

## **NZJER Special Issue: The General Election in New Zealand in 2011**

### *Editorial*

It has been a tradition that the *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* publishes a special issue on employment relations issues in the run up to a General Election. While this issue follows that tradition, there are *two* major changes. Under the Mixed Member Proportion (MMP) electoral system, minor parties and their policy positions have become more important. As there are at least five or six minor political parties which could have an influence on the formation of the next Government, a suitable coverage of each party's policies could have been a rather extensive. Instead, the Journal editors took the decision to commission an overview article from two academics. The overview article by Peter Skilling and Julienne Molineaux covers six political parties and provides a brief insight into the employment relations position of each party. Secondly, it was not possible to obtain a detailed policy statement from the National Party. We wrote to the Minister of Labour, Kate Wilkinson in July and were told (by the Minister's Press Secretary) that a detailed policy position was not ready and that the Minister would not have the time to do a detailed policy overview (see instead [http://www.national.org.nz/PDFGeneral/Employment\\_Relations\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.national.org.nz/PDFGeneral/Employment_Relations_Policy.pdf)). In light of this, the Editors invited Professor Nigel Haworth to write a critical review of the National-led Government's employment relations policies.

Besides the three articles about the minor parties, the policy position of the Labour Party and Professor Haworth's review, there is also an article by three academics who seek to address the key employment relations issues which *could* have featured in this General Election. While some of the suggestions by Geare, Edgar and Honey will probably have limited chance of being implemented, they do highlight the policy tensions and divisions which have been a mainstay of New Zealand employment relations for some time. These policy tensions and divisions are also obvious in the last two articles, though these articles were not part of the Journal's General Election coverage. The articles deal with the fundamental issues of employee representation in occupational health and safety, and the connection between employer attitudes and the elusive search for a comparative improvement in productivity levels.

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