



### Preparation for talking with your MP

As with any other important meeting, it's critical to prepare before you talk to your MP. Think about it as if you were preparing a lesson plan – after all, you want the MP to learn, reflect and change as a result of your interaction with them!

#### 1. What do you know about your MP?

The more you know about your MP and what is important to them, the better you can engage with them. Knowing what party they represent, any previous interest or background in education, whether they have children or family at school or who work in education is all helpful. Knowing your MP may also help decide who goes with you, or who is present, when you meet them.

The most powerful place to meet your MP is your place – your school. But if that's not possible, both list and electorate MPs have local offices. Contact details for MP's "Out of Parliament" local offices are at the bottom of this web page: <https://www.parliament.nz/en/get-involved/have-your-say/contact-an-mp/> and you can email them directly: <https://www.parliament.nz/media/5095/members-contact-details-as-as-02-august-2018-pdf.pdf>

#### 2. What do you want to achieve?

MPs and even Ministers do not have the power to change Government policy or their own party policy overnight. So your goal is to get them to understand your issues, while not overwhelming them with all of the possible things that need fixing in education! You need to:

- Engage with them respectfully about the campaign, sticking to one or two key points
- Ask them to do something they can actually achieve (see below)

#### 3. Tell a story

Like most people, MPs remember personal stories that illuminate an issue, not a generic statement. So pick one thing and explain how it affected you personally (for example, how the teacher shortage affected your school recently, or what additional learning resources students in your school currently need, or what a boost in pay or recognition would mean for you if you're living in a high housing cost area, or a Q 1/2 teacher or a beginning teacher, or a SENCO.

#### 4. Give some facts – what do MPs need to know?

- There have been a 40% drop in the number of people entering teacher training in the past five years while the student population is growing
- The Ministry pay offer of just over 2% to more than 85% of teachers is not dissimilar to a cost of living increase. The larger increase offered to beginning teachers would only bring their starting salary to above the average median wage.

## 5. Have a clear request

Ask your MP to write to the Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins, asking that he give the Ministry of Education a new negotiating mandate to invest more funding into education so that our kids have:

- More teachers so that classes can be smaller, and leaders can be given time to lead
- New resourcing so that schools can employ teachers in specialist roles (such as SENCO) to work with children with additional learning needs
- A pay jolt to salaries for teachers and principals that values the work they do and makes teaching an attractive profession

## 6. Make sure they report back

Ask your MP to report back with a copy of the Minister's response.

Some questions you might get:

### ***Why are teacher pay demands so out of kilter with everyone else?***

The June offer from the Ministry meant more than 85% of teachers get just over 2% pay increases, not dissimilar to a cost of living increase. The larger increase offered to beginning teachers would only bring their starting salary to above the average median wage. In comparison, the Government and DHBs have agreed a 15.9% pay increase over three years for nurses with comparable experience.

Most (more than 60%) of primary teachers are paid less than \$75,949 (the top of the base scale). We are particularly concerned about teachers who graduated with a three year diploma when that was an agreed entry qualification and are experienced teachers but are now disadvantaged from moving up the pay scale because they do not have a degree.

Between 2007-2017, teachers received an average annual increase of 1.93% compared with an average annual increase of 3.74% in the NZ average wage. This means that the cumulative increase to primary teacher base scale rates 2007-2017 inclusive is 18.9% compared with 41% increase in NZ average gross weekly wage since 2007.

### ***But the Government has put more money than ever into Learning Support in Budget 2018...***

Schools are facing a desperate need for more resourcing for increasing numbers of children with additional learning needs. Budget 2018 saw a welcome increase in resourcing for some children with additional needs, but it comes after a nine year freeze on specialist staffing. Schools need SENCOs who are given time and recognition to ensure all children get the support and intervention they need as early as possible.

### ***But there has been an increase in teacher trainee numbers this year...***

The slight upturn this year is not sufficient to counteract the 40% drop in teacher graduates in the past five years. We hope the free fees tertiary policy will reduce some hurdles, but there was nothing in the Budget to make teaching a more appealing career choice and to turn the growing teacher shortage around.

Meanwhile the student population is growing rapidly. The Ministry continues to minimise the teacher shortage, while we know there are schools that are experiencing zero applications for teaching jobs in main centres like Auckland and Wellington. Schools are making do and some are even merging classrooms. This is not sustainable. Offering teachers more money at the start of their career won't attract or help to retain experienced teachers in places like Auckland

### ***How come the industrial action is happening under a Labour Government, and not during the nine years of National? Is this government an easier target?***

The crisis we are facing - created by the teacher shortage and years of under-investment in education under the previous government - needs addressing now, or our kids and their learning will suffer further. We haven't taken industrial action lightly - we have been negotiating since April, with more than 20 days of negotiation and mediation already.

We know the Labour-led Government has inherited nearly a decade of under-investment in education by the former National Government, but the crisis in education is too important and urgent to ignore or put off. The Government has acknowledged there is a significant problem with teacher shortages and under-investment in education, and we are appealing to it now for immediate action. If these issues are not addressed immediately, we will be facing a far greater crisis in teacher supply and workload when we next negotiate in, probably, two years' time. We know there is a strong

public mandate for more investment in education, and we are encouraging the Government to take a courageous approach to fixing the problems before more children's learning is put at risk.

The National Party leadership's recent commitment to lowering class sizes, increasing teacher pay and reducing teacher workload is a welcome response to NZEI's campaigns over the past decade. However teachers want to see details of how National will resource its new policies, as the crisis today is a direct result of the previous Government's policies over the past nine years.