



MERAS MECA UPDATE

1 March 2019

Facilitation progressing

At a facilitation meeting last Monday, 25 February, there was discussion about a proposal from the DHBs' Chief Executives (CEOs) to extend the expiry of our new MECA to January 2021 with an additional percentage increase from August 2020.

MERAS added some additional claims, including starting new midwifery graduates on Step 2 from August 2020. These extra claims are being considered.

Midwives' pay equity process agreed

Further, we have negotiated a separate pay equity process for midwives with NZNO and the DHBs. The outcome of the pay equity process will be negotiated as new salary scales for midwives covered by our MERAS MECA as a variation to the MECA and backdated to December this year.

Thus, when we go into negotiations to renew our MECA in 2021, there will be a separate pay scale for midwives based on the outcome of the pay equity.

The recognition of the value of midwives' work will be compared with occupations or professions dominated by men and therefore historically advantaged, rather than comparing midwives with another women-dominated, undervalued and underpaid profession, that of nurses.

Midwifery Accord is the third element of a potential deal

Thirdly we are in the process of negotiating a Midwifery Accord with the DHBs and the Ministry of Health that will address what the DHBs call "workforce challenges" and we call a "midwifery crisis". The Accord will address safe staffing standards for midwives, recruitment and retention of midwives, and financial support for midwifery undergraduates.

None of this would have been achieved if most midwives had not joined MERAS. Our total membership is now very close to the entire employed midwifery workforce. MERAS is not only the voice of midwives, it is the choice of the vast majority of employed midwives!

Frequently asked questions

In light of what is being reported about the now-expired junior doctors' Collective Agreement, some are questioning the status of our terms and conditions now that the MERAS MECA has expired.

The legal situation is that MERAS members are still covered by the terms and conditions of the MERAS MECA, technically on IEAs that can't be changed without your agreement. So no need to worry!

I have just started a job at a DHB. Why have I been offered the NZNO Agreement?

New employees, including MERAS members, are being offered the NZNO Agreement or the NZNO pay rates as an individual agreement (IEA).

You do not have to join NZNO. You can accept the NZNO rates on an IEA and remain as a MERAS member, or join MERAS if not already a member.

When we settle the MERAS MECA, new employees who belong to MERAS will automatically move onto the MERAS MECA. Your pay rate will not go down as the DHBs are offering the same pay rates through to August next year.

Anyone who joins NZNO at this stage will not get the lump sum or back pay. They will be bound by the NZNO MECA until 60 days before its expiry.

Will MERAS members get the lump sum and back pay that was in the NZNO settlement?

The DHBs have offered MERAS the same lump sum and the same backpay, that is \$2000 lump sum prorated for part-timers, plus 3% from 4 June 2018, and 3% from 6 August 2018.

I have changed jobs and am now working at a different DHB. Will I still be entitled to back pay?

A MERAS member who has changed her employment to another DHB after one or both pay increases last year, will be paid the backpay by her former DHB up until she left, and by the new DHB from when she started.