



**Crying shame:** Anne Thewles braves a cold, wet day outside Parliament to show her support for equal wages. Disparity was unacceptable, she said. "They can't ignore it, they must fix it." Photo: CRAIG SIMCOX

## Scrapping of pay equity inquiry sparks protest

**NATHAN BEAUMONT**

ANNE THEWLES hopes she will never have to explain to her granddaughter why she earns less than her brother.

Mrs Thewles, a Public Service Association employee, was one of at least 200 people who braved wet, freezing conditions at Parliament to protest against the lack of pay equity.

The protest yesterday was sparked by the Government's scrapping of a pay equity investigation and its disbanding of the pay and employment equity unit at the Labour Department.

"I'm angry the Government is telling my six-year-old granddaughter she's worth less than her eight-year-old brother because she's a girl," Mrs Thewles

said. "That's unacceptable. They can't ignore it, they must fix it."

The PSA said yesterday it had complained to the Human Rights Commission. It said axing the investigation, aimed at closing a pay gap for Child, Youth and Family social workers, discriminated against women.

At the protest, Council of Trade Unions president Helen Kelly demanded the Government reveal how it planned to close the pay gap.

"We challenge them to tell us how they are going to work with employers and unions across both public and private sectors to reduce the pay gap," she said.

Labour's women's affairs spokeswoman, Sue Moroney, told the crowd that women

earned on average 12 per cent less than men. Many people held placards of \$10 notes, with the 10 altered to \$8.80 to show the inequity.

Carrying pink balloons and placards, school support staff, including teacher aides, librarians, administration staff, specialists and therapists, used the protest to voice anger over pay talks. The group's union, NZEI, said support staff, many of whom were women, were clear victims of the gender pay gap.

The union lodged claims for support staff in November and bargaining began in May.

Spokesman Paul Goulter said many workers earned as little as \$12.94 an hour - 44c more than the minimum wage - and had not been offered a pay rise.

## INSIDE



### Family says sorry

The family of wheelchair-bound gunman Shayne Sime apologises to everyone affected by his rampage. More than 100 shots were fired from his home before police shot him dead. **A2**



### Madoff to die in jail

Victims applaud as \$100-billion swindler Bernard Madoff is sentenced to 150 years in prison. **B1**



### Heath's demons

Friends of the late Heath Ledger speak about the actor's battle with prescription drugs in the weeks before his death. **B7**



### Sanctuary under review

Mt Bruce's future as a breeding centre for endangered birds is under review as DOC considers shifting its focus to local initiatives. **A10**

SBORNE RAIN NAPIER/HASTINGS RAIN PALMERSTON NTH CLEARING MASTERTON RAIN NELSON FINE BLENHEIM RAIN CHRISTCHURCH DRIZZLE **INDEX: A2**

STAND UP

CENTURY CITY Interislander BEDS HYUNDAI GANTAS SOLO