Waring was conferred with Honorary Membership of Zonta International in 2014.