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New practice nurse pay offer out to vote: 3.5% increase plus prescribing allowance



Fiona Cassie

fcassie@nzdoctor.co.nz

Thursday 17 September 2026, 04:07 PM

3 minutes to Read



A 3.5 per cent pay offer for the country's biggest practice nurse pay agreement is out for voting by the NZNO members and employers party to the deal [Image: NZD]

Essentials

- › **Voting is now under way on an offer to settle the country's largest practice nurse and administrator pay agreement.**
- › **The offer includes a 3.5 per cent increase to nursing pay rates, a \$2 an hour increase for admin staff (equivalent to 7–10 per cent) and a new nurse prescribing allowance.**
- › **The NZNO Primary Health Care MECA covers about 3500 nurses, health care assistants and administrators working at 580 practices and urgent-care centres.**

After a three-month lag in bargaining, a 3.5 per cent offer to settle the country's largest practice nurse pay deal is now being put to the vote.

Voting was to start today by the about 3500 NZNO nurses, health care assistants (HCA) and administrators party to the Primary Health Care MECA (multi-employer collective agreement). At the same time, the about 580 general practice and urgent-care employers are also voting whether to ratify the offer made by their PHC MECA bargaining agents.

New Zealand Doctor Rata Aotearoa understands the deal includes a 3.5 per cent increase to nursing and HCA pay rates plus a \$2 an hour increase to administration staff which is the equivalent of a 7–10 per cent pay increase. The offer also introduces a prescribing allowance of \$1.50 an hour for designated registered nurse prescribers and \$1.00 an hour for community health nurse prescribers.

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We went back and said...'hey, look, the nurses are waiting for a deal, and we want to get on with it' – Mark Liddle

The 12-month offer falls short of the union's claim which included an 8.6 per cent increase for nurses plus adding an extra pay step to the administrator pay scale to bring the top rate up to \$34 an hour. Also sought was an increase in base sick leave from 10 to 12 days a year and adding NPs to the MECA. If the employers' offer is accepted it would also see **the union's proposed rewritten MECA contract** put aside, with employers and the union instead stating an intention to jointly develop a new modernised MECA contract over the term of the agreement.

Long wait for employer offer

NZNO College of Primary Health Care Nurses chair and MECA negotiator Tracey Morgan says it was a long wait between the union presenting its claim on 3 June and employers coming back to the table in early September.

That meeting saw the employers make a counter offer which has gone out to members, with voting to accept or reject the offer closing on 23 September.

In July, *New Zealand Doctor* reported **feedback from employer bargaining representatives that the union's major rewrite of the MECA agreement had come as a "surprise" and "complicated" bargaining.**

Mark Liddle, chief executive of the General Practice Owners Association, which represents about 330 MECA practices, says at the 3 September meeting employers asked to delay redrafting the MECA and focus on "core terms only". "We went back and said... 'hey, look, the nurses are waiting for a deal, and we want to get on with it.'"

"The redrafting of the MECA could be something we commit to do together but we shouldn't try and do that first because that's going to take a long time."

Key PHC MECA offer components

The 3.5 per cent offer would see the new registered nurse pay scale range from \$33.93 an hour for new graduates to \$48.60 for nurses at step 7, the top of the pay scale.

The offer includes a new hourly rate of \$49.90 for nurses in lead nurse or team leader type roles.

Medical receptionist/administration new pay rates would range from \$27.04 (step 1) to \$28.86 (step 4).

New health care assistant pay rates would range from \$26.39 (step 1) to \$30.46 (step 4).

Qualified nurse prescribers would receive an additional \$1.50 an hour for designated RN prescribers (requires a postgraduate qualification) or extra \$1 an hour for on-job-trained community health nurse prescribers.

There are small increases to merit and professional development hourly rates for nurses.

A one-off lump sum would be offered of \$500 (for 0.6 FTE or above) and \$250 (for 0.6 or less) MECA employees being paid at the current 2025 PHC MECA rates.

Southern correspondent Fiona Cassie has been a journalist since 1985. Fiona covers the South Island and her areas of interest include nursing, rural health, health reforms, GP business and PHO news.

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