

A conversation with climate strike organiser Sophie Handford

The following is a brief version of an interview with Sophie the national co-ordinator this year's Student Climate Strikes.

Amanda Thomas: Thanks heaps for making the time for this. Firstly, you're fresh to organising: how has the past year been?

Sophie Handford: Pretty insane. At the end of last year when I was thinking about what I wanted to do after leaving high school, and I didn't really know, I had sent off all my forms to universities and was really set on doing that, and then I decided actually no, that's not where I am meant to be at this point of my life. Then I just kind of found myself a job and found myself with quite a bit of time because obviously at school you're working from 9 till 3 every Monday to Friday, like you're constrained by the school system. So I was like oh well, what else am I going to do?

And then I saw all the school strikes last year and realised there was nothing like it in New Zealand. People have this theory about New Zealand: that we're a clean, green country and we do appear to be, because, you know, on the surface you see trees and the air is pretty clean to breathe. But I found out more about the impacts that we are having on our environment and it was really shocking.

Amanda Thomas: Tell me a bit about some of the strategising and organising work for the strikes earlier this year (in March and May) and leading into September?

Sophie Handford: We've been very committed to ensuring that it's led entirely by young people. So we've got a 12-year-old from Christchurch called Lucy who is one of our national co-convenors. We've been doing things like talking with different unions and members of parliament and that kind of thing. Also, the Elbow your Elders campaign which is a tactic launched with Generation Zero—so that's essentially where we are encouraging young people to link up with their grandparents and their parents and the elders in their community to say, actually, 'look nana this is my future'. The best inheritance you can give me is a liveable planet so take action now by submitting on the Zero Carbon Bill, by signing a petition to get parliament to declare a climate emergency, all of that.

We've been really trying to connect people and connect in ourselves with other groups based on values. Like the things that no one can really argue if we front up and say that it's our future and that's being put at risk, you also can't argue with that either because that's fact.

Amanda Thomas: Totally. A friend of mine works in a bank and she could see the March strike from work. Some of her colleagues were saying 'they just want a day off work' and my friend had quite a heated discussion with them and why the strikes were important. In workplaces everywhere I think it created opportunities for conversation.

Sophie Handford: Yeah, and it also meant that the media was onto us and that meant that the word spread further; that meant that we had more regional organisers join. It just escalated from that which wouldn't have happened if we did a little march on a weekend.

Amanda Thomas: I was really struck by the prominence of young women, globally and here, leading the strike for climate. Tell me about that.



Sophie Handford (2nd from left) with School Strike 4 Climate NZ



NZ school student climate strikes 2019

Sophie Handford: Yeah, I'm not really sure why necessarily, but it has been amazing linking up with young women. Especially in Wellington and nationally. There are lots of young women involved. In saying that, there are lots of amazing young men involved and one of our key organisers is 15, from Onslow College, and he's awesome. But it

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What members and ISEA achieved in 2019

Collective Bargaining

It has been a busy year for ISEA in respect of Collective Bargaining, particularly in the context of the state collective bargaining round. We have renegotiated the Collective Agreements in eight of our schools. We need to recognise the contribution of our representatives and members who support and lead this process in their schools. Your skills, knowledge and input are essential to the bargaining, so thank you very much.

Remuneration was important in all the bargaining and in 60% of the agreements we increased the level of remuneration paid above the new state rates. This remuneration element recognises the additional requirements and expectations of Independent school staff that is over and above what is asked of a state schoolteacher. With levels of remuneration above the state ranging from 3 – 10 % It is ISEA's long term strategy to establish a fair rate this would provide the opportunity to remove competition around wages from the bargaining table.

75% of the bargaining rounds had claims for greater transparency around fairness, equity and consultation. This reflects members desire to have a voice in the work that they do, members have a vested interest in their school being successful and as professionals they seek opportunities to do so.

There were also claims that ensured collective agreements met changes in legislation, and included the new leave provisions under the Family Violence Act 2018. Workloads, extra and co-curricular activities, updating clauses to non-gender references, overnight allowances and transparency around management units, part-time employment and union only benefits have been some of the issues for members in the bargaining round. We are pleased to say that we have made good progress on these matters.

Collective Bargaining can sometimes be a fraught process; often the member representative feels the pressure on behalf of their colleagues it is important that members engage and support the bargaining process. We would also like to acknowledge those principals who take a constructive approach to bargaining, who are respectful of the role their employees hold as ISEA reps and are supportive of the process. Thank you.



Kristin School ISEA bargaining team reps L to R Cheryl, Simone, Helen and Monika

Member Assistance

This year we have assisted 57 members in various employment matters and have responded at the highest level from filing in the Employment Authority, the Teachers Council, providing access to a criminal lawyer to advise a member witness and supporting members at mediation with the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. We have drawn heavily on the services of two lawyers in what has been a bumper year for employment matters and most unusual for ISEA. We have dealt with issues such as fixed term agreements, harassment, student complaints against staff, school closure, workplace bullying, arrears of wages, entitlement to employment terms and conditions, workplace reviews and redundancies. In all cases where a member's job has been threatened an ISEA staff member has been involved in the process.

For members a good fair process starts with their ISEA rep, attending meetings, taking notes and debriefing after the meeting. It is important that your ISEA rep is the first port of call for members in an employment matter. ISEA has developed a training module for reps to cover this aspect of their role that we will run in 2020. This is an important aspect of your ISEA membership and often one that we do not give much thought to until we need to.



TANJA BRISTOW ISEA ORGANISER BASED IN AUCKLAND OUR FIRST FULL-TIME ORGANISER

ISEA is delighted to welcome back Tanja who will take up a new national organising role. In the three years since Tanja has worked with ISEA she has gained invaluable experience as a trainer with PPTA and Worksafe NZ in addition to her organiser role with that teachers' union.

Previously Tanja worked for the Association of University Staff as a branch organiser at Auckland University. She has worked for the PSA the largest trade union in New Zealand prior to working in the Education sector.

Tanja will bring great skills to ISEA, she has always had a passion for training and will make a significant contribution in upskilling our ISEA representatives and encouraging more of our members to qualify as Health and Safety representatives.

Tanja has extensive experience working with and advocating for members. She understands the role of ISEA representatives in resolving workplace issues and enforcing collective agreements. Tanja is looking forward to developing new methods of organising which will improve the lives and conditions of all the members of ISEA.

The facts behind the new rest and meal breaks

On 6 May 2019, changes to the Employment Relations Act 2000 came into force that change how employers should deal with rest and meal breaks.

Previously, the employer only had to provide “reasonable opportunity” for rest and meal breaks, and the timing of the breaks had to be “reasonable”. “Reasonable and necessary” restrictions were allowed on when and how long the rest and meal breaks were. The employer could avoid the need to provide breaks if they provided “reasonable compensatory measures” to the employee, such as time in lieu.

However, as of 6 May 2019, both the length and timing of minimum break entitlements are prescribed as follows:

Total work period	Break entitlement
2–4 hrs	10-minutes (=+)
4–6 hrs	1 x 30-minute meal break (+)
6–8 hrs	2 x (+) 1 x 30-minute meal break
> 8 hrs	E.g. an additional 4 hours 3 x (+) and 2 x 30 minutes meal break

The length and number of breaks are minimum entitlements and cannot be avoided by agreement.

In terms of timing, the Act now requires that each break must be spread evenly throughout the employee’s work day. In the absence of an agreement with the employee as to timing, this default ‘even spread’ for timing of breaks will apply. For example, for an 8-hour work day starting at 8.30am, the breaks must be timed as follows:

Start time:	8.30am
Rest break:	10.30–10.40am
Meal break:	12.30–1.00pm
Rest break:	3.00–3.10pm
End time:	5.00pm

The default break times from the Act will apply, unless you reach agreement with the employee – which will need to be recorded in the employment agreement. Therefore, we recommend that employers reach agreement as to timing as that will provide flexibility and more likely meet operational needs. We find that the above timings are quite restrictive for many employers and do not work at all for others.

Therefore, changes to your employment agreements may be required. This may include:

- setting out actual break times that need to apply for your business; or
- rostering when breaks are to occur; or
- other changes to create flexibility as to break timing.

If there are other legislative requirements for timing of rest and meal breaks, that apply to employees, such as the Land Transport Act work-time rules, these will also need to be accommodated. The Act specifically provides how these breaks are to be worked together. In many cases, for example, the work time rules can be worked so that they coincide with the Employment Relations Act break entitlements and timing.

Article published with permission (by Amanda Douglas Wynn Williams Lawyers provided by Avalon Kent | Legal Officer CTU)

This is an interesting Article, that will require some thought as to the implications for our workplaces in meeting this requirement. ISEA Executive and reps will be looking at this in 2020, we would welcome your views on this matter.

ISEA fee increase reminder

ISEA membership fees will be increasing slightly from 1 December 2019 to reflect the increase in CPI. We have notified payroll and principals. If you pay by automatic payment can you please check to make sure you have changed the amount paid.

Membership Fees December 2019

	Fortnightly	Monthly
Full-Time Teacher	\$17.10	\$37.85
Part-Time Teacher	\$8.55	\$18.90
Full-Time Support	\$11.20	\$24.25
Part-Time Support	\$5.60	\$12.15
Associate Member		\$5.00

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varies from place to place. I think in Auckland its mainly young men leading it.

I don’t necessarily know why. We haven’t been specifically focused on recruiting young women over young men, but it’s just been the kind of way it’s turned out, but we are finding that as the movement grows there are more young men coming on board.

And I do think that it’s important that people aren’t just like ‘young people give us hope, they’ve got it under control’. Like as Greta [Thunberg] says, we don’t want your hope, we want you to act, we want you to join us, we want you to walk the talk. If the young people give you hope, be a part of that hope and give other people hope. There will be a tipping-point where if we get enough people on that [parliament] lawn and if we flood everywhere, if everyone in New Zealand joins, the government can’t turn us away, they can’t refuse to act anymore, so we want people to be a part of that hope to inspire others, be inspired by our hope.

ISEA would like to thank ESRA for permission to reproduce this edited version of the interview.

Amanda Thomas is an ESRA research and a lecturer in environmental studies at Victoria University of Wellington. Her research is largely grounded with communities, and examines democracy and the ways that environmental politics interact with social justice.

Sophie Handford graduated from Kāpiti College in 2018 and is the national coordinator for School Strike 4 Climate. The first School Strike 4 Climate was held in March 2019 and involved 20,000 young people from across the country.

Farewell to long serving ISEA reps



Meritorious Service Awarded to L to R Geoff Stanton, David Farmer and Alastair McGowan ISEA reps at St Andrew's College

ISEA and STAC members say farewell to three of our ISEA representatives David Farmer, Geoff Stanton and Alastair McGowan from St Andrew's College (STAC) who are retiring at the end of the year. We recognised their significant contribution to ISEA in awarding them with Meritorious Service Awards, below are some reflections on their time as reps.

David has been a member of ISSATA, for over 25 years. He says "It has been very special to be able to serve my fellow staff all these years. My ISEA colleagues and I have been at the forefront of staff well-being long before well-being became trendy. The role has, at times, been demanding and challenging but also personally rewarding."

For Geoff his driving force has been the wellbeing of colleagues. "This probably stems from my mother who worked tirelessly to support people in her small community, many of whom were involved with gangs, unemployed, in victims of domestic

violence."

He says: "An ISEA rep spends many hours supporting staff on a variety of matters, including many meetings with members, management, contract negotiations etc.

My advice...don't react impulsively, consider all options, seek clarification before meetings, support and value each other, don't be an idiot!"

Alastair entered the teaching profession in 1990 after a 19 year career in engineering. According to Alastair "dealing with situations involving people can be fraught with complications, but with ISEA and fellow reps support I have navigated a whole range of issues from simple employment queries to complex contract negotiations. As I leave teaching and hand over his role as an ISEA rep, I would encourage anyone with an interest in improving the conditions of staff in our Independent schools, to find out more and give it a go."

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NEED ADVICE OR ASSISTANCE?

- ISEA has a Freephone number **0800 300 073**. You can leave a message for ISEA on our freephone number 0800 300 073.
- We endeavour to respond to queries within 24 hours on weekdays or the Monday following the weekend.
- (Our normal office hours are Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. We are closed on all Public Holidays and Auckland Anniversary Day).

ISEA OFFICE HOURS OVER CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

- The ISEA office will close for the Christmas-New Year period on Friday 6 December 2019 and reopen on Tuesday 21 January 2020. *We wish all our members a relaxing and safe holiday break.*

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