

HANDS OFF OUR HOLIDAYS

The Government wants to make your 4th week of annual leave tradable – that is, allow you to ‘sell’ it back to your employer.

But you shouldn't be surprised. National and ACT voted *against* the introduction of the 4th week's holiday when they were in opposition – which shows that they really didn't want you to have four weeks holiday in the first place.

Remember, it took 30 years to progress from three to four weeks minimum annual leave, and now within 6 months of taking office, the Government wants to knock you back to three. Do we really need to go through the arguments again why people need decent time off to be with their families or just have a break?²

One survey¹ showed that New Zealanders still take less time off than most other workers around the world – a third of surveyed workers said they'd like to take more time off but couldn't because of work demands.

Although we expect to see protections built into any legislative changes, the reality is that some workers will cash in a week's leave due to financial pressures.

Unions and employers were part of a Ministerial Advisory Group on the Holidays Act. They reached agreement on some recommendations to change some parts of the Holidays Act to make it clearer, but there are significant differences on issues relating to trading off one week's leave, calculation of payment for a day in lieu, and holidays being calculated in hours rather than days. It is unclear how the Government will respond to the recommendations in the report.

The risk is that if a number of the changes go through, not only will the four weeks annual leave be liable for reduction to three weeks, but other important entitlements under the Holidays Act will be weakened.

¹ Expedia survey 15 April 2009 – reported at http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10566779

² See the Families Commission report 'Finding Time' about the effects of long working hours on family life:

<http://www.nzfamilies.org.nz/node/1712>



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