



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2021

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# RELIEF TEACHING

A PAPER FROM THE HUTT VALLEY / WAIRARAPA AND TĀMAKI MAKĀURAU REGIONS

This paper outlines the terms of employment faced by relief teachers since changes to their maximum salary levels in 1994 and 2013. It advocates for day relievers to be paid up to Step 7 of the salary scale and not the current maxima of Step 6, and that “short-term reliever” be defined as a teacher employed on a short-term basis for a period not exceeding three weeks.



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PPTA Te Wehengarua | PO Box 2119, Wellington 6140 | p. +64 4 384 9964 | e. [enquiries@ppta.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@ppta.org.nz)  
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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the report be received.
- 2 That short term relievers be paid at Step 7 on the salary scale in the 2022 industrial claim.
- 3 That the 2022 industrial claim includes an amendment to Clause 3.2.5 of the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement for short-term reliever to be defined as a teacher employed on a short-term basis for a period not exceeding three weeks.

## 1 INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SALARY MAXIMA

- 1.1. To understand how it is that salaries for short-term relievers are capped at Step 6 of the trained teachers' salary scale, regardless of how long that day reliever has been teaching, and regardless of what step they would be on if they were a classroom teacher, a brief survey of the last thirty years of industrial settlements is needed. It is worth noting that this paper uses the terms "short-term reliever" and "day reliever" interchangeably, since they are, for all intents and purposes, the same thing.
- 1.2. In 1991, schools were bulk-funded for their day relief costs. Day relievers were paid at whatever level on the salary scale they happened to be at. This bulk funding was fought when the government proposed introducing it for all teaching staff.
- 1.3. In 1994, during that year's collective bargaining round, the Ministry of Education presented a claim for relievers to be paid at rates below their actual salary band. This was because, as the Ministry argued, funding for day relief was insufficient for relievers to be paid as they had been. PPTA accepted this claim, in order to achieve a settlement.
- 1.4. The 1994 settlement introduced a bar at Step 8 for day relievers, which was one step below the then-G1M step of \$34,212. In 1994, the top of the salary scale was \$41,860.
- 1.5. The next settlement was in 1996. It left the maxima for day relievers at Step 8 (which was also the G1M), but increased the value of that step to \$39,000.
- 1.6. 1999's settlement saw the entire salary scale changed. The old Step 8 became the new Step 10, and the new Step 8 became the maxima for day relievers, and G1M - with a value of \$41,500. This Step 8 remained the maxima for relievers and G1M until 2010, with its value rising to \$54,132.
- 1.7. 2011 brought a new rejig of the salary scale, with *another* new Step 8. Two steps were eliminated, two were merged, and another one was created below the old Step 8 - but this new Step 8 remained the maxima for day relievers and G1M, with a value of \$55,621.
- 1.8. In our 2012 claim, PPTA wanted the period for short-term relief changed from six weeks to less than three weeks, and we asked that the maxima for short-term relievers be increased to Step 9. This was rejected by the Ministry, despite the fact that under the Primary Teachers' Collective Agreement and Area Schools Teachers' Collective Agreement relievers are considered long-term after three weeks and are paid according to their actual place on their salary scale.
- 1.9. Once negotiations had concluded, we were left with the 2013 settlement. It merged three steps in the salary scale. The effect of this was to move the maxima for day relievers and G1M from what *had* been Step 8 to what became Step 6, and was worth \$56,741. In 2015, Step 6 increased to \$60,500, and in 2019 to \$62,000.
- 1.10. In 2018, PPTA's claim sought the removal of the Step 6 salary maxima for short-term relievers, but this was rejected by the Ministry. However, although the 2019 settlement kept the maxima for day relievers at Step 6, it moved the G1M to Step 10 - where it remains.

## 2 WHO ARE DAY RELIEVERS?

### 2.1. Relief teachers include:

- Those who do not wish to work full-time, due to commitments such as childcare, but who wish to provide income for the household and family.
- Those who have worked full-time for a number of years and wish to reduce their commitment to allow time for other interests, but who want to keep active and gain an income in a semi-retired capacity.
- Those who would like to have full-time employment, but are unable to secure such a position and are forced to accept whatever employment is available to cover financial commitments. This group could include some establishing teachers, who find that being attached to a school doing relief work may result in secure work in the future.
- Teachers experiencing burn-out, who opt to do day-relief teaching, which lessens their workload.
- Retired teachers, who wish to keep their hand in and supplement their income.

### 2.2. Part-time teachers may also do short-term relief beyond their normal teaching duties. This is considered a separate job where they are paid for those hours as if they are a general day reliever.

## 3 THE SITUATION AS IT STANDS

### 3.1. Day relievers are paid at a maximum rate of Step 6 of the salary scale, even if they would be eligible to be paid at the top step if employed on a long-term basis (six weeks or longer). Their relief pay includes holiday pay.

## THE WORK OF A DAY RELIEVER

### 3.2. Some people might argue that day relievers have it easy, and that consequently Step 6 of the salary scale is more than adequate. After all, day relievers don't prepare lessons and they don't mark assessments, and they don't go to meetings or coach the First XV or run the chess club at lunch time. Indeed, this sort of argument was one of the reasons given by the Ministry in 1994 for introducing the salary maxima for day relievers.

### 3.3. However, that argument ignores the other stresses of relief teaching. A day reliever doesn't need to prepare a lesson, but they do need to deliver the lesson to a room full of unknown students and, quite often, they'll be delivering a lesson in a subject with which they are unfamiliar. Moreover, they may find that the unfamiliar work they have to present to this unfamiliar class isn't actually adequate for the class – and although teachers are skilful at improvising, it's understandably stressful when you're obliged to extemporise activities for a roomful of strangers about a topic about which you know very little.

### 3.4. As well as this, a day reliever may be working in an unfamiliar school, with unfamiliar staff, unfamiliar systems, and unfamiliar rules. There is also the problem of the intermittent nature of relief, and of the uncertainty of employment on any given day. Teaching is stressful enough as it is, but day relievers have the added burdens of unfamiliarity and precarious employment – and all those

stresses are compounded by the knowledge that they're not even being paid fairly.

## DAY RELIEVERS WHO BECOME LONG-TERM RELIEVERS

- 3.5. Sometimes, a day reliever may end up staying in that role, relieving for a particular teacher, for longer than six weeks. At that point, they become a long-term reliever. They have to prepare lessons and contribute to the wider life of the school - and they often get a pay rise. Long-term relievers are paid at whatever step on the salary scale they're supposed to be at.
- 3.6. As has already been noted in this paper, you're considered a long-term reliever at a primary school or area school after three weeks - and yet in the STCA it's six weeks. We would describe this as 'odd', but really it's just unfair. After all, there is little real difference between looking after someone's class for three weeks, or four weeks, or five weeks, or six weeks - apart from, of course, the rate of pay.

## ANOMALIES

- 3.7. The main anomalies occur between schools and relate to how time is calculated. Some schools deal in half days and others in total hours. Some schools pay for down-time, when no cover is available, like periods 2 and 4 in a 5-period day. Some schools will want to pay only for 3 hours, but the STCA requires them to pay for at least 4 hours (the hour for the gap time, which includes the lunch break).
- 3.8. There is anecdotal evidence of day relievers being discriminated against if they claim the travel allowance. There is also anecdotal evidence of schools requiring day relievers to be available on an 'as needs basis', which precludes them taking jobs at different schools.
- 3.9. Most schools insist on relief teachers being fully registered, but it is often difficult for day relievers to get a lead school for the purposes of attestation and certification.
- 3.10. Part-time teachers who do relief periods are paid differently for relieving from the rate they are paid as part-timers, despite the fact that they may well be relieving in a subject in which they are qualified and have expertise and therefore, in effect, teach.

## 4 POSSIBLE COSTS OF A CLAIM

- 4.1. If an increase in the maxima for day relievers is included in our 2022 claim, it will be expensive.
- 4.2. Currently, schools are funded for about 8.5 days relief per FTTE. Across the country, there are about 18,000 FTTE of secondary staffing entitlement. If the maxima for day relievers were increased from Step 6 to the top of the scale (meaning short-term relievers could be paid at their actual rate), the approximate cost for equity with full time teachers would be about \$80 million across the three years of the new collective agreement.

- 4.3. For this reason, this paper recommends making progress one step at a time and raising the maxima for short-term relievers to Step 7 on the salary scale.

## 5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1. We need to treat our relief teachers as full PPTA Te Wehengarua members, deserving of the same pay rates on the same salary scale as every other teacher. It is time to begin rectifying this historic injustice, stop treating relief teachers as second-class colleagues, and improving their pay rate.