

Zelda D'Aprano was born in Melbourne in 1928. She was a bright student, but her family's poverty forced her to leave school at 13 and work in a biscuit factory. After marriage and her daughter's birth Zelda worked in clothing factories, where pay and conditions for women workers were miserable.

Zelda then went to work in a hospital. She studied and qualified as a dental nurse, but because she was a married woman she received a low wage. Her application for an increase led to the removal of wage discrimination against women dental nurses in Victoria.

Zelda joined a trade union and was soon involved in many struggles to improve the conditions of workers. She became an official in the Meat Industry Union. In 1969 this trade union applied for equal pay for women workers in sausage factories.



Zelda chained to the doors of the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne in 1969.

Zelda attended the **1969** Equal Pay case. She became angry with the way the court operated, because the women in the audience felt like 'cows at the sale yards, while all the men out the front presented arguments as to how much we were worth'. She was also very angry with the judges' decision: some women in the meat industry received equal pay, but this did not apply to other industries.

Zelda and her friends asked one another what they could do. Zelda decided that extreme action was needed. In October 1969 she chained herself across the entrance to the Commonwealth Building in Melbourne to protest against the government's lack of action on equal pay. The media gave Zelda's demonstration great publicity. This helped raise awareness of the injustice of unequal pay.

Journalists and photographers were present again when Zelda and three friends took tram rides and paid only three-quarters of the fare because, as Zelda said, 'We get paid only 75% of the pay men get'.

In **1972** the Arbitration Commission awarded men and women equal pay for work of equal value.