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University won't talk to Buchanan, says union

By Eleanor McKay

Dr Paul Buchanan's future in New Zealand is still undecided as the University of Auckland refuses his requests for mediation.

His union, the Association of University Staff (AUS), is assessing its options but says the university has been uncooperative in its requests for meetings.

"We've been seeking an urgent mediation meeting with the vice-chancellor and the university but we've made no headway," says Marty Braithwaite, of the union.

The university could not be reached for comment.

Dr Buchanan was dismissed on July 25 after an international student laid a complaint regarding an e-mail he had sent her.

AUS says there were "extenuating circumstances" surrounding the e-mail and the university had many others options apart from dismissal.

The debate surrounding Dr Buchanan's dismissal has raised questions over the academic standards of international students and the income derived from their enrolment.

A petition calling for Dr Buchanan's reinstatement is circulating among students.

Green MP Keith Locke has called Dr Buchanan a "valued contributor to the public debate in New Zealand".

"The very bluntness that many of us appreciated in Mr Buchanan's commentary now seems to have got him into trouble with the university.

"Academic freedom goes hand in hand with robust debate, and I would ask the University of Auckland authorities to re-think their position," says Locke.

Breakfast joke raises father's ire

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Paulin has children himself, as do the marketing and public relations employees who compile and "sanitise" the newsletters. "I can't say it won't happen again," he says.

"The same *Clipboard* newsletter goes into all our cereals. There is no difference across the products.

"We thought the vein the joke was written in was one of humour and light heartedness. If children ask questions, the parents are there to explain."

"Mr Slater's complaint has been taken seriously and we will be looking at the future content for the newsletter.

"We have apologised to him for the stress it has caused him and his family and have offered him complimentary cereal. He declined our offer but is happy we've taken his feedback on board," he says.

Vegans okay with meat lovers

By Sarah Gooding

The vegan community has rejected recent claims of rampant "vegansexualism" in New Zealand made by Canterbury University lecturer Annie Potts.

The editor of vegan.org.nz, John Livesey, says the term Potts coined, based on her research into the lives of "cruelty-free consumers", is an enormous generalisation.

"The worldwide media interest in Annie's supposed discovery of 'vegansexuals' says more about humanity's abiding interest in sexual gossip than about any major sociological changes in society," Livesey says.

Veganism is an extreme lifestyle choice already, so the fact that vegans may only want to form relationships with others who share the same viewpoint is understandable, he says.

According to Livesey, this is an established part of many vegans' culture, despite Potts' claims that she had "not come across it before".

An online uproar about the research has seen vegans and their supporters lash out against the comments.

One posting made on salon.com read: "It makes sense that they would have trouble developing a relationship with people who don't share their values. . . Even without a silly label like 'vegansexual', I'd expect like to gravitate towards like."

Livesey says Potts' comments are unfounded, that "just six of her 157 subjects mentioned a sexual preference for non-meat eaters, and only three of the five were actually vegan".

He described it as a "storm in a teacup".

Finding a partner is hard enough, he says, without having to specify that they be vegan.

Livesey cites Alex Jamieson, a vegan chef married to "omnivore Morgan Spurlock of *Supersize Me* fame", as a prominent example of this culture-clash working in marriage.

He says "vegansexualism" is a luxury not many can afford. "'Vegansexualism' is only a lifestyle choice for those lucky enough to find another compatible vegan - life might be rather lonely otherwise."

PHOTO JAMES LITTLE

STANDING UP TO THE MAN: Young workers and their supporters marched down Queen Street on August 11, demanding an end to youth rates.

Call to scrap youth rates

By Spike Mountjoy

Unions and youth groups say they will fight for higher pay at each individual workplace if Parliament passes the "watered down" Minimum Wage Amendment Bill.

Eliana Darroch, 16, has been speaking at her school to encourage students to fight the youth rates bill.

A founding member of Radical Youth, she says the argument that young people are "just working for pocket money" is not necessarily true.

She says many young people help out their families by paying for food and transport.

"Most of my friends aren't rich and their families don't have extra money to give them."

In its current form the Minimum Wage (New Entrants) Amendment Bill will see 16 and 17-year-olds spend 200 hours on the youth rate before employers are obliged to lift their pay to the adult minimum wage.

Tom Buckley, of the Unite union, says lower rates for 16 and 17-year-olds should be removed altogether.

"Most young people don't work a 40-hour week, they work 15 to 20-hour weeks, so they'll be on this rate a long time. Youth rates are discriminatory and they've got to end now."

Buckley says many employers will replace young workers after 200 hours rather than lift their rate.

The private member's bill, as it was first put forward by the Green Party's Sue Bradford, would have removed the youth rate for 16 and 17-year-olds.

The current bill, with its 200 hours "working experience" requirement, now has the backing of both the Labour and Green parties.

> "Youth rates are discriminatory and they've got to end now."

Minister of Labour Ruth Dyson says the changes are intended to satisfy employers' concerns "regarding socialisation in a work environment".

Phil O'Reilly, chief executive of Business NZ, the body representing employers in New Zealand, says this means young people need time to get used to the work environment.

"You need to set up a situation where people can get skills, things like timeliness and customer service," he says.

"Employers will tend to hire someone with more experience.

"Without youth rates young people will find it hard to make that first step in the job ladder."

However many young people will already have work experience when they turn 16.

Jamie Phillips, 15, earns $8.30 an hour stacking shelves at Manukau Foodtown, where he has worked for several months. If the bill is passed in its current form, when Jamie turns 16 he will spend a further 200 hours on the youth rate.

"It's hard to save towards the things you want. I'd prefer they scrap the youth rate altogether," he says.