

## **Delays in bargaining: Lobbying your MP**

### **What you could say to your MP:**

Making sure our children get quality learning means making sure that the people who work in education have quality working conditions.

Research shows that valuing and investing in people working in education leads to better quality teaching and learning.

If we're to come out of the economic recession with a productive economy and a healthy society, then we need to keep investing in education and our children – they are the workforce of tomorrow.

I'm concerned that the negotiations for kindergarten teachers, support staff and kaiarahi I te reo have now been delayed for more than four months. NZEI Te Riu Roa lodged the claims in November (for support staff) and December (for kindergarten teachers) last year. Bargaining for both sectors was initiated by NZEI on 19 January. The agreements have already expired (on February 28 (kindergarten) and March 1 (support staff)).

NZEI has been asking the Ministry of Education to start negotiations. They say they will not begin discussion because the Government has not given them a mandate for the negotiations.

As members, these agreements are fundamental to ensuring we improve our working conditions and get fair pay. Ultimately, children's learning will suffer if there are not enough teachers, there is a high turn over of teacher aides and people working in education are stressed, over-worked and under-paid.

What's at stake for us is...

- Kindergarten teachers want to retain their professional status with teachers in other sectors.
- Early childhood teachers are in short supply. To retain and attract teachers, their pay and conditions need to match those of teachers in other sectors.
- School support staff – teacher aides, office administrators, school nurses, science technicians, IT staff and more – want fair pay for the essential work they do in our schools.
- Support staff want better job security instead of never being sure how many hours they will have – or whether they will have a job - the next term.
- If the government supports quality education, they need to support quality conditions for people working in education. We can only get that if we sit around the table and negotiate!

### **Possible questions you may get from MPs**

#### ***But won't the CEAs just roll over for another 12 months anyway?***

Legally the agreements will continue in force for another 12 months. But the delay in negotiations means members may miss out. For example, any pay increases – and any tax advantages - that would otherwise have begun early in the year may not be back-dated.

More importantly, we're beginning to question the Government's commitment to good faith negotiations.

***You surely can't expect a pay rise in the current economic climate?/There's no money anyway***

We are in a difficult economic climate but if the country wants good quality education for our children then the government needs to support quality conditions of employment for people working in education.

Negotiations are not just about pay, they are also about addressing issues of professional development, career structures, job security, and re-organisation of kindergarten services, for example. Support staff and kindergarten teachers want these issues addressed now.

Money spent in the education sector should be seen as an investment in the future because it is education that will help us move out of the present downturn.

***We're too new as government/ it's up to the Ministry not to us... ie /process based arguments***

The government has been in power for five months. The Ministry are very clear that they do not have a mandate from the government and that that is the problem.

NZEI has given the government plenty of leeway by presenting our claims in November so that it would have plenty of time to respond to them. After 5 months, members' patience is now wearing thin and they are demanding negotiations get underway.

This government says it is an action-oriented one. It has implemented its 100 day action plan which covered a wide range of initiatives, but there has been no action on the negotiations which is a "bread and butter" issue for our members.