

The urgency of a just transition in the face of climate change

Sam Huggard, NZCTU General Secretary

New Zealand is about to embark on a transition to a low carbon economy and future. It's one of the most important transitions we will make, and it must be done well. Our lives literally depend on it.

For people who work for a living, and the unpaid work that supports this, change and transition are permanent features of employment, nationally and internationally.

But big transitions in work can make people anxious. New Zealand hasn't done them well before.

The massive economic restructuring in the 1980s including the removal and reduction of tariffs saw tens of thousands of people sacked without any consideration of the impact on them and their families. We won't let this happen with the transition to zero carbon.

The Government has an important call to make on the future of oil and gas exploration in New Zealand. The Prime Minister has indicated they are close to a decision on this.

How we manage this transition is critical. It was a huge relief for working people to hear that the new Government has committed to a 'Just Transition'. Since being elected, the Prime Minister and her Ministers have backed up this position repeatedly in public.

We're all agreed on the need for a just transition. But what does one look like?

For a start, it needs to be well planned. A good plan needs sustainable industries to ramp up, and the creation of new sectors at the same time as phasing out old ones. New, decent employment should already be in sight for affected people and communities.

We don't have to wait for the inevitable to act. Retraining can happen as part of current jobs. We should offer the assurance of a full transition package that maps the move to new secure jobs, recognises existing skills, and provides financial support to protect people's quality of life.

An example might be help upgrading someone's class of driving licence, providing a travel subsidy, and relocation assistance for someone moving to sustainable work.



Photo credit: Takver on Flickr under Creative Commons 2.0. The climate march in Bonn before COP23 for climate justice.

For affected people and their families, any old job won't do. Many of the jobs in extractive industries have been reliable, high paying jobs which have sustained whole communities and regions.

The new Government can promote economic diversification away from New Zealand's heavy reliance on extractive industry, particularly in the regions. This is already begun with the initiation of the Provincial Growth Fund and the Green Investment Fund.

There is a level of urgency around this now. We need to work up a transition plan for people employed in the oil and gas industries, and we need to do it right now. This will give confidence to current employees that they'll be protected and have a say in the transition away from fossil fuels.

The good news is we're not alone. Just Transitions are already happening in Australia, Germany, Canada and Norway.

Our Just Transition will only be successful if we find a way forward which is fair to everyone. No one person can fully mitigate the impact of climate change through their individual actions, no matter how noble. If we are asking some people to move their homes, their families and their careers for the good of us all, we should expect them to ask what they are being offered by society in return.

This article has been abridged. The full article can be read at : http://www.together.org.nz/the_urgency_of_a_just_transition_for_climate



Workplace Bullying

Anti-Bullying Week (14-18 May 2018), culminating in Pink Shirt Day on 18 May, is a good time to take stock of your workplace environment to be sure that it is a fair and healthy one, free of bullying and intimidation, and to focus on improvements needed, if this is not the case.

Complaints about workplace bullying have surfaced in schools for many years. According to Adele Redmond, in an article in *Stuff* (Better Business News) in August 2016, based on an academic study, New Zealand had the world's second highest rate of workplace bullying in the developed world, with 1 in 5 workers adversely affected.

Some teachers and support staff have complained to ISEA about being bullied by their employer, colleagues, students or students' parents and being victims of cyber-bullying. They have described the negative impact of bullying on their confidence, health, employment and relationships with family and colleagues. Others have had complaints of alleged bullying made against them.

It is critical that employers and employees have clear understandings of what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, of their obligations in the workplace and of the processes in place to ensure that bullying is dealt with.

What is workplace bullying?

According to Employment New Zealand, workplace bullying is "is repeated and unreasonable behavior directed towards a worker or a group of workers that can be physical, verbal or relational/social (excluding someone or spreading rumours)".

Unreasonable behavior can be described as "actions that a reasonable person in the same circumstances would see as unreasonable". This could include, for example, using words or actions that are humiliating, threatening or intimidating, abusive or offensive. One incident involving such behavior is unacceptable and should be dealt with, but if it is not repeated, it is not considered bullying.

Bullying can affect staff morale, cause stress, increase staff turnover and affect the reputation of individuals and institutions. It can lead to legal action, which may be expensive in terms of time, financial costs and stress.

Obligations of employers and employees

The employer has an obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace, to act professionally and in good faith and to have appropriate policies, fair processes and good support mechanisms in place to deal with bullying when it arises. Employee Assistance Programmes can provide independent support for staff.

Employees have an obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not to impact adversely on the health and safety of others. They must act professionally and in good faith and should alert the employer if there are issues of bullying so that the employer can deal with them.

Dealing with bullying

As bullying is misconduct or serious misconduct, the employer must deal with it in a timely manner, effectively and fairly, using methods that are appropriate to the level of bullying. Processes should be carried out in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

In determining the appropriate process to be used, consideration should be given to power imbalances between the person alleging bullying and the person accused of bullying.

If the employer has not resolved the issues of bullying, or if the outcome against the person accused was unjustified, there may be a case to pursue a personal grievance through employment relationship structures under the Employment Relations Act, or through the Human Rights Commission.

Help is at hand

There are organisations that provide extensive resources with respect to bullying, such as WorkSafe, the Ministry of Education, the Human Rights Commission, Employment New Zealand and TEU. The PPTA Safety in Schools Tool Kit is useful.

If you believe you are being bullied or if allegations of bullying are made against you, contact your ISEA Rep or an Organiser for advice, support and representation.

Barbara Hill, Organiser, ISEA

Warnings

Occasionally members find themselves in a meeting where the purpose of the meeting or the conversation turns to an aspect of their performance or conduct. Usually these discussions are in good faith and constructive. Sometimes they may form the beginning of a performance management or disciplinary process where a warning may be issued as an outcome.

If you are in such a meeting and are concerned about its direction, you should ask to have the meeting adjourned and reconvened when a support person, such as your ISEA Rep or Organiser, can be with you.

You should check your employment agreement, which may have a process for addressing performance (competency and discipline) issues, and the school's complaints policies.

It can be very intimidating to receive a warning from your employer. Official warnings can be given verbally or in writing. If the warning is verbal, your employer needs to make it clear that it is an official warning. Warnings should have an expiry date.

If the warning is based on a concern supported by evidence, it puts you on notice that your performance in some area requires improvement. You should be given a reasonable opportunity to make the improvements. This means being given adequate time to respond and further training or support if required.

Warnings should be given in good faith. They should not be used to intimidate or discriminate against employees.

If you have grounds to do so, you can disagree with the content of a warning. It is always a good idea to do this in writing, whether the warning is written or verbal. If the warning is in a written form, you do not have to sign it. Alternatively, you may



wish to write on the warning that you disagree with it and then sign it. Where a warning is disputed, it will still have effect as a warning.

The issue may be resolved from receiving the initial warning, however sometimes it is not, and your recorded disagreement with the warning may be useful should the matter need to be taken further, for instance in a personal grievance context.

If you have been in a meeting and have felt uncomfortable with the discussion regarding your performance or have been given a warning and disagree with being issued with a warning or aspects of the content, contact your ISEA Rep or an Organiser. They will be able to offer support and advice on what to do next.

You've been warned!!!

Cindy Doull, Organiser, ISEA

Amended ISEA Rules approved

ISEA has been reporting to and consulting members about reviewing our Rules to ensure they meet members' needs and legal requirements and that the Association's processes are clear, democratic and effective.

The main task of the Executive in the past twelve months has been to complete the updating of the Rules to ensure they conform to proposed changes to the Incorporated Societies Act 1908. The areas of focus have been clauses around the winding up of ISEA, procedures for resolving disputes, and the membership of the Executive.

The remit proposing the approval of the amended Rules of ISEA has been available to members on our website. The remit received sufficient support to be passed at our AGM on 5 May 2018. This was very pleasing and paves the way for the current Executive to continue developing strong leadership of ISEA, with good succession planning. It is also important that we have effective ISEA Representatives within our member schools. An additional submission around the term ISEA Representatives should serve and their role, along with any other submissions which are received in future, will be reviewed by the Executive.

Over the 50 years of the Association's life, the role of the Executive has changed. With collective bargaining and cases bought forward by members now dealt with by the General

Secretary and the Organisers, the Executive has a governance role which is important for the ongoing success of ISEA as an organisation. The main work of the Executive is carried out in the three meetings held each year.

Over the past 50 years, many members have made significant contributions to ISEA for a considerable period of time as members of the Executive. With increasing workloads in teaching, it has become more difficult to encourage and attract new members to serve on the Executive, despite the role being a rewarding one, with an opportunity to increase knowledge and skills.

The current Executive would like to see more members put their hand up to serve for a term on the Executive. The term established by the new Rules is two years. Becoming a member of the Executive does not require a long-term commitment to the role. The new limit to the number of terms (two) anyone can serve without a break should help. It is the Executive's goal to ensure good governance for the future by having an effective succession plan. Please let us know if you would like to get involved by emailing president@isea.org.nz.

Hilary Stubbs, President, ISEA

ISEA Executive Meeting, May 2018



Front row: Barbara Hill (Organiser), Cindy Doull (Organiser), Hilary Stubbs (ISEA President), Beth Rouse (Executive)
Back row: Alastair McGowan (Rep) , Cynthia Upchurch (Former ISEA Vice President), Matthew Fitzsimons (General Secretary), Malcolm Walker (Former President)

GOING ON AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF LEAVE?

ISEA offers an Associate membership subscription. As an Associate Member, you keep your status as a financial member of ISEA and retain access to employment support and the membership benefits during your period of leave.

The Associate Member subscription rate is \$3 per month. It has been established for ISEA members who are on parental leave, or sabbatical or other leave without pay, and members who have retired, resigned or been made

redundant and wish to continue to be connected to ISEA.

If you are going on leave and wish to remain a financial member, please set up an automatic payment to: 15 3978 0032116 00 and put Associate in the Reference and your surname and let ISEA know when you are going on leave and expect to return by emailing cdoull@isea.org.nz .

ISEA Directory

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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).

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