

NZEI Te Riu Roa support of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (NACEW) recommendations on priorities for possible improvements to the parental leave scheme.

1. NZEI Te Riu Roa is the professional organisation and industrial union that represents the interests and issues of its 43,500 members. Our members include teachers in the early childhood and primary sectors, support staff in the primary, intermediate, and secondary sectors, advisers employed by the Colleges of Education and Special Education staff employed by the Ministry of Education. The main objective of NZEI is to advance the cause of education generally while upholding and maintaining the just claims of its members individually and collectively.

2. NZEI Te Riu Roa supports the following National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women's recommendations on priorities for possible improvement to paid parental leave provisions.

3. Wider eligibility criteria

NACEW recommendation

Widen the eligibility criteria for PPL to the following groups of workers:

- more casual and seasonal workers and people with more than one job
- whāngai and customary adoptions.

NZEI Te Riu Roa comments:

NZEI supports this recommendation. Enacting and expanding paid parental leave legislation indicates the government's firm commitment and recognition that children's initial years are a priority. Many of our members in the support staff sector are casualised and employed for short terms. If adopted this recommendation would also benefit relieving teachers and itinerant teachers. Both of these groups often hold more than one position with multiple employers.

4. PPL entitlement for fathers

NACEW recommendation:

Ring fence some PPL solely for use by fathers/partners. This would be in addition to entitlements for mothers which can be shared.

NZEI Te Riu Roa comments:

NZEI supports this recommendation particularly as it would be in addition to the entitlements for mothers and not impact negatively on this entitlement.

5. Flexible leave

NACEW recommendation:

More flexible options for taking parental leave, e.g. parents can take leave together or one after the other, or leave can be taken on a part-time basis up to a certain point in time such as when the child turns three years old. This could include allowing a parent to work for a limited number of days while they are on paid leave without losing their payment e.g. to complete a handover or to undertake training.

NZEI Te Riu Roa comments:

NZEI supports this recommendation in the context of paid parental leave. Paid parental leave is, by itself not a total answer to giving our children a more enriched beginning. But, it is a good base, essential to an improved social system. PPL sits alongside policies around breastfeeding in the workplace, free or supplemented early childhood education provision, and flexible working hours provision in supporting both working families, and parents who wish to remain home with their children.

6. Longer leave

NACEW recommendation:

Increase the length of PPL to one year as a first step, and then increase the level of payment.

NZEI Te Riu Roa comments:

NZEI supports this recommendation to increase the length of PPL to one year as a first step, and then to increase the level of payment. This would bring New Zealand closer to countries which stand out internationally through offering extended paid maternity leave, as well as paid paternity leave (Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland).

7. Employers

NACEW recommendation:

Find ways to support employers manage workflow when an employee is on parental leave. This may not require legislative change.

NZEI Te Riu Roa comments

NZEI supports this recommendation and further recommends the provision of Department of Labour resourcing to provide practical assistance to those seeking flexibility in a range of work environments. This resourcing would be further enhanced by union involvement in the development and provision of practical guidelines to employees, employers and unions on how to implement and manage flexible working hours arrangements.

Irene Cooper
National President