

NZL: The Bulletin: Early childhood teachers fed up with low pay^[1]

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EXCERPTED

Good morning, and welcome to The Bulletin. In today's edition: Early childhood educators plan action to raise pay, many councils reporting low election turnout, and Defence Industry forum cancelled.

A new phase of industrial action in the education sector looms, with early childhood teachers calling for a huge pay jolt. Radio NZ reports it was one of the major outcomes of the NZEI union conference held over the course of this week. The immediate demand was for an 11% pay rise, aimed at closing the gap with kindergarten and primary school teachers, which Stuff reports has started to blow out particularly with kindergarten teachers. And they're not going to be quiet about it either – a week of action is planned for November to highlight the issue.

The situation for early childhood teachers is very different to that of the primary and secondary teachers who went on strike this year. Both the latter two workforces are heavily unionised, while among early childhood teachers union membership rates are very low – about 4,000 out of a workforce of 30,000. As well as that, they're employed independently of the government, which means those not covered by a collective agreement have a much more difficult time of negotiating with their employer. The union says that a better collective agreement for early childhood teachers would set a minimum pay rate for the industry, and have launched a website aimed at bringing in the voices of those who aren't unionised.

For all of this to happen, much more government funding would have to be put towards subsidising Early Childhood Education. Stuff reports minister Chris Hipkins has been front-footing this, saying at the start of the week that raising ECE pay was his “top priority” going into the next Budget, so it is almost certain there will be some increase on the way. Such a move would fit very neatly with the government's wider wellbeing framework, because of the importance of the earliest years of a kid's life in their future development. But the total cost of bringing early childhood teachers up to parity with kindergarten teachers has been estimated at \$1.7 billion, and it's hard to imagine that sort of money could be found. If it isn't, the response from a workforce that feels undervalued could be one of absolute fury.

Lots of councils around the country are reporting lower turnout in local elections, compared to the same time last election. The Wairarapa Times-Age reports it's happening in their patch, as does the Manawātū Standard in Palmerston North, and the NZ Herald in Auckland. It isn't yet known if this is simply because of less regular postal services, or if turnout around the country genuinely will be lower than 2016. Just in case, here's a reminder about how you, yes you reading this right now, can get your vote in on time.

The Defence Industry Association forum (also known by critics as the Weapons Expo) has been canned this year, reports Radio NZ. In part, the cancellation was blamed on protesters, who were particularly prominent in Palmerston North last year. Protesters say they're thrilled with the outcome, while the DIA says they'll instead be heading to smaller, more targeted events.

Hundreds of staff at the University of Auckland have signed a letter denouncing a lack of action against white supremacist posters on campus, reports The Spinoff. They say the posters are at odds with both Te Tiriti, and human decency. Vice-chancellor Stuart McCutcheon has defended his handling of the incident, saying that he was trying to balance rights of free speech “and the rights of people not to be upset by things.” The full letter can be read [here](#).

Youths, take note: You're running the risk of losing your hearing by listening to headphones too loud. Newshub have reported that more than a third of Year 9s in New Zealand have abnormal hearing, with many of them listening to music at volumes that exceeds World Health Organisation recommendations. The alarming stats haven't previously been widely known about, because compulsory screening for hearing loss only happens for pre-schoolers.

But seriously youths, take note of the name ACN, and be very very wary of it. Reporting for The Spinoff, Cameron Wilkinson reports it's the newest multi-level marketing scam to hit these shores, promising naive people a world of independence and riches, and then trapping them into a business model in which there's basically no chance of enriching anyone but ACN's bosses. Keep an eye out for your friends as well, lest they be sucked in.

Here's two very interesting pieces to share from some of the local government blogs I like to follow. The first is from The Traffic Jam, based

in Wellington, which has quite literally gone through every transport vote undertaken by the City Council over the last term and counted who voted for more pro-car policies, and who didn't. And the second is from Greater Auckland, and is a tribute to the work of departing General Manager of the Auckland Design Office Ludo Campbell-Reid. Including the pieces here isn't necessarily an endorsement of the points made – rather what I want to do is highlight the fine work of these sites in keeping an eye on those who work for the public.

Related link:

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