

Reps celebrate MERAS history and look to the future



Waitemata DHB workplace reps join the Rt Hon. Helen Clark at the first ever MERAS Conference in Parnell this week.

Helen told the story behind the passing of the Nurses Amendment Act 30 years ago. She also highlighted issues facing women today in those countries where health systems are struggling to cope with Covid.

Green MP Julie Ann Genter Zoomed into a panel of three new women Labour MPs, which included midwife Sarah Pallett, MP for Ilam. The MPs listened to issues for the women in their communities raised by workplace reps, and discussed ways we can engage with politicians to make change.

DHBs work on Holidays Act breaches with MERAS and other unions

All but three DHBs have now completed reviews of their payroll systems to identify those areas where they have not been complying with the Holidays Act. Most DHB payroll systems have made errors in calculating Annual Leave pay. For example, you should be paid average weekly earnings over the last 52 weeks (AWE) or what you are being paid at the time you take the leave (OWP), whichever is the greater. Some DHBs only use AWE, while others only use OWP, so they have not compared the two.

Annual Leave has been accrued in hours, not weeks as required by the Holidays Act. This means some employees may not have got their full 4 weeks statutory Annual Leave.

Similarly, sick leave has been held and paid in hours, not days. Sick leave, bereavement leave, alternative days and Public Holidays are supposed to be paid as relevant daily pay (RDP) or average daily pay (ADP) if it isn't known what you would have been paid had you worked that day. Most only use RDP.

There is no such category as "casuals" in the Holidays Act. If you work on a regular basis, you could be missing out on entitlement to 4 weeks Annual Leave, to sick leave or bereavement leave, and to alternative days for working on a Public Holiday.

The next step in the process is for DHBs to fix their payroll systems so they comply with the Act. MERAS and other unions are working with the DHBs, both locally and nationally, on a range of solution options. The DHBs will then be in a position to pay out what you may be owed, going back to 2010.

You may have worked at more than one DHB during this time. We have asked the DHBs to come up with a single portal so you can enter your details once and then these go to all those DHBs where you have worked so they can make any payments due to you.

The timeframe for remediation will vary from DHB to DHB as they started the process at different times. Also, the bigger the DHB, the bigger the job is to fix the problems! Payments will be well into 2021.

DHBs MECA negotiations set to start

December 14/15 have been set down to start negotiating the DHBs MECA renewal.

At Conference, workplace reps came up with a list of claims, which we will be sending out to members to endorse. We also elected our MERAS negotiating team.

Caroline Conroy, Co-leader (Midwifery)
Jill Ovens, Co-leader (Industrial)