



PPTA TE WEHENGARUA ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2024

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# RELIEF TEACHERS

A PAPER FROM THE HUTT VALLEY (TE AWA KAIRANGI) REGION



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That the paper be received.
- 2 That the 2025 collective agreement claims include an increase to the maximum salary step for short term relievers.

NB. This paper uses the terms “short-term reliever” and “day reliever” interchangeably, since they are, for all intents and purposes, the same thing.

## 1. INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DAY RELIEVER SALARY MAXIMUM

- 1.1 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 regular classroom teacher.
- 1.2 Prior to 1991, day reliever costs were funded centrally by the Department/Ministry of Education. They paid the actual rate of the reliver if they were covering an authorised absence. In 1991 schools were bulk funded for their day relief costs. They then received funding for about the first 8 days of relief per teacher to cover most relief for sick leave, parental leave, PLD etc. The Ministry continued to fund additional relief days for sickness in excess of 8 days absence. Day relievers were paid at whatever level on the salary scale they happened to be at. This was fair and matched what was happening in NSW.
- 1.3 This bulk funding of relief was part of a transfer of many administration costs from the centre to the schools. The bulk funding of teacher staffing was fought off when the government proposed introducing it for all teaching staff.
- 1.4 In 1994, during that year's collective bargaining round, the Ministry of Education presented a number of claw-back claims, including that short term relievers to be paid at a maximum rate which was below the top of the scale and for many below their actual maximum salary. In a very difficult industrial environment PPTA was forced to accept this claim in order to achieve a settlement. It had the effect of reducing the pay for experienced day relievers.
- 1.5 The 1994 settlement set the day relief bar at Step 8, one step below the G1M step of \$34,212. The top of the salary scale was \$41,860.
- 1.6 The settlement of 1996 left the maximum for day relievers at Step 8 (also the G1M step) but increased the value of that step to \$39,000.
- 1.7 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 maximum for day relievers and G1M teachers with a value of \$41,500. Step 8 remained the maximum for relievers until 2010, with its value rising over that time to \$54,132.
- 1.8 2011 brought a rejig of the salary scale but the maximum day relief step remained at Step 8 with a value of \$55,621.
- 1.9 In our 2012 claim, PPTA wanted the period for short-term relief changed from six weeks to less than three weeks. 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. A claim for the maximum to increase to Step 9 was also rejected. The settlement in 2013 merged three steps in the salary scale. The effect of this was to move the maxima for day relievers and G1M from old Step 8 to the equivalent new Step 6, worth \$56,741.
- 1.10 Step 6 increased to \$60,500 in 2015, and in 2019 to \$62,000.

- 1.11 In 2018, PPTA's claim to remove the salary bar for short-term relievers was rejected by the Ministry. The 2019 settlement kept the maximum for day relievers at Step 6, but it moved the G1M to Step 10, where it remains.
- 1.12 In 2023 the pay settlement included reducing the short-term period from six weeks to three weeks and increasing the maximum salary step for relievers by one step to the new step seven. The step value at the time of conference is \$77,213.

## 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 and they are paid for those hours as if they are a general day reliever.

2.3 Sometimes, a day reliever may be relieving for a particular teacher for longer than three 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 generally get a pay rise as they are then paid at whatever step on the salary scale they're supposed to be at.

## 3. THE SITUATION AS IT STANDS

3.1 Day relievers are paid at a maximum rate of Step 7 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, which other teachers receive as payment during the term breaks.

- 3.2 Day relievers are either paid 1/190 of the step 6 salary for a whole day of relieving or on an hourly rate of 1/950th of that step for each hour worked, in which case the minimum payment is two hours per day. If there is a break in duties of one and a half hours or more, an allowance of one hour is paid.
- 3.3 The main anomalies between schools 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 instead of the 4 hours required by the STCA (the hour for the gap time, which includes the lunch break).
- 3.4 Some people might argue that day relievers have it easy not doing preparation and administration, and that consequently Step 7 of the salary scale is more than adequate. However, that ignores the differences between regular and day relieving. 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 with complex needs, and quite often they'll be delivering a lesson in a subject with which they are unfamiliar. They may be working in an unfamiliar school, with unfamiliar staff, unfamiliar systems, and unfamiliar rules.
- 3.5 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 of those stresses are compounded by the understanding that they're not being paid fairly.
- 3.6 There is anecdotal evidence of day relievers being discriminated against if they claim the travel allowance and of schools requiring day relievers to be available on an 'as needs basis', which precludes them taking jobs at different schools.
- 3.7 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.

## 4. BENEFITS OF A CLAIM

- 4.1 If the increase in the maximum for day relievers is gradually increased in future claims this will attract more relief teachers to the job and remove the burden on teachers of having to cover for their peer's absence, and of being scared to take sick leave or attend training.
- 4.2 This would allow NZ relief teachers to be paid in a manner similar to those in New South Wales, rewarded according to their experience as a classroom teacher.
- 4.3 This paper proposes that the Association should seek to make progress one step at a time and in raising the maximum for short-term relievers to match their experience on the salary scale in future pay claims. This acknowledges their importance in our education system and pays them accordingly. As conference can't bind members to claims the recommendation in this paper is that the conference recommends to members that the next claim includes an increase of one step to the maximum relief rate.

## 5. PPTA AND RELIEF TEACHERS

- 5.1 As PPTA members, day relievers have the rights of full members to participate and vote in the Association's activities. They pay subscriptions of 1% of any payment they receive for relieving each fortnight (if any). If they choose to attend PUMs on days that they are otherwise booked to work then the school must meet their pay for that day. If they are not working on the day of a PUM they may attend and can claim mileage for attending, but they receive no additional salary payment for doing so. Regions and branches may use their funds to support attendance of relievers at branch and regional activities and relievers can be regional and branch representatives at local and national events.
- 5.2 However, being a relief teacher can be quite isolating in some schools. Often branches do not think about their day reliever members when planning events or meetings or in their communications to members. This paper encourages branches to include relievers in their branch events.
- 5.3 Regions can also include relievers in Conferences and training days, paying their day's pay as a matter of course.
- 5.4 Relief teachers should get the PPTA News and can sign up to receive an electronic copy.
- 5.5 We need to ensure that relief teachers can be involved in PUMs.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 We need to treat our relief teachers as full PPTA members, deserving of the same pay rates on the same salary scale as an equivalent regular teacher. We need to continue to improve their pay rate and find ways to enhance their involvement in the union.