

Report on NZEI Hui

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At the end of April 2004 the New Zealand Education Institute (NZEI) held a YMN Hui in Auckland which I attended. The YMN is a Hui for young members, new members and students who represent the branches or district councils from each region of New Zealand.

The Hui was for 2 days and the following issues were discussed:

1. the collective employment agreement (CEA) claims formulation process and upcoming campaign.
2. overview of the situation in Australia with visiting union organisers from Queensland and Victoria.
3. increased understanding of activism in union and union structures.
4. discussion around provisions in CEA and union policies.
5. formulation of Student Loan Campaign.

The Student Loan Campaign, in particular, is becoming a critical issue for teachers and student teachers. The student loan debt is currently at seven billion dollars and NZEI is focussing on four areas for future negotiations:

1. *Lowering of interest rates.* NZEI's negotiating position at the moment is to argue for the wiping of student loan interest during the first 2 years of teacher registration. This interest write-off would continue for the first year beyond the teacher's full registration, provided that the teacher maintains permanent or long-term relieving employment.
2. *Increasing the repayment threshold.*
3. *Recognition of loans in accessing other financial support.*
4. *Flexibility of repayments.* Introducing flexibility of repayment obligations depending on personal financial and family commitments.

Fleur Fitzgibbons, the co-president of the New Zealand Universities Student Association (NZUSA), spoke at the Hui as well. NZUSA is currently in negotiations for a Living Allowance for every student no matter what their parents earn. This will then reduce the overall student loans debt as many people would not have to borrow a living allowance from the government.

Overall, the Hui was very interesting and informative and now the next step is to educate members and the community in preparation for an inter-union, nationwide campaign in the lead up to the Government elections.

The NZEI can be joined while you are a student teacher and it only costs \$5 to join for a year and in doing this you can have your say.



About the Author(s)

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My Name is Rachel Keegan and I come from Taranaki. Before coming to Massey University College of Education I spent a year overseas as a Nanny and doing part-time study. I am currently in my third year of my degree (Bachelor of Education (Teaching)) at Massey University. I am a member of the Student Executive Committee in which I am the liaison and representative for the New Zealand Education Institution.