

Submission by



GROWING PROSPERITY AND POTENTIAL

to the

Education and Workforce Select Committee

on the

**Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave)
Amendment Bill**

18 August 2021

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HOLIDAYS (PARENT-TEACHER INTERVIEW LEAVE) AMENDMENT BILL – SUBMISSION BY BUSINESSNZⁱ

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 BusinessNZ welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Amendment Bill.
- 1.2 BusinessNZ recognises the concern that has led to the introduction of this Bill but is of the view that the consequences of what is proposed have not been properly understood.
- 1.3 BusinessNZ therefore considers, for the reasons set out below, that the Bill should not proceed.

Recommendation: That the Holidays (Parent-Teacher Interview Leave) Bill not proceed.

2.0 DISCUSSION

- 2.1 It should be noted that the definitions of 'early childhood service', 'registered school' and 'special school' refer to sections of the Education Act 1989. This Act was repealed, on 1 August 2020, by section 669(3)(b) of the Education and Training Act 2020 (2020 No 38).
- 2.2 As previously indicated, while the motivation for this Bill is recognised, the consequences for many employers would be significant, particularly, when, as the Bill seems to consider the case, the majority of parent-teacher interviews are held in working hours.
- 2.3 Many employees have more than one child attending school or pre-school and the 'up to four hours' to be made available each year would therefore increase accordingly. This would represent a considerable amount of down time which would have to be paid for, despite the loss of productivity for the employer plus, in many instances, the cost to the employer of providing replacement cover.
- 2.4 The Bill fails to recognise the many different formats utilised for parent teacher interviews. For instance, a 'speed dating' approach is used in many secondary schools which offer 5-minute slots for parents. This approach would make the entitlements proposed by the Bill excessive. If the Bill was meant to provide for more formal 1:1 type discussions, it fails both to state this and to recognise that such discussions are more readily able to be arranged at times mutually convenient to all.
- 2.5 Further, the Bill appears to apply to any employee with a parental role in respect to the child in question. This could mean more than one employee seeking interview leave for the same child.

- 2.6 Then there is the effect on other employees not entitled to this kind of 'special circumstance' leave. It is not logistically possible to accommodate all situations where an employee might want to take leave – to pay a hospital visit for example – and favouring one situation over another can be a source of resentment, the more so for employees required to fill in for the leave taking employee. Up to four hours a year might not on the face of it, seem a great amount of time but depending on employee numbers – in a school or hospital, for example – the time involved can add up quite rapidly.
- 2.7 It is also unclear from 61H of new Subpart 3A whether the up to four hours applies solely to the interview itself or also covers travelling time (which could be considerable) and time spent waiting for the interview. If, as the current wording suggests, the former is what is intended, that could involve quite a lengthy absence from work, though presumably not all would be paid (though there would still be a cost to the employer). If, contrary to BusinessNZ's recommendation, the Bill does proceed, that is something that would need to be clarified.
- 2.8 However, it must be borne in mind not only that many parent-teacher interviews take place in the evening or at the end of the conventional working day but that the ability to communicate digitally now sees parents able to communicate far more promptly and directly than once was possible.
- 2.9 As a consequence of the above, many parents concerned about progress will no longer need to wait until the official interview period to find out how their child is doing at school or pre-school.
- 2.10 But that aside, many employers are also willing to accommodate employees who need to attend a parent-teacher interview should the interview be held in working hours. The difference for the employer is that this is then a discretionary matter, not something imposed by statute which the employee could challenge were the leave not granted.
- 2.11 Employers at the present time are facing or have faced many imposed cost increases. Imposing an even further cost will serve only to further encourage automation, limiting, not increasing, employment opportunities.

Recommendation: That the Bill not proceed.

ⁱ Background information on BusinessNZ is attached as Appendix One

Appendix One - Background information on BusinessNZ



GROWING PROSPERITY AND POTENTIAL

[BusinessNZ](#) is New Zealand's largest business advocacy body, representing:

- Regional business groups [EMA](#), [Business Central](#), [Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce](#), and [Employers Otago Southland](#)
- [Major Companies Group](#) of New Zealand's largest businesses
- [Gold Group](#) of medium sized businesses
- [Affiliated Industries Group](#) of national industry associations
- [ExportNZ](#) representing New Zealand exporting enterprises
- [ManufacturingNZ](#) representing New Zealand manufacturing enterprises
- [Sustainable Business Council](#) of enterprises leading sustainable business practice
- [BusinessNZ Energy Council](#) of enterprises leading sustainable energy production and use
- [Buy NZ Made](#) representing producers, retailers and consumers of New Zealand-made goods

BusinessNZ is able to tap into the views of over 76,000 employers and businesses, ranging from the smallest to the largest and reflecting the make-up of the New Zealand economy.

In addition to advocacy and services for enterprise, BusinessNZ contributes to Government, tripartite working parties and international bodies including the International Labour Organisation ([ILO](#)), the International Organisation of Employers ([IOE](#)) and the Business and Industry Advisory Council ([BIAC](#)) to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ([OECD](#)).