

MECAs and Individual Employment Agreements: Some Basic Facts

What happens if there is a MECA (such as in DHBs) or other collective, when you are not a member of the body that negotiated the MECA or other collective?

- Nurses in this situation are not under the MECA but that does not mean that they are on different salary rates or conditions.
- None of our members have ever paid a bargaining fee (except by accident) and none have ever been significantly disadvantaged by that. In such situations, they are technically on an individual employment agreement (IEA).
- The rates in the IEA are generally identical to the MECA and all increases apply; but there is some variation between DHBs on this: most have exactly the same terms and conditions while others have substantially the same. Where there is a difference, the net difference is generally negligible when all factors such as representative membership fees are considered.
- Each time a new MECA is implemented, DHBs automatically email employees on IEAs with an offer to revise their IEA. They cannot pass on the changes automatically, they have to make an offer.
- No complicated or big negotiations are involved, usually just an offer by email to each employee, by Human Resources, once the relevant collective has been settled. The dates for all increases are usually the same, but we are aware of minor differences in some cases.
- Moreover, we have other options available for the future including negotiating separate collectives, should that be necessary. Where appropriate, possible or as a need arises, we do negotiate collective agreements, *Te Uniana o NSNZ* being one of our vehicles for this. Generally, we can only do that where we have sufficient numbers. An IEA is the backstop position when we do not have the numbers, or if it would not make sense to do a collective.
- The DHB MECA and many other collectives have clauses to allow nurses who do not hold membership with the union that negotiated the MECA, to be under the MECA, without paying a bargaining fee, if they are a member of “another union”. Since all

Society members are automatically concurrent members of *Te Uniana o NSNZ*, this theoretically presents another possibility. However, we are not relying on this as an option, because not all DHBs agree with our interpretation of this clause.

- What about other parts of the health sector? IEAs in sectors like primary care generally match or exceed the MECA rates.
- While *Te Uniana o NSNZ* is a new additional arm, we have managed some workplace unions for decades and have previously used these to negotiate collectives. *Te Uniana o NSNZ* is relatively new, but the Nurses Society of New Zealand is far from new: it has operated since the 1970s and we are very experienced in both the union and professional body space.



NURSES SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND / *Te Kāhui Tapuhi o Aotearoa & Te Uniana o NSNZ*
director@nursessociety.org.nz