

**PPTA**

NEW ZEALAND POST PRIMARY  
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

TE WEHENGARUA

[www.ppta.org.nz](http://www.ppta.org.nz)

**SUBMISSION**

**to the**

**Government Administration Committee**

**on the**

**PARENTAL LEAVE AND EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION  
(SIX MONTHS' PAID LEAVE AND WORK CONTACT  
HOURS) BILL**

## **ABOUT PPTA**

1. PPTA represents over 17,500 secondary teachers, principals, and manual and technology teachers in New Zealand; this is the majority of teachers engaged in secondary education – approximately 90% of eligible teachers choose to join PPTA.
2. Under our constitution, all PPTA activity is guided by the following objectives:
  - (a) To advance the cause of education generally and of all phases of secondary and technical education in particular;
  - (b) To uphold and maintain the just claims of its members individually and collectively; and
  - (c) To affirm and advance Te Tiriti O Waitangi.
3. PPTA is not affiliated to a political party and our members individually support a broad spectrum of political parties in Parliament. However, PPTA have consistently promoted policies that promote progressive economics, social policy and employment relations policy.
4. PPTA is an affiliate member of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (“**CTU**”) and the National Council of Women of New Zealand (“**NCWNZ**”).

## **SUBMISSION ON THE BILL**

### **Introduction**

5. This submission sets out the PPTA’s submission on the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Six Months’ Paid Leave and Work Contact Hours) Bill (“**the Bill**”) and is informed by members’ commitment to extending paid parental leave (“**PPL**”) and improving working conditions.
6. PPTA supports the submissions that the CTU and NCWNZ have made on the Bill.

### **Support for the proposals in the Bill**

7. The Bill contains two key proposals that impact on (predominantly women) workers: extending paid parental leave to 26 weeks establishing a system of “keeping in touch” by allowing workers who are on paid parental leave or extended leave to return to work for a limited period of time without losing their entitlement to paid parental leave. We support both proposals.

### **Paid parental leave – 26 weeks**

8. PPTA continues to support extending paid parental leave to 26 weeks. As will have been noted by other submitters on the Bill, this is the recommended time

for breast-feeding from the World Health Organisation, is a critical time for attachment between parents and their new children and, if not paid, will mean that parents often either return to work before they are ready because of financial need or leave their current job to find one that provides the necessary financial support while being more flexible with their new care arrangements. This is a significant loss of skill for workplaces and the economy - as people in this position continue to struggle to find quality part-time work.

9. Extending paid parental leave brings the law closer in line with our international obligations to act in the best interests of the child under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (“**UNCROC**”), the rights of women workers under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“**CEDAW**”) and the with the policy underpinning the Care of Children Act 2004 (“**COCA**”).

### **Keeping in touch days**

10. For teachers, and other professionals, there could be a genuine desire to return to work during the paid parental leave period where there may be the opportunity for significant professional development – such as attending a conference on changes to NCEA assessment or curriculum developments.
11. We have women members who have advised us of the challenges of returning to work with a full workload after a period of maternity leave to a changed working environment. Schools are often a testing ground for new “initiatives” generated by government agencies and management – and this all adds workload to teachers being able to effectively do their core job of teaching.
12. We also submit that any new keeping in touch scheme needs to have effective protections and monitoring to ensure that vulnerable workers are not taken advantage of and that any consent to return to work for any set period is with the genuine consent of both parties.
13. We support the proposal for workers who access the keeping in touch days to either be paid at the same rate that they are normally paid for the day that they return to work or to receive the equivalent time in lieu when they return to work. This is a pragmatic approach that provides flexibility in the system for businesses and workers. Anything less would have a discriminatory impact on people (still largely women) who access parental leave.

### **Other changes**

14. We urge the Select Committee to look at the law in other countries that guarantee paid leave for partners. For example, in Sweden parents are currently offered 16-months parental leave which can be taken by either

mothers or fathers, with two months of that set aside for dads on a “use it or lose it” basis. Gender equality bonuses encourage parents to share leave more equally. An allowance of 80% of salary for the first 390 of the 480 days leave available is another incentive. Around 85% of men in Sweden now take some time off.

15. Such an approach is one lever that can be used to address the gender pay gap. A 2010 study by the Swedish Institute of Labour Market Policy Evaluation found that a mother’s future earnings increased 7% for every month that her partner took parental leave.
16. We also urge the Committee to look at extending paid parental leave to foster parents, and lifting the eligible age for children who are adopted. Children in either of these situations are going through an important life transition and should have the support of the primary carer at these times. These are some of our most vulnerable children and need wrap-around support. Such an approach is in the best interests of the child.
17. Children over the age of six are legally required to be enrolled in school but this does not mean that there is not an equal or greater need to care for the child when they are going through a transition period and new care arrangements.
18. Hours that a school is open for instruction do not equate with when people are required to be at work. For example, teachers regularly work outside these hours for extracurricular activities, assessment and moderation, parent-teacher evenings and (of course) too many meetings.
19. Despite the positive amendments to the Employment Relations Act 2000 in respect of flexible work, this is only a legal right to request flexible work rather than a right to have flexible work, for reasons such as caregiving responsibilities. There are no guarantees that it will be granted.

### **Oral presentation**

20. We would like to appear before the Committee in support of our submission.