

**pay parity** The same pay for the same job across different employers/workplaces

**pay relativity** the relationship between pay rates for various roles/work

**pay equity** The same pay for work of equal value

**Pay and employment equity** Pay, conditions, experiences in the workplace and access to jobs at all levels are not affected by gender

Gap between the average earnings of women compared with men  
**gender pay gap**

Same pay for the same job (no differential based on gender) **equal pay**

The same rights and opportunities **gender equality**



**Pay Equity Update**  
**January 2023**

## **MERAS seeks action on interim midwifery pay equity rates**

As soon as we heard the news of an interim Pay Equity (PE) payment for nurses in early December, MERAS urgently sought an interim PE payment for all Te Whatu Ora employed midwives.

Two months later, we still do not have a date for the unions involved in the Midwifery Pay equity claim (MERAS & NZNO) to meet with Te Whatu Ora, despite the MERAS team making ourselves available. There is no sense of urgency from your employer.

Nurses will shortly be receiving the previously bargained pay equity rates, and a lump sum payment of \$3000, that had been on hold subject to legal action by NZNO and PSA seeking a determination or “fixing” of the rates.

The nurses’ payments will be backdated to 7 March 2022 (the date originally agreed) and the new rates and lump sums are now being implemented. This was an initiative of Te Whatu Ora because the legal processes were taking so long.

Te Whatu Ora must understand we can’t have a situation where nurses working under the direction of a midwife in maternity services are earning \$11,000 a year more. If they don’t, you need to let them know!

An interim pay equity settlement for midwives could be based on the latest offer by Te Whatu Ora in August last year, though it was nowhere near enough to address the undervaluation of midwives as established through the four-year pay equity process.

The RNs’ interim pay settlement could also be a possible starting point for negotiations for an interim midwives’ settlement if the differential between RN and RM Equitable Job Evaluation (EJE) scores is taken into account.

MERAS has filed legal action in the Employment Court to ensure that the interests of MERAS members are protected in the NZNO and PSA litigation in relation to the nurses’ backpay. This is because MERAS has the same clauses as NZNO relating to backpay. There is no news on dates for this hearing.

Further, we would only consider an interim payment while the Authority decides on the questions we raised with them last December, including taking into account any movement in the comparators’ pay between 2020 and 2022, and Te Whatu Ora’s exclusion of some potential comparators.

We cannot take industrial action over pay equity as the Equal Pay Act only provides for redress through the Employment Relations Authority. MERAS has filed in the Authority for urgency in hearing our case.

Te Whatu Ora’s offer last August did not include caseloading midwives as we were still in the process of assessing their roles using the EJE tool. Now that this process has been completed, an interim offer would need to include their pay equity rates.

We also need an urgent process to address the senior midwives’ pay structure and salaries, which should be linked to the new Midwifery Career Pathway.

Any final settlement will go to a ratification vote of Te Whatu Ora employees (midwives and MCAs) who would be covered by the settlement (MERAS, NZNO and non-union). A separate process for pay equity in the “funded” primary birthing units is also underway.

### **Cost of living adjustment**

We were keen to settle interim pay equity (PE) rates before April 2023 so we could pick up the \$4000 Public Sector Pay Adjustment (PSPA) on top of the interim PE rates. There would have been a further 3% increase from the PSPA 12 months later.

Unfortunately, all talks on the PSPA have been on hold by Te Whatu Ora since early December. We may have to wait till we initiate for renewal of the former MERAS DHBs MECA to negotiate a cost-of-living adjustment.

An advantage of this is we can take industrial action over our Collective Agreement negotiations from 40 days after we initiate for bargaining on 1 March.

**Jill Ovens, Co-leader (Industrial)**

**Caroline Conroy Co-leader (Midwifery)**