



## **Pay Equity Lump Sum: MERAS members Frequently Asked Questions**

**8 December 2021**

### **What if I have transferred between DHBs in the last 12 months?**

The process has only just been agreed with the DHBs today as payroll staff needed to be consulted about what would work for them. How it is to work is your current DHB will have paid you, or will shortly be paying you, the portion of the lump sums for the time you have been employed with them. You will need to fill in an application form for your current DHB and they will confirm your entitlement to the remainder of the payment from your previous DHB, which you will then send to the previous DHB along with a record of your lump sum payment. Details of the process will be posted on your DHB Intranet, along with the email addresses of the appropriate people in each DHB. This might sound like a hassle, but it means you retain control of the process.

### **What if I have left the DHB?**

To be eligible for the \$6000 pro-rated pay equity lump sum, you needed to be a member of MERAS on 1 September and employed by a DHB on 17 September. If you transferred your membership from NZNO to MERAS after 1 September, you would need to have been an employee of the DHB and a member of MERAS before 15 October when NZNO ratified their MECA.

To be eligible for the \$1000 pro-rated pay equity lump sum you needed to be a member of MERAS as of 30 November when the pay equity should have been concluded. It may be that this payment will not be processed until the New Year as the goal is to process these payments for NZNO and PSA members at the same time as MERAS members – a huge job.

Both of these payments are in effect “down payments” on the eventual pay equity settlement and will come off any backpay that may flow on from the pay equity settlement as this is backdated to 31 December 2019. If you resigned from the DHB before the effective dates, it may be that you will be entitled to some backpay from the final settlement even if you missed out on these payments. If this is the case, you will need to apply.

### **What if I am on leave without pay, parental leave or ACC?**

If you are on leave without pay, parental leave, and/or you were receiving ACC weekly compensation on the ratification date of the new MECA (i.e. 17 September), and you meet the criteria above, you will be eligible for the relevant lump sum payments. You will receive the payments on written application after you return to work from the relevant period of leave (or in your final pay if you do not return to work).

You may, however, receive lump-sum payments while on leave without pay (as defined above) and/or receiving ACC weekly compensation on written application. It is recommended that, before



making a written application, you consider the potential impact of payment of a lump-sum on any other income/compensation you are receiving while on extended leave.

The payment is based on actual hours worked in the previous 12 months or your contracted FTE, whichever is the greater. If you are on a return-to-work programme following a period on ACC, our view is that your payment should be based on your contracted FTE.

### **What if I have been working as a vaccinator?**

Some midwives have taken on vaccinator roles to help out with the Covid response. The Midwifery Council approved midwives as Covid vaccinators, including outside of the maternity setting. Therefore as long as a midwife was a member of MERAS as of 1 September 2021 and employed by the DHB on 17 September, she is eligible for the pay equity lump sums and if she is also performing a midwifery role, it should be based on the total hours worked or FTE (up to 1 FTE).

Some DHBs have insisted that Covid vaccinators had to be classified as RNs. This has meant that some have been denied access to the lump sums under the MECA settlement on the basis that MERAS doesn't cover RNs. In fact while many of our members are direct entry midwives, we also have a number of members who are dual registered with nursing and midwifery APCs. We include such midwives within our coverage and provide indemnity insurance even if some of their role is as a nurse.

Therefore we are asking DHBs to audit all those midwives who have been doing vaccinations for the DHB to ensure that, as long as they meet the membership criteria, they receive both the \$6000 and \$1000 pro-rated lump sums. So far we have written to Capital & Coast, Canterbury, Hawke's Bay, and Southern DHBs on behalf of members who have been doing vaccinations.

### **What if I work for a non-DHB maternity service?**

We are planning to lodge a midwifery pay equity claim when we settle the DHBs midwifery pay equity claim. The intention is to cover all non-DHB providers. We are working with other health sector unions to ensure that the "funded sector" (NGOs, iwi providers and private maternity units) can access Government funding. We will use the data collected for the DHBs midwifery pay equity claim, so it should not take so long.