



**Specialty
Trainees**
OF NEW ZEALAND

TI FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Kia ora

Thank you to everyone who has joined one of our information sessions, it was great to meet you and have the opportunity to talk about STONZ.

What we've tried to do in this document is pull together the most commonly asked questions we get asked by new graduates.

It is important to remember that as well as your terms and conditions which govern your day-to-day employment and what you are paid, the role of your union is also to provide help, support and advocate for the overall improvement of working conditions of all RMOs. Much of which cannot be changed by adding a clause to the MECA. With the changes to the one employer model, it's important to think about your career now and where you want to be in the future.

If you have a question that is not answered here, please get in touch support@stonz.co.nz

*Ngā mihi nui,
The STONZ Team*

EMPLOYMENT FAQs

What are the key differences between STONZ & NZRDA?

The key differences in the MECA are around Medical Education, Training and what you get paid. We've also created a separate document with a comparison table highlighting the differences and similarities between STONZ & NZRDA for each clause. You can find this on our [website](#).

STONZ is also a registered non-for-profit and our executive team are ultimately responsible for the day to day running of the union, as well as the strategic direction. Our support team are also employed directly by STONZ. You can read more about our team structure and how STONZ operates on our [website](#).

We aim to be as transparent as we can, however both unions will always highlight their best attributes, so make sure you do your own research and decide which union is best for you once you have all the facts.

What changes were made to the MECA at recent negotiations?

As part of the negotiation process, almost 600 of our members provided us with feedback in regards to what they thought were the most important issues facing RMOs now which we used to influence what we ask for. Many of the new MECA clauses have come directly from our members. Many of the new MECA clauses have come directly from our members.

STONZ has been established since 2018 and we're all pretty proud of what we've been able to achieve in that short-time.

We know there is a lot of work to do, and our view is that if we can make small changes at each negotiation outside of pay then we're doing well. If you'd like to read more about our new MECA you can find it [HERE](#).

TI FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS *continued*

What are the current MECA terms and what does this mean?

STONZ MECA: A two-year agreement from 14th December 2021 – 13th December 2023

NZRDA: A three-year agreement from 17 May 2021 to 31 March 2024

Regardless of if you join STONZ or NZRDA as per New Zealand Employment Law, you will be 'locked in' to these terms and conditions until 60 days before the expiry of that MECA.

I haven't started yet, but I've already signed my contract and joined a union but I've changed my mind. Is it too late?

No, if you haven't started at the hospital yet, you are still free to resign from one union and join another. You just need to let the RMO Unit that you had made this change before you start, so they can update their records.

What support can you offer Trainee Interns if we sign up now?

As a Trainee Intern, we can offer support throughout the ACE process and provide advice in regards to the employment process, including checking contracts and ensuring the hospitals are providing the correct documents ready for you to start on time.

If you change positions, e.g., House Officer to Registrar can we change between STONZ/NZRDA then?

No, because the coverage clause of both MECAs include House Officers and Registrars you are unable to change Unions when changing positions.

The only time you are able to change MECAs is in the period from 60 days before the MECA expires, up until the MECA is ratified again.

If you don't join a union within the first 30 days, can you join one later whilst in the same job/employer?

Yes, if you don't join a union in the first 30 days the DHB will place you on an IEA (individual employment agreement) leaving you free at a later date to join a union if you choose to.

Note, if this is something you are considering you need to make sure you are not a member of ANY union prior to starting your first day in the hospital. If you are wanting to resign from a union you must provide this in writing (email) with at least a weeks' notice (for STONZ).

Can I change what MECA I'm covered by if I change hospital?

No, you can only change your terms and conditions if you either negotiate an IEA (Individual employment agreement), or 60-days before the expiry of the contract that you're currently covered by.

With the Interim Health NZ and the change on 1st July 2022, what Involvement have STONZ had in this process?

STONZ is the only union representing Junior Doctors affiliated with the CTU (Council of Trade Unions). All the health unions who are members of the CTU have been meeting regularly from day 1 of the transition and have been working closely with the transition unit, and now the Interim leaders on this change.

We are also working with HNZ to develop FAQs for RMOs specifically and have been integral in advocating that a separate workstream is established with the sole purpose of managing change over the coming years for RMOs.

We have been strongly advocating at every opportunity for RMOs, and to ensure that this transition is used as an opportunity to make positive change for the entire healthcare workforce.

As part of our MECA negotiations, we also have agreement to meet mid-term (later in 2022) to review the MECA following the transition.

SICK LEAVE & MEDICAL EDUCATION FAQs

How much Sick Leave am I entitled to if I join STONZ?

On appointment you will be entitled to 10 days Sick Leave. There is also a provision that allows for an additional 10-days sick leave each year if required. Most House Officers on average take approximately 4-days each year and Registrars take even less. If someone is seriously ill, then employers also have discretion to pay more as well.

Under the STONZ MECA, you cannot have sick leave deducted for off duty weekends where Sick leave crosses a Friday to a Monday. If you were sick on a Friday and a Monday you would be only de-deducted 2 days, rather than 4.

With the current pandemic, there are also provisions for special leave if you have COVID-19 which does not get deducted from your balance.

What Medical Education leave am I entitled to if I join STONZ?

For PGY2+, both STONZ and NZRDA offer 5 days per year of MEL. However, STONZ House Officers can also access an additional one-off 3 weeks extra as a House Officer or Non-Training Registrar.

NZRDA members receive a total of 12 weeks per vocational training programme which includes MEL accessed as a House Officer and Non-Training Registrar. As a STONZ member, the MEL you take as a House Officer and non-training Registrar is in addition to the 12 weeks.

As a PGY1, MEL and reimbursements for conferences and courses are not usually covered (under both STONZ & NZRDA) as the focus in the first year is about starting work and finding your feet. However, there are always exceptions, so if you are presenting a paper or have something you need to attend as a PGY1 then speak to STONZ and your RMO Unit.

Am I entitled to get courses like the Paediatrics or O&G Diploma reimbursed as a House Officer?

Yes! Provided that the diploma is relevant to your career pathway the Hospital will reimburse the Child Health or O&G Diploma for House Officers PGY2 or above. Under STONZ you are also entitled to an additional 2 weeks of leave for undertaking a diploma (clause 7.7).

ROSTERING FAQs

Can I have RDOs after the weekend under the STONZ contract?

Yes, following the STONZ 2021 contract we have negotiated that PGY1's will work 10/4 rosters (have RDOs following a weekend) on schedule 10 rosters for quarters 1 and 2 of their PGY1 year.

What our members and TI's have told us is that it takes about 6-months to find your feet and that the role of a new House Officer is changing to what it was even 5/10 years ago. We've recognised that there are different needs at different stages of training so, in order to help the transition to House Officer and better support our new RMOs we have negotiated that new PGY1s will work 10/4 rosters for their first 2 quarters.

How does it work with different rosters and the impact on Salaries?

When calculating the salary category for a schedule 10 run two calculations are done, one for RMOs observing RDOs and one for those who aren't. This means that those observing RDOs will likely be paid a lower salary category than those not observing RDOs.

Where the run descriptions say 'observing RDOs' vs 'not observing', is that choice up to the people making the roster?

Under the STONZ MECA, PGY1s work 10/4 rosters for the first six months and following this the DHB can require you to work 12 days in a row. However, some DHBs are still offering alternative options to STONZ members who are working schedule 10 Rosters and would like to continue observe RDO's (Rostered days off) such as:

- Recalculating your salary individually so you can observe them.
- Balloting all STONZ members
- on a run and seeing what the overall preference is and then rostering for the majority e.g., everyone observes the RDOs or everyone works 12 days.
- Offering Annual Leave in order to observe the RDOs.

If you are wanting to know the options at your particular Hospital, please discuss this with your RMO Unit Manager/Advisor. Noting, in the Auckland Region they do not allow STONZ members to observe RDO's outside the first 2 quarter at all.

For those PGY1s working towards surgical specialties, is there a benefit in having RDOs to study for part ones?

For this question asked our team to see what they think...

Emma: I think it's a personal decision, but I think as a PGY1 there is a benefit to working as a part of a team, i.e., working the RDOs, rather than studying, as you get far more out of it for a surgical career and have plenty of opportunities to study in evenings/weekends and as a PGY2.

Jordan: I'm not studying for part 1's, but I am studying for my diploma and the RANZCOG PVP, whilst doing 2x research manuscripts and participating on the STONZ Executive. I think you manage with what you have and I am managing to get through my workload adequately. There are many factors which play into this question like, how busy your job is, and overall, where you would like to go in your training long term.

Christina: I found taking a chunk of study leave much more beneficial than using my RDOs to study. Often, you'll do your part 1s in PGY2 or 3. I wouldn't suggest doing them any earlier! A good time is to tee it up with an ED rotation while you're on shift work. I found that worked best for most of my colleagues.

Magnus: Use the time you have, & nothing substitutes for a good study plan. I started to study 3 months out from the exam, and took 2-weeks off immediately prior, I made sure my study plan fit exactly into the time that I had. If I had RDOs it might have altered my study plan, but they wouldn't have changed the number of books to read/study that was required. But every person is different. Some people did the 6-week Dunedin exam course and swear by it, I did not think it was necessary but that was me. Some people might think RDOs are essential. I personally did not notice their absence.

Responses gathered December 2021.

GENERAL FAQs

Is there any protection for leave to attend graduation in the STONZ MECA?

Yes, we have this entitlement in the STONZ MECA, you will be guaranteed leave to attend your graduation.

Why is Medical Indemnity Insurance important?

While your union is here to support and advocate for any employment-related issues. Your indemnity insurance is there to support you if there are any issues raised in a clinical setting.

Often a complaint or issue may overlap both employment and clinical spears so it's important to have both. Under the STONZ MECA you can get MPS Indemnity cover reimbursed each year. MPS provides indemnity to over 83% of all doctors in New Zealand: membership@mps.org.nz

Which union is optimal for supporting junior doctors with young families? What's it like being under the STONZ contract with a young family?

We asked one of our delegates who have had kids whilst being an RMO to share their thoughts.

'Life has been busy as a doctor and work-life balance is always tough. The STONZ contract takes some of the effort out of training, which allows more time and energy for family. It used to be a chore working out what training costs would be funded and fighting to get them approved. Under STONZ, with our collaborative approach, it has been much easier to access all the training I need to progress.

My wife and I had our last child before STONZ existed. Back then parental leave required taking leave without pay - surviving on a reduced income when baby was born and claiming reimbursement months later. We could not afford to do that. Instead used 2 weeks of annual leave to ensure we had income at the point we needed it.

STONZ pioneered a new format for parental leave where parental leave is paid at the time when it is taken. Parents are provided financial support at the time when they need it, and the primary caregiver is paid for far longer than previously. The secondary caregiver can also now afford to actually take leave now without tapping into annual leave. I was super happy about these improvements. I only wish parental leave like this had been available when I had my kids.'

Magnus Cheeseman

What are the benefits for parental leave with STONZ vs NZRDA?

Under the STONZ MECA if you are the primary caregiver and have been employed by the DHB's for more than 12 months you are entitled to take up to 52 weeks leave. If you have been employed for less than 12 months you can apply for up to 6 months leave.

Since 2018 under the STONZ MECA as the Primary Caregiver you have been able to apply for 14 weeks paid parental leave (the DHB will pay the difference between the weekly statutory payment and the equivalent weekly value of your base salary.) And as the non-primary caregiver you are entitled to apply for up to 2 weeks paid leave on your ordinary salary, this is in addition to the 2 weeks unpaid partner leave available under the Act.

Following the 2021 negotiations, we have also added an Appendix for Best Practice Parental Leave Guidelines. These guidelines outline what should be done before, during and on return from parental leave for DHBs and RMOs. It includes the ability to request to have no long days, weekends or nights rostered in the first month of returning from leave and also includes the possible reimbursement of a breast-pump if the DHB cannot provide appropriate facilities.

Want to keep in touch?

You can keep up to date via social media, we're on Facebook & Instagram. We also have a quarterly newsletter that goes to all members, if you'd like to sign up for our mailing list, please email support@stonz.co.nz

Our [website](#) also has a lot of information about STONZ.

On the website, we also have a section for Trainee Intern resources and a quick links page for many of the resources you'll need on a daily basis as a House Officer. If you have any questions about the below FAQs or comparisons, please contact support@stonz.co.nz or phone 03 745 9258, our team is here to help.

We appreciate working through what is best for you can be difficult and we're happy to talk through any questions you have even if you're not yet a member.