



12 August 2021

S21.18

## **Submission to the Education and Workforce Committee on the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Amendment Bill**

### **Introduction**

1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wahine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 14 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
2. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ Employment Standing Committee and the Parliamentary Watch Committee after limited consultation with the membership of NCWNZ.

### **Summary**

3. The National Council of Women of New Zealand supports this Bill which will amend the Holidays Act 2003 to allow workers with children to take leave to attend parent-teacher interviews.
4. We agree that it is most important for parents and teachers to get together several times each year to discuss children's social and physical development as well as academic progress. The interaction between parents and teachers is critical for a quality education. The value and importance of home-school partnerships has long been acknowledged for its positive impact on children's learning, progress, motivation and

achievement<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>. We support the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>5</sup> and note that SDG 4 is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education”.

5. Te Tiriti o Waitangi guarantees Māori the right to full participation in all aspects of life in Aotearoa New Zealand including education. Ensuring that parents can attend their children's parent-teacher interviews at school is one small way of addressing the educational inequities evident in achievement data for Māori children recorded in the country's current education system.
6. Many families in our country would not be able to afford to take several hours unpaid leave to attend parent-teacher interviews. Their children are therefore disadvantaged. This Bill is a positive initiative to overcome that disadvantage.

## The Bill

7. The Bill's introduction states that *“The growing trend of insecure and casualised work is making it particularly difficult for parents in these employment arrangements to take leave. It is important to ensure all parents have the opportunity to attend parent-teacher interviews”*.
8. Notably, ‘Employee’ has the same meaning in the principal Act, the Holidays Act 2003, as that defined in the Employment Relations Act 2000, which means people in insecure and casual work will still be unlikely to meet the criteria to take Parent-Teacher Interview Leave.
9. Our organisation voted in 2015<sup>6</sup> to urge the Government to promote the rights of workers engaged in insecure employment [Insecure employment is defined as including: casual, temporary, fixed-term and zero-hour employment that can be characterised by low and/or fluctuating pay, uncertain duration, and with limited or no access to training, career progression and employment rights and benefits such as sick leave and holiday pay.] We would be pleased to see insecure workers being entitled to paid leave to attend parent-teacher interviews, and recommend the government provide coverage

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<sup>1</sup> Hargraves V. Home-school partnerships: What parents and whānau can contribute.

<https://theeducationhub.org.nz/home-school-partnerships-what-parents-and-whanau-can-contribute/>

<sup>2</sup> Education Central. 2012. The power of parental involvement. <https://educationcentral.co.nz/the-power-of-parental-involvement/>

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education. 2021. Involving parents, families and whanau.

<https://www.educationleaders.govt.nz/Partnerships-and-networks/Involving-parents-families-and-whanau>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education. 2021. Parents as learning partners.

<https://www.educationleaders.govt.nz/Partnerships-and-networks/Involving-parents-families-and-whanau/Parents-as-learning-partners>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The SDGs in action.

<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

<sup>6</sup> NCWNZ. 2012. 115 years of resolution. 6.2.2.8. <http://www.ncwnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/115-years-Register-everything-2.pdf>

for this important aspect of family life in the same way as it does for paid parental leave. This would meet NCWNZ's principle of family-friendly workplaces for all workers.

### **Clause 4 New subpart 3A of Part 2 inserted**

10. We are pleased to see the definition of parent in new Section 61C demonstrating that the Bill is not restricted to biological parents only.
11. New Section 61H (a) specifies the duration of parent-teacher interview leave for an employee as “up to 4 hours’ parent-teacher interview leave in each 12-month period of current continuous employment”. The allocation of four hours’ leave per year is insufficient.
12. Children at secondary school will generally have five subject teachers plus a form teacher. Parent-teacher interviews per child will take at least two hours if time queuing to see a particular teacher is included. These two hours will need to be multiplied by the number of children in a family. Travel time will be in addition to the interview time, and in remote rural areas or cities with traffic congestion this could be several hours. We suggest either doubling the hours to eight hours or allowing travel time on top of the four hours. This would mean parents could attend two interviews a year under the paid leave provisions.

### **Gender attitudes**

13. NCWNZ's Gender Attitudes Survey 2019<sup>7</sup> Section 9 states that most New Zealanders believe both genders should share home responsibilities including “looking after the children” (89% support) and “bringing in the household income” (87%). Given that the large majority of New Zealanders expect parents, regardless of gender, to earn and contribute to the household as well as be involved in their children’s development and care, this Bill will contribute to family friendly workplaces in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Conclusions**

14. The National Council of Women of New Zealand supports the Bill. To make a more meaningful and practicable impact, we recommend the Bill is expanded with the definition of Employee to include insecure and casual workers, and to double the proposed leave entitlement to eight hours.

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<sup>7</sup> National Council of Women of New Zealand. 2020. 2019 Gender Attitudes Survey.  
<https://genderequal.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2019-Gender-Attitudes-Survey-Online.pdf>



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