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Overwhelming member support for claim – PPTA

Thousands of teachers around the country have voted on a collective agreement claim that focuses on high quality, well-resourced public education.

PPTA president Kate Gainsford says there is “overwhelming support” for the proposed package, with 97% of those who voted backing the claim.

The proposals cover four areas – student and teacher learning conditions, professional support for teachers, remuneration, and good employment conditions.

The proposal for a base scale increase of 4% for a one-year term and improvements to targeted allowances had strong membership support, she said.

“It’s about maintaining the value of a secondary teacher’s job. Our teachers are part of a global market and we need to ensure secondary teaching is a first choice career.”

It is also proposed to seek an additional 1% employer contribution for teachers in Kiwisaver - to bring it in line with the 3% contribution of the Teachers’ Retirement Savings Scheme, which was closed with the introduction of Kiwisaver, Gainsford said.

Also included is a reduction in class sizes to no more than 30 students – or no more than 24 in practical classes where there are hazards present, greater professional support for teachers and safer working environments.

Other areas include access to free immunisation against contagious diseases and the provision of laptops to all teachers as basic tools of the job. “We want all teachers to be able to concentrate on providing the best learning environment for their students,” she said.

PPTA had looked at the way other OECD countries had responded to the financial crisis when drawing up the claim, Gainsford said.

“OECD countries have responded in three kinds of ways,” she said.

One group, which included Africa and East European countries, had responded by cutting spending on education. The second, including Latin America, responded by protecting and maintaining investment in the education budget, and the third, which included countries such as Canada, had responded by increasing investment in education as a way out of the financial crisis and towards growth and prosperity for all, she said.

“We would be interested to know which group this government wants to be in. With the budget cuts it has been signalling it appears to wish to join Eastern Europe. We would like to see unequivocal evidence that the government wants to be in group three and is going to support teachers to do the best possible job for New Zealand students.

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