



New Zealand Educational Institute (Inc.)

Fairness at work
NZEI Briefing Paper June 2008

Fairness at Work

- NZEI policy supports fair employment law and the right to bargain collectively at national level as a union
- There have been gains for working people in the past decade such as paid parental leave, Kiwisaver, increases in the minimum wage and income support for working families that need to be defended and built upon

NZEI wants to ensure that the ability of people to join unions and the right of unions to meet with their members at their worksites is maintained. Other rights now enshrined in the Employment Relations Act that NZEI believes are important to keep and build upon include members' rights to access paid employment leave for education programmes and the right to deduct subscriptions from pay where there is mutual consent.

NZEI does not agree with proposals to undermine the benefits of union membership by automatically passing on all improvements in pay and conditions to non-union members.

Any move to reduce people's ability to engage with their union would reduce our collective ability to improve our pay and conditions. NZEI therefore opposes any proposals to remove the right of education workers to bargain nationally and to move to site-based bargaining - a scenario that would be more likely if teacher salaries were bulk-funded or funding was based on vouchers (or "scholarships").

Provisions such as paid parental leave, Kiwisaver and four weeks holiday leave need to be extended and enhanced. NZEI supports higher incomes particularly for low paid workers such as support staff. This means maintaining and increasing the minimum wage, continuing programmes such as Working for Families, and the continuation of pay and employment equity programmes to adjust inequitable pay structures.

NZEI opposes proposals to introduce probationary periods for employment - such as those envisaged in National MP Wayne Mapp's 2006 Bill - that would give employers the power to dismiss employees with no reason and remove their

personal grievance rights. The impact of removing people's employment rights in their first 90 days of a new job would include reducing job mobility in the education sector (the probationary period would be a disincentive to teachers or principals moving schools or centres), resulting in less diversity and mobility in the labour market. It would make it tougher for low decile and rural schools to recruit new staff and would further reduce job security for school support staff.

NZEI supports the rights of all workers to have timely and realistic access to personal grievance procedures if and when they are treated unfairly at work.