MERAS
Midwifery Employee
Representation & Advisory Services

November 2021

MECA pay rates now in effect at most DHBs

The new DHBs pay rates, backpay to 2 August 2021, and $600 pro-rated lump sums are now either already paid out, or they will be in the next few weeks.

Please check that you are receiving the new pay rates, especially if you are a casual. Also casuals, always check that you have progressed to the nest step on your Anniversary date (up to step 7) as you should.

Remember that the $600 lump sum is pro-rated for part-timers or casuals. If this is you, take your actual hours worked over the past year, multiply by the FTE or average worked, and deduct tax. For example, 0.8 x $600 = $480 - $158.40 (at 33% tax) = $321.60.

The calculation for the $6000 pro-rated lump sum would be the same with an extra zero.

Please note also that the DHBs have still not received the funding from Treasury for the pay equity lump sum. We raised this with the Minister of Health Andrew Little last week and followed up with the lead DHBs advocate and also the Crown negotiator. We know that the DHBs were asked to supply costings to Treasury and that this has been done.

Those on parental leave, ACC, or LWOP will receive their lump sums on return to work. Those who are leaving DHBs due to vaccination status are eligible for the lump sums if they were MERAS members on 1 September 2021 and employed by a DHB on 17 September.

Other negotiations now underway

We have negotiated the MECA rates at Rodney Coast Midwives in Warkworth and our members are about to vote on the proposed settlement.

We have also resumed negotiations at Auckland Birthcare, Waitaki, Dannevirke and Hauora Hokianga now that the MECA has settled.

Pay equity negotiations stalled

The DHBs have cancelled the pay equity negotiations for all three dates in October and the DHBs are now in breach of our DHBs MECA commitment to start in September/October. This is because the DHBs negotiators do not have a mandate to bargain with us.

We have advised the Crown negotiator and the DHBs of the breach and the delay in paying out the pay equity lump sum. Our lawyers have filed for compliance orders in the Employment Relations Authority.

Vaccine mandate – a stressful time

The next few weeks will be a stressful time for MERAS members with some colleagues and friends leaving our workplaces.

Those midwives who are vaccinated and staying on are not only sad to see colleagues and friends leaving, there is also concern about the impact this will have on midwifery services, which in many places already have midwifery shortages.

For those who are not vaccinated, this will be a time to meet with managers and consider the options that might be available for you within the mandate provisions.

Information continues to be released by the MoH providing more detail about aspects of the mandate, changing the process to obtain a medical exemption, and amending some aspects of the Health Order (such as health practitioners who provide health services remotely, e.g. only by phone or on-line).

MERAS is recommending unvaccinated members engage in the process with your manager. If there are no options that would allow you to continue in your midwifery role, at some point your job will be terminated.

There will be a termination notice period in your Collective Agreement (usually 4 weeks) and you can be paid out in lieu of notice. You will also be paid out outstanding annual leave, shift leave and lieu days.

Most employers are keen to keep the door open so that if your situation changes (e.g. other vaccines become available that you are happy to have), you will be able to contact them about the possibility of returning to a role.

If you obtain a medical exemption, you will still need to meet with your manager and Occupational Health to determine how best to keep you safe in the workplace.

Please be kind to each other, and talk to your manager or contact Caroline (027 6888 372) if you have any questions. EAP services are also available.

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