

NEW ZEALAND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE (INC)

APPENDIX 2007/330

17 July 2007

FILE REFERENCE	National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women (NACEW)	350.06
	Parental Leave	370.05

**TOPIC: PARENTAL LEAVE (PPL) EVALUATION
NACEW SUBMISSION**

This appendix contains draft recommendations. It is referred to the Executive Industrial Committee in the first instance.

Draft Recommendations

i) That it be noted the National President's decision to support the National Advisory Council's submission on the Department of Labour (DoL) Parental Leave 2005/2006 evaluation is endorsed.

ii) That NZEI adopt as policy that:

- *With respect to paid Parental Leave provision:*
 - *Widen the eligibility criteria for Paid Parental Leave (PPL) to the following groups of workers:*
 - o *more casual and seasonal workers and people with more than one job*
 - o *whāngai and customary adoptions.*
 - *Ring fence some PPL solely for use by fathers/partners; this should be in addition to, and have no negative impact on, entitlements for mothers which can be shared.*
 - *Develop 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.*
 - *Increase the length of PPL to one year as a first step, and then increase the level of payment.*
 - *Find ways to support to employers manage workflow when an employee is on parental leave; this may not require legislative change.*

Main Points

- The Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 provides an entitlement for women and their spouse/partners to take leave from employment on the birth or adoption of a child.
- New Zealand's provision of 14 weeks paid parental leave is lagging behind other OECD countries.

Comment:

Internationally the overall direction of change is towards increasing the flexibility of leave entitlements that support family transitions and extending and supporting fathers' access to parental leave.

The NZEI Te Riu Roa submission (attached as Annex A) includes the rationale for supporting the NACEW submission and the benefits to our members of extending current PPL provision. Currently, NZEI has no policy on paid parental leave. This submission provides an opportunity to rectify that situation.

Background Information

1. Dr Anne Meade requested that NZEI consider supporting the NACEW submission on the government's evaluation of the Parental Leave scheme in 2005/06.
2. The Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act 1987 provides an entitlement for women and their spouse/partners to take leave from employment on the birth or adoption of a child.
3. Paid parental leave was introduced in 2002 and since then, the Act has been amended twice to extend the duration of paid parental leave, broaden the eligibility criteria, and extend paid parental leave to self-employed parents.
4. Research into the provision of parental leave internationally shows that a number of countries are strengthening statutory leave policies and that New Zealand's provision of 14 weeks paid parental leave is lagging in comparison.
5. The overall international direction of change is towards increasing the flexibility of leave entitlements that support family transitions and extending and supporting fathers' access to parental leave.
6. In New Zealand two-income families are increasingly the norm, and working hours are relatively high, especially compared to Western Europe. In 2005, the average employed person worked 34.8 hours per week, about eighth highest

among the 30 OECD nations. There is a high incidence of part-time work (under 30 hours a week) and of long hours. 22% of employment was part-time, the sixth equal highest in the OECD, and 17% was at least 50 hours a week. (NZ Treasury, Monthly Economic Indicators - May 2007).

7. In New Zealand, the labour market participation rate of women between the ages of 20 and 44 years is approximately 70-80 percent (compared with approximately 90 percent for men). Parental leave and paid parental leave recognise this reality by supporting parents in employment to make the work and care choices best suited to their particular needs.
8. The DoL report found widespread support for PPL, and agreement around the importance for parents, primarily mothers, to take time out of paid work around the birth or adoption of a child. The report shows that most mothers use the time provided by PPL for themselves.
9. Most fathers/other parents take some sort of leave around the birth or adoption of a child. Very few eligible fathers/other parents took unpaid partners paternity leave.
10. The biggest barrier to taking the full 12 months of parental leave available is financial pressure. Mothers acknowledge that current PPL provision lessens money worries, but does not provide financial security.
11. The NZ government PPL objectives are based mainly around participation (DoL). To truly promote better outcomes for families, parental leave should support labour market participation in quality work, rather than participation per se.

Susan Elliot
Executive Officer

NZEI Te Riu Roa support of NACEW submission on the Department of Labour paid parental leave evaluation attached as ANNEX A.

ANNEX A

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