

How to be an

NZEI Worksite Representative



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Introduction

Kia ora and congratulations on being elected an NZEI Te Riu Roa worksite representative. This booklet is a ready reference to help you do your job as representative at your worksite. To say that your job is an important one is an understatement. You are the link between your colleagues and the wider union. Members must be well-informed to be able to participate in their union.

Your position is not simply one of passing on information. The worksite representative is also important because he or she is the member who encourages and helps other members become further involved in their union, to have their say. Whether it is attending Branch or District Council meetings, involving yourself and others in campaign work, or recruiting new members, you are the face of the union at your worksite.

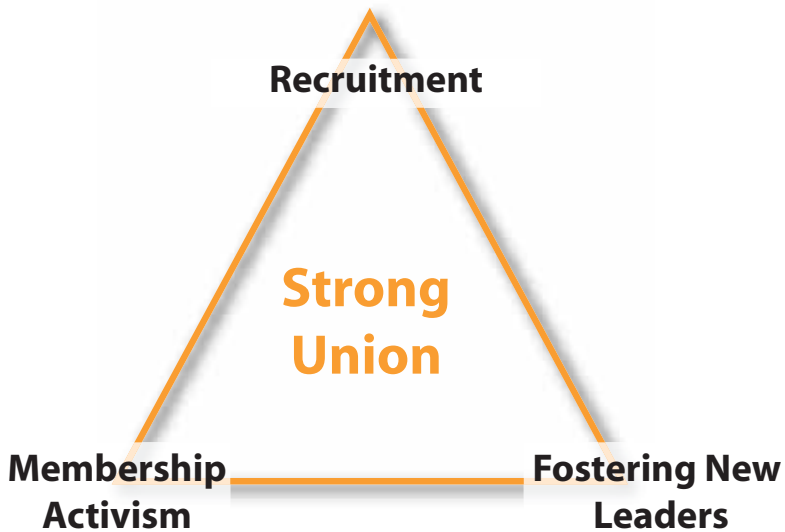
NZEI Te Riu Roa has achieved a lot for its members and for education over its 120-year-plus history. It will continue to do so through the committed work of people such as yourself. Your activism is to be commended, and your time is most appreciated.



How NZEI organises

NZEI Te Riu Roa is a strong and successful union. Our success is the result of campaigning around issues that affect our members. NZEI is in a continual process of building the union and activating membership through its focus on organising. This organising process has three parts: recruitment, membership activism and fostering new leaders, as shown in the “organising triangle” below.

By using this process, we can protect what we have achieved and build on that position. As a worksite representative, you play a part in all aspects of organisation to varying degrees.



Job description

Your **job description** can be broken down according to the three aspects of the organising triangle to help you better focus on your role within NZEI. An overview is shown in the box on the right.

You will know you have been successful as a worksite representative when most or all of the members at your worksite are members of NZEI, are active within the union and are knowledgeable about its direction. In the following sections of the guide, we will explore each of these aspects of your job description in more detail.

Recruitment

- Recruit new members to the union.
- Raise the profile of NZEI Te Riu Roa at your worksite.

Membership activism

- Receive and pass on information from the union
- Encourage the participation and involvement of new and existing members in NZEI campaigns.
- Involve yourself and other members in Branch, District Council and network activities of the union
- Attend NZEI education programmes, and encourage others to do so.

Fostering new leaders

- Identify and encourage new activists within your worksite

Other responsibilities

- Support members with problems at work, or at meetings with employers, as appropriate

Recruitment

Recruitment is the lifeblood of any union. The more people who join, the stronger we are and the more say we have in advancing employment conditions and educational policy. Without a large force, the union is starved of its collective strength, new ideas and potential leaders. NZEI has very high density (the proportion of members who belong to the union at each worksite) in comparison with other unions. Despite this, there are still areas within the education sector that are under-unionised.

Recruiting new members

One role you play as a worksite representative is to help with recruitment at your school or centre. The best time to recruit new members to the union is when they first start at your worksite. Introduce yourself as the NZEI worksite representative, ask them how they are finding working there and see if anyone has talked to them about belonging to NZEI. There is no need to pressure people; if the time is not right, arrange to see them at a quieter time.

Listening

This is the most important skill you need to exercise when recruiting. You need to listen to the concerns of your colleague and be ready with strategies to deal with barriers as they arise.

Employment agreements

When recruiting members, you should explain that by joining NZEI they can be covered by the appropriate NZEI collective agreement for their position. Remember



that there are two types of agreements, according to the Employment Relations Act: collective agreements and individual agreements.

Collective agreements are negotiated by an employer and the union, and cover two or more employees who are union members.

Individual agreements are between one employer and one employee, and occur when there is no collective agreement on that worksite, or where the employee chooses not to be part of the collective agreement.

NZEI membership has always been voluntarily, but employees **must** join the union if they want to be covered by the collective agreement on their worksite. New employees are automatically covered by the collective agreement for the first 30 days. During this time they need to make a decision whether or not to continue to be covered by the collective agreement.

With more than 40,000 members, NZEI has the collective strength to gain improved pay and conditions for its members. This is done through agreement negotiations with the Ministry and employers. All members are encouraged to vote on claims and final settlements.

Other benefits of membership

When recruiting members, let them know about the many benefits NZEI offers to members in addition to the security and strength of a collective agreement. The main benefits are listed below.

Education Benevolent Society (EBS)

EBS offers comprehensive medical care benefits at low cost for member subscribers and their families. The benefits offered are wide-ranging, and EBS is regularly rated one of the best medical insurance schemes in the country.

Units at Rotorua

The Rotorua welfare units are primarily for members who are convalescing or on long-term sick leave. However, they are available to members for use at very reasonable rates all year round.

Provident Fund

Emergency financial assistance, in the form of either grants or loans, is available to members and their dependants. Applications are made to the National Executive through Member Support Personnel (MSP) or field staff.

Legal Assistance Fund

The National Executive administers a Legal Assistance Fund to assist members who become involved in legal proceedings arising from their employment. Only full members are eligible for such assistance.

Death Benefit

The Death Benefit is payable on the death of a full or student teacher member to approved recipients. This is organised through an officer of the local Branch/Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika.

Dealing with concerns of potential members

Reluctance to join the union usually comes down to one of four things: money, freeloading, friends with the boss, or anti-union. Below are some common statements made and how to counter them.

Money

“I can’t afford to join.”

First: Note that if the potential member is earning under \$26,500 per year, they qualify to pay a lower rate of 1.05% of their salaries. For someone making \$20,000 per year, that’s only \$4 per week.

Possible answers (other members)

“When you look at it over the year, it’s only \$500, or less then \$10 a week. That’s cheap when you consider that you will be guaranteed the terms and conditions within the collective agreement.”

Or

“Joining allows you to access a whole lot of other services that save you money in the end, such as access to low-cost health insurance schemes and legal help for employment matters, should you need it.”

Or

“It costs a lot of money to do the things that NZEI does. Becoming a member allows you to have a say in how your money is spent.”

Freeloading

“Why should I join when I’ll probably get the same conditions of employment without joining?”

Possible answers

“NZEI has only been successful in negotiating the conditions of employment we have today because members have worked together. If too many workers begin to ‘freeload’ off the work we’ve done, our power to keep and advance those conditions will be lost. We hope that everyone here will want to be part of positive change in our workplace.”

Or

“How do you know you are getting (or will get) what NZEI members get? The only way to guarantee you get the same conditions is to join the union. Remember you can’t get help retrospectively.”

Friends with the boss

“I don’t need a union; I am a good worker and get on well with the boss.”

Possible answers

“Things change very quickly in education. Your manager may leave; the board may change, the community may make unreasonable demands. The union protects us from these uncertainties.”

Or

“NZEI also promotes your professional interests, like the Medical Association, by working with and lobbying government. Being friends with the employer won’t protect you from poor government policy.”

Anti-union

“Unions just go on strike.”

Possible answer

“NZEI is a democratic organisation. If members decide to go on strike, it is because they have thought an issue is so important that they have no other option but to vote to do so.”

Recruitment hints

- Some people will not want to join, regardless of the great arguments you use. Don't worry about this. Focus on those who are open when approached.
- Stress the importance of getting involved in the union, whether through campaigns or as part of the negotiation process.
- Don't forget to mention the membership benefits, such as EBS and other financial services that members can get when they join.
- Remember to prepare before attempting to recruit anyone. Have some idea about what their concerns might be and be ready to answer them.
- If people want more information, tell them to have a look at the NZEI web site (www.nzei.org.nz).
- Always have a membership form ready when going to recruit someone. If they seem positive about joining, make it easy for them – get them to fill out the form there and then, and offer to send it away for them.
- If you are not sure about any question that they ask, say so, and tell them you'll check and get back to them. Do so once you have checked your facts.
- Don't forget to ask support staff and relievers to join. Often the reduced membership fee applies to these potential members.
- Never assume that people have been asked to join the union unless you have asked them yourself. This is the number one reason people haven't joined the union – "No one asked me!"

Raising the profile

It is important that new employees know that NZEI is the union that covers the worksite, and that you are the worksite representative. This can be done a number of ways:

- Have an NZEI noticeboard in a prominent place in the staffroom.
NOTE: This must be kept vibrant and up-to-date. A tired and out-of-date noticeboard will not attract anyone's attention, nor will it motivate them to read the information.
- Ask for a regular slot at staff meetings for union business. Briefly present key issues and draw attention to key points in circulars and newsletters.
- Promote NZEI campaigns at your worksite, and try to involve members where possible.
- If you work at a larger worksite, you might consider forming a Union Committee where active union members meet to discuss campaigns and how to involve the wider membership.
- Have fun! Organise regular social activities and invite members and non-members.



Membership activism

An active union is a strong union. NZEI's goal is to motivate members in every worksite, to get them involved in the issues they care about.

Receive and pass on information from the union

NZEI is involved in a number of professional and industrial issues at any one time. There is a constant stream of information coming out from national and regional offices about these issues. Some of this information is to keep members up-to-date with changes in their sector, such as qualifications and registration. Other information is about what's happening in various NZEI campaigns and how members can get involved. An important part of your role is summarising this information so that the relevant points are brought to the attention of members. This can be done in a number of ways as discussed in the Raising the Profile section.



A knowledgeable member is an active member

By helping members to understand the resources available to them, they will become more confident in their abilities, and more likely to participate in other ways. If a member comes to you with an issue, your first question might be “How can we resolve this together?” You can then sit down and walk through the steps to take together, or help them look up the appropriate resource.

Involve yourself and other members in local, regional and national activities of the union

NZEI has a very strong democratic structure based on members organising geographically, from the grassroots up. Your involvement in this

process is important to keep the organisation vital and responsive to its membership. Members can participate on any number of levels within the organisation, from local (Branches/Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika) to regional (District Councils/Rohe) to national (Annual Meeting/Te Kāhui Whetū). These structures are discussed in detail later in the booklet.

Attend NZEI education programmes, and encourage others to do so.

The education programmes that NZEI runs aim to provide members with the skills to fully participate in their union and to better the employment relations in their workplace. The main targets for training are worksite representatives and provisionally registered teachers (PRTs).

This training is held as Employment Relations Education Leave (EREL). You and your manager will receive a letter from NZEI



inviting you to attend an EREL course. These courses are held during work time and you should be granted paid leave to attend.

Due to the extra responsibilities that worksite representatives have taken on, NZEI is very conscious about making sure that they have the skills they need to do the job. There are three levels of training that build the level of skill of the worksite representative over time. You are strongly encouraged to attend training when you can.

The PRTs are the other main focus of the NZEI education programmes. This is because they are new to the profession, and to the union, so they need extra support when starting out. Please encourage all PRTs at your worksite to attend NZEI programmes when they can.

There are a number of other courses available to be run at a Branch level where there is interest. These are mainly focused on professional issues and making your school or centre a better place to work in. For a full list of available courses, contact your education development officer at your local field office.

Fostering new leaders

Without new leaders, our union would stagnate. Ours is an older profession, and without the active promotion of new leaders into positions of responsibility, fewer and fewer people will be required to do more and more. This is simply not sustainable.

Identify and encourage new activists within your worksite.

We have already discussed a number of ways in which new members can become involved in the organisation. The next step is to actively identify and encourage these members to take on leadership roles within their worksite, or Branch/ Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika structures, or at a District Council/Rohe or higher level. The point is that a conscious effort must be made to build new leaders.

Identifying potential leaders

Any of the following are good ways to identify potential leaders. They:

- Are recommended by workmates
- Are already involved in the community
- Speak out about issues
- Are respected by other workers
- Ask questions
- Organise social events
- Have talked to you about a workplace issue
- Are natural leaders in the workplace

Recruiting worksite leaders

Here are some hints to recruit other members to help in organising your workplace.

Ask people directly. Publishing a newsletter asking for volunteers is not enough. Worksite representatives and current leaders need to go over lists of members and

identify those who might be willing to take on certain tasks. Those members should then be approached by someone they know and respect and be asked to help.

Assure recruits that they will have the back up and support they need. People are more likely to agree to take a task if they feel that you will help them do it well.

Involve new people. This is a good opportunity to recruit new activists and to share the workload of often overworked worksite representatives.

Look for leaders who are representative of the work force. There should be a good balance of gender, race, age, ethnic background, sector type and employment type (eg part-time, reliever, fixed-term).

Look for leadership qualities. It is easier to find the right people than it is to remove the wrong people later.

Tap into the natural social groups in the workplace. Find out where people congregate, who with and when. Identify union supporters and ask for their help first.

Other responsibilities

As the NZEI worksite representative, you may be the first person to be told if a member believes they are not receiving their correct entitlements, or they are having problems with their manager or other staff. Please remember two important things.

1. NZEI believes in resolving all issues at the lowest level possible, as quickly as possible. If you have any questions about how to do this, contact your local field staff or MSP (Member Support Personnel) member. Both are trained in conflict resolution and are able to help if required.
2. Confidentiality must be maintained for you to retain your credibility. Members will quickly lose faith in your ability to represent them if you make their personal problems public.

Things to remember when representing a member

Members have a right to union representation. There will be occasions when a member would like you to accompany them to a meeting with

their manager. This may be in the capacity as a witness, to speak on their behalf or simply as moral support. Please remember the following:

- Always take the member with you when you meet management
- Arrange to meet in a private place at a time that suits everyone
- Concentrate on the problem, not personalities
- Look for creative solutions that will suit all parties
- Ask for a break, or short adjournment, if you need to talk with the member to clarify any points or formulate any answers
- Always take notes
- Make sure the results of the meeting are clear and that everyone agrees on what is decided
- Do not be pressured into a solution that is not satisfactory to the member. Call an adjournment to the meeting. Say you will make a formal response after you have consulted with a MSP member, field officer or takawaenga.

Remember

- If you are feeling out of your depth, unsure, or need someone to talk things over with, your field staff or local MSP are available.
- You are encouraged to seek advice from these people if the manager wants to discuss a disciplinary issue or a complaint about the member.
- NZEI aims to deal with workplace problems at the lowest possible level and as quickly as possible.

Health and Safety at work

Being a union representative not only means caring about the pay and employment conditions of workers at your school or centre, but also about the health and safety conditions in their workplace.

The health and safety responsibilities of employers and employees have expanded considerably, especially with amendments passed in 2002 to

the Health and Safety in Employment Act. The definition of hazard has been expanded to include stress. All worksites should also have a health and safety committee with elected health and safety representatives.

This committee is responsible for identifying hazards, assessing their significance and putting in controls to reduce the hazard. It is also responsible for creating policy around keeping the workplace safe and ensuring that employees have sufficient training to deal with any such hazards.

Remember

- With the amendments from 2002, stress is now a health and safety hazard that can be identified and redressed.
- Your school or centre's health and safety policy should be regularly reviewed. This process is also an excellent opportunity to involve all staff in an organising activity.
- Make sure that you keep in regular contact with your health and safety representative. If that are any issues that need resolving, support your colleague and make your workplace a safe and healthy one.



Where to go for further support

As the link between members and the wider union, it is important to know what wider structures are available to support members. In most cases you will be able to resolve the member's query or complaint. If not, the diagram on the following page offers some suggestions of where you can go for further help.

Members' Support Personnel (MSP)

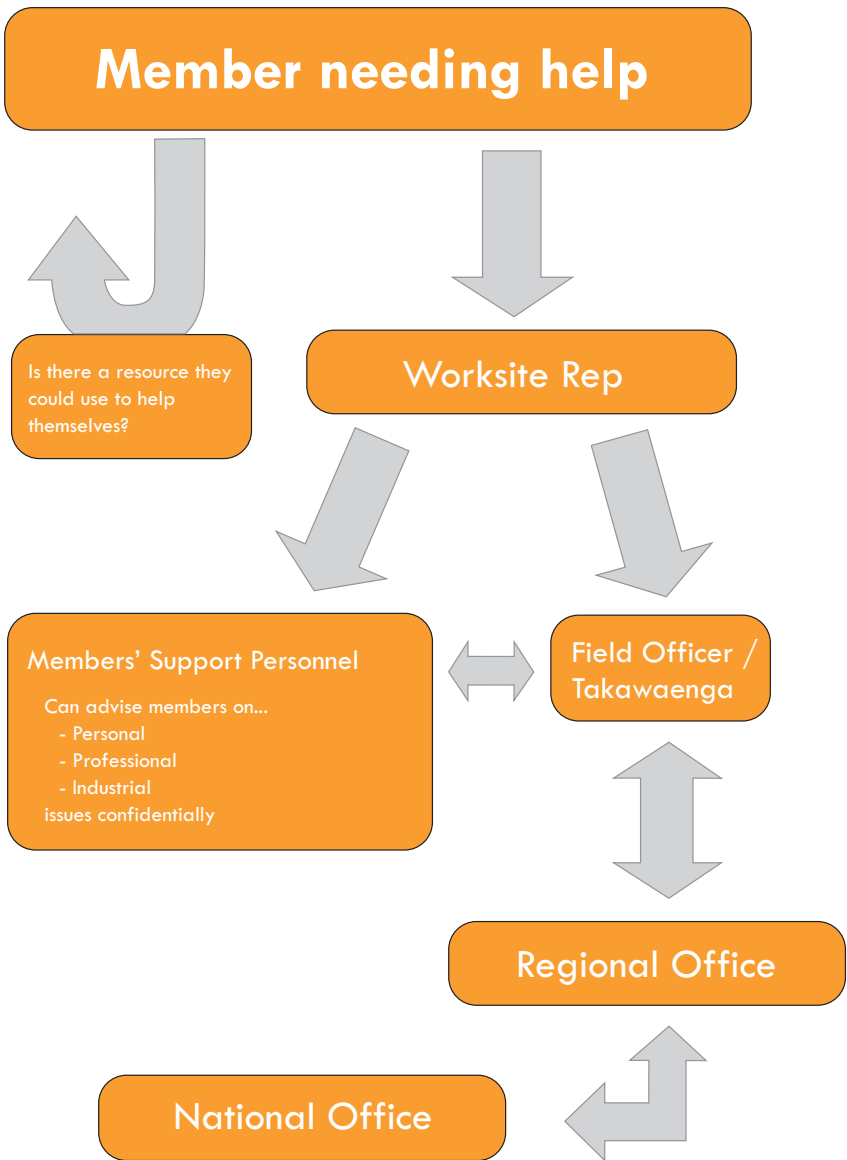
Members' Support Personnel (MSP) are trained members who offer personal and professional confidential support and advice. The service is free, confidential and open to all members. The MSP work closely with field staff to provide advice on resolving professional difficulties and helping with communication with colleagues.

NZEI field staff

NZEI-employed regional field staff are based throughout New Zealand. They include field officers and takawaenga. Takawaenga are field staff who assist Māori members and provide specialist help on issues concerning Māori education.

Each field officer/takawaenga has his or her own group of Branches/Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika and workplaces to look after. They represent and advocate for members locally on matters concerning employment agreement negotiations and enforcement and personal grievances, as well as offering professional advice and assistance. Other responsibilities include helping to organise members and providing education and training for the membership.

Contact phone numbers and addresses for regional staff are at the end of this book, or can be found at the NZEI web site (www.nzei.org.nz).



Member needing help

Worksite Rep

Is there a resource they could use to help themselves?

Members' Support Personnel

- Can advise members on...
- Personal
- Professional
- Industrial issues confidentially

Field Officer / Takawaenga

Regional Office

National Office

NZEI structure and democratic processes

On the next page is a diagram that gives an overview of NZEI's structure and democratic processes. This is what makes our organisation different from, for example, a corporation or government department: it is democratic and everyone has the right to vote on what direction it should take.

A note about the Treaty of Waitangi

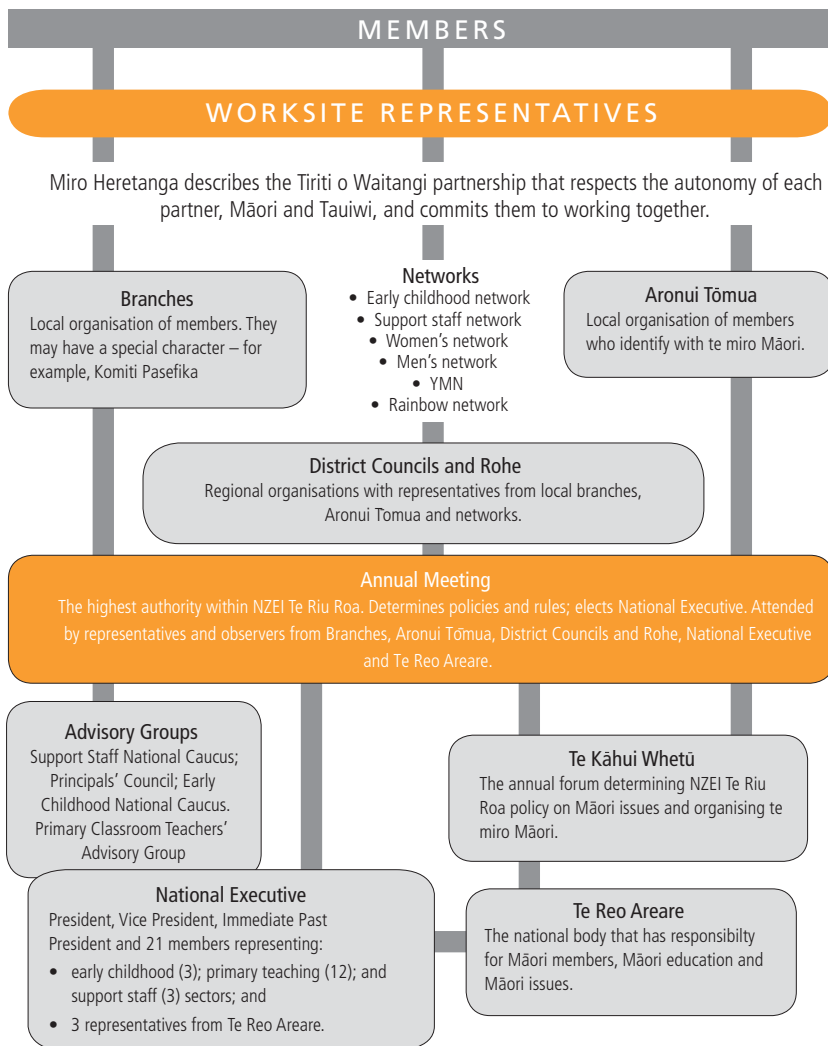
NZEI takes its responsibilities under the Treaty of Waitangi very seriously. To give effect to tino rangatiratanga, NZEI has a parallel Māori thread, or structure, called miro Māori. Further work around the partnership between Māori and tauwi members is being worked on through the Dual Leadership project.

At a local level, Māori members can participate in their Branch equivalents, named Aronui Tōmua. These bodies then elect representatives to their Rohe, which is the equivalent of the District Council. In turn, Rohe representatives comprise the national body, Te Reo Areare. Each year members of Te Reo Areare and Aronui Tōmua attend Te Kāhui Whetū to formulate policy on Māori issues and nominate three members to the NZEI National Executive.

Branches/Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika

These groups are where members from worksites in a geographic area get together to discuss issues and campaigns at a local level. They usually meet bi-monthly. Any member can attend, and as a worksite representative you are expected to be present to represent the views of the members at your worksite.

Aronui Tōmua are local organisations of members who identify with Māori issues and education. Komiti Pasefika are local organisations of members who identify with Pasefika issues and education.



Every year the Branches/Aronui Tōmua/Komiti Pasefika receive funding from national office to help pay for local activities. These groups decide the following:

- How local members will be involved in NZEI campaigns
- Who will represent the local area at Annual Meeting
- What social events will be held in the area
- What events/campaigns members wish to develop locally

District Councils and Rohe

These groups are where representatives from local groups meet to discuss and coordinate issues and campaigns at a district level.

This is also the level at which members can become involved in campaigns with other unions through their Council of Trade Unions (CTU) Local Affiliates Council.

Annual Meeting and Te Kāhui Whetū

Annual Meeting representatives make up the ultimate decision-making body of the union. They meet once a year in Wellington, and it is here that members vote on the direction our union should take. This body also elects the National Executive for the following year.

Te Kāhui Whetū is the national decision-making body of miro Māori. The decisions made by this body are reported to Annual Meeting.

National Executive

This body runs the organisation when Annual Meeting is not in session. Any full member can stand for election to this body. The National Executive meets approximately six to eight times a year.

Advisory groups

These bodies have been set up to represent particular groups within the organisation. They feed information and advice to the National Executive for action.

Networks

Networks are groups of members who come together from a particular sector, or to discuss issues related to a particular area of interest or concern within education.



Thank you

Being an NZEI worksite representative is a challenging position, but also one that can be very rewarding. Remember that there is always support available to you from other activists, networks, courses and field staff.

The most important thing to remember is to have fun! As an NZEI worksite representative, you'll have great opportunities to meet and help members, find out more about your union, advance your profession, and gain new skills.

All the best for your work as an NZEI worksite representative.

Kia kaha,

Kia toa,

Kia manawanui

For information or advice, visit www.nzei.org.nz or talk to an NZEI Te Riu Roa field officer or takawaenga at your nearest NZEI field office.

NGĀ TĀTAHA-Ā-MĀUI - NORTHERN REGION

Email all offices: nzeinorth@nzei.org.nz

Northern Regional Office – Auckland

P O Box 52087, Kingsland, Auckland
Level 1, 4 Bond Street, Grey Lynn, Auckland
Ph 09.360.4005 Fax 09.360.4008

Taitokerau

81 Gillies St, Kawakawa, Northland
Ph 09.404.1446 Fax 09.404.1778

Waikato

P O Box 20-333, Te Rapa, Hamilton
1st floor, ANZ building, 650 Te Rapa Rd
Ph 07.849.7061 Fax 07.849.7042

Bay of Plenty

P O Box 249, Rotorua
1353 Eruera Street
Ph 07.349.5063 Fax 07.349.2682

TE NGAIO TŪ - CENTRAL REGION

Email all offices: nzeicentral@nzei.org.nz

**Central Regional Office – Wellington / Hutt /
Mana / Horowhenua / Wairarapa**

P O Box 466, Wellington
5th Floor, Education House, 178-182 Willis St
Ph 04.384.9609 Fax 04.384.9983

Taranaki / Pâtea / Waverley

P O Box 8041, New Plymouth
Devon Centre, Suite 2, Level 3, 44 Liardet St
Ph 06.759.1056 Fax 06.759.1104

Central East / Southern Hawkes Bay

Suite 104, 201 King St North, Hastings
Ph 06.870.4905
Fax 06.870.4907

Gisborne

Trades & Labour Hall,
Cnr Customhouse St & Childers Rd
Ph 06.867.5302 Fax 06.867.5382

Manawātū / Wanganui / Ruāpehu

P O Box 1876, Palmerston North
300 Church Street
Ph 06.354.6671
Fax 06.354.6674

TE WAIPOUNAMU - SOUTHERN REGION

Email all offices: nzeisouth@nzei.org.nz

**Southern Regional Office –
Canterbury / West Coast**

P O Box 13455, Christchurch
5th Floor, Trade Union Centre, 199 Armagh Street
Ph 03.366.1385 Fax 03.366.2030

Marlborough / Nelson

P O Box 3009, Richmond, Nelson
66 Oxford St (in courtyard behind Tasman Energy)
Ph 03.544.9281 Fax 03.544.9283

Otago

P O Box 656, Dunedin
335 Princes Street
Ph 03.477.1833 Fax 03.477.4097

Southland

P O Box 6155, Invercargill
74 Salford Street
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