



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2019

EMBRACING KAITIAKITANGA

Improving PPTA's commitment to the environment



This paper provides background on current environmental issues, in particular climate change, and some of the previous actions that the PPTA has taken to be environmentally aware.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the report be received.
2. That PPTA purchases carbon offsetting for all flights that are booked by the organisation
3. That PPTA sets up a working group to look into further measures that could be taken to reduce the PPTA's environmental impact

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2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. Compared to other western countries, New Zealand has a relatively strong environmental focus but there is still work for us to do as a nation and as a union.
- 2.2. Increasing amounts of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere are causing unprecedented changes to our global climate. A recent report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that increases to average global temperature of more than 1.5°C will lead to more extreme weather events such as drought, heavy rainfall, and extreme temperatures.¹ Governments around the world are looking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions with the goal of staying under 1.5°C warming, such as the proposed "Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill" by the New Zealand Government.²
- 2.3. Climate change is an area of concern for many, in particular young people. Tens of thousands of students across New Zealand took part in the Student Climate Strikes in March and May this year, and another strike is planned for shortly before Annual Conference on September 20th.³
- 2.4. At the New and Establishing Teachers Conference earlier this year, attendees heard from Sophie Handford – one of the activists leading the strikes – who spoke about the importance of the movement, and of the effect it is having on youth activism. The PPTA also set up a fund of \$2500 to support student involvement in climate change activism.
- 2.5. Whilst climate change is the most serious environmental issue facing our world currently, it's not the only area where our country and our union have negative environmental impacts. Other environmental issues currently being discussed publicly include waste minimisation (in particular in relation to single use plastics), deforestation, and clean waterways.

3. PAST ACTIONS OF PPTA

- 3.1. Over recent years, PPTA has already taken many actions to become more environmentally conscious. Conferences have been becoming less paper-intensive since 2014, with more conference material being provided on flash drives rather than paper.
- 3.2. Likewise, the gifts given in conference packs have had a focus on high-quality items that teachers are likely to reuse for a significant time, and name tags and pouches are re-used between conferences.
- 3.3. One of the most recent changes adopted by PPTA involves executive papers. Previously, paper copies of agenda items were couriered to executive members before each meeting. As of this year, these are now being sent out by email, reducing unnecessary transportation costs.
- 3.4. PPTA also has a policy of leasing fuel efficient vehicles, creating savings on fuel costs whilst benefitting the environment.

¹ IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/summary-for-policy-makers/>

² https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/bills-and-laws/bills-proposed-laws/document/BILL_87861/climate-change-response-zero-carbon-amendment-bill

³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/climate-news/113897805/school-climate-strike-students-call-on-adults-to-join-third-wave-of-action>

4. CARBON OFF-SETTING

- 4.1. Globally, aviation is estimated to account for 3% of total carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. One of PPTA's biggest environmental impacts is through air travel. In 2017, a total of \$484,697 was spent on airfares for 1,091,588 kilometres of travel, and in 2018 we spent \$546,671 on 1,187,242 kilometres of travel. This is an inevitable consequence of being a union that values grassroots activism and democracy in a widely spread out nation. However, this does not mean that there are not things that we can do to reduce that impact.
- 4.2. One method for reducing the impact is, of course, to travel less. This is difficult to do without impacting the ability of members to interact with parts of the union other than their local areas. Possibilities may exist however to ensure that conferences and events are held in locations that minimise travel, or to hold more meetings by electronic means.
- 4.3. Another method for reducing the impact is through carbon offsetting. Carbon offsetting is a concept where consumers can pay for 'carbon credits', which represent funding for projects that reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (such as the establishment of new forests or investment in energy-efficient upgrades). By purchasing an amount of carbon credits that equals the amount of carbon they emit, consumers can offset their greenhouse gas emissions from particular activities.
- 4.4. Air New Zealand offers carbon credits with [Permanent Forests NZ](#) domestically and [ClimateCare](#) internationally, which the PPTA could use. Table one compares return flights to Wellington from Invercargill, Auckland, and Christchurch, and the cost to offset their emissions through Air New Zealand's website.

Return trip from	Distance travelled	CO ₂ Emissions	Offset cost per person	Cost per km
Invercargill-Wellington	1536 km	217kg	\$4.92	\$0.0032/km
Auckland-Wellington	960 km	129.4kg	\$2.76	\$0.0029/km
Christchurch-Wellington	608 km	82.0kg	\$1.74	\$0.0029/km

Table one: Comparison of offset costs

- 4.5. If we use the average of \$0.0030/km, we can calculate that for PPTA flights in 2018, the cost of offsetting would be in the ballpark of \$3500.

5. OTHER POSSIBLE CHANGES

- 5.1. As well as carbon offsetting, there are other possible changes that the PPTA could make to continue its environmental awareness – for example, in areas such as waste minimisation. These changes will likely be more operational in nature, so the most appropriate way to identify and address them would be to set up a working group with a mixture of PPTA leadership and union activists to tackle them rather than developing them individually on the conference floor.

5.2. NZEI has recently undertaken similar steps to minimise its environmental impacts. Some of the actions it has taken include:

- Offsetting all fleet vehicle travel
- Introducing a common waste reduction and recycling programme across its offices
- Switching to renewably sourced electricity
- Increasing usage of eco-friendly products (cleaning, LED lighting when replacing)
- Improving the lifecycle of their ICT equipment
- Increasing usage of Zoom and Skype for business to reduce face-to-face meetings