

# 2 Hospitality employment: Historical analysis

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## Abstract

This chapter traces three historical case studies from New Zealand, Ireland and South Africa. From broadly similar corporatist systems in the post-war period, to broadly similar neo-liberal approaches post-1990, the chapter provides insight into the historical antecedents that underpin the modern and deeply problematic employment conditions in all three countries. The case studies highlight clear similarities in conditions across all three countries: low pay, poor career progression, high turnover, precarity and high levels of harassment, to name a few. However, we also see clear differences between the countries, whilst highlighting the consequences of a shift away from state management of the employment ecosystem in the post-war hospitality period, to the neo-liberal free-for-all of the modern era. Whether state intervention was intended to be supportive, with protective legislation and strong trade unions (as in New Zealand and Ireland) or was part of the control exerted on all aspects of life by the apartheid regime in South Africa, the broadly similar Keynesian, corporatist milieu is clearly apparent, and the consequences of these changes are seen in a legacy of problematic employment conditions in all three countries.

## Introduction

This chapter brings together three historical hospitality employment case studies from New Zealand, Ireland and South Africa. It will argue that these three countries, while they differ greatly in their recent cultural, economic and political journeys, share similar experiences in evolving from corporatist to neo-liberal consensus in the post-war period. The chapter does not focus on one specific fair work principle but rather takes a broad historical approach and argues that the antecedents for problematic pay, conditions, representation and all fair work elements can be brought into focus by these case studies. The three countries were selected as they represent the expertise of the authors, and they provide a manageable view of the similarities and differences of both shared colonial