

# Submission template

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## A New Zealand Income Insurance Scheme

This is the submission template for the discussion document, *A New Zealand Income Insurance Scheme*.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), on behalf of the Government, Business New Zealand and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, seeks your written submission on the matters raised in the discussion document by **5pm on 26 April 2022**.

## Your submission could be made public

The information provided in submissions will be used to inform policy development on the proposed income insurance scheme, including how it could be improved and how it could affect different groups. We may contact submitters directly if we require clarification of any matters in submissions.

The *Privacy Act 2020* applies to submissions and responses. Any personal information you supply to MBIE in making a submission will only be used for the purpose of assisting in the development of policy advice as part of this review. When businesses or organisations make a submission, we will consider that you have consented to the content being included in any summary of submissions unless you clearly state otherwise. If your submission contains any information that is confidential or that you do not want published, you can say this in your submission. Please clearly indicate in your cover letter or email with your submission if you do not wish your name, or any other personal information, to be included in any summary of submissions that may be published.

Submissions and responses may be subject to requests for information under the *Official Information Act 1982*. Please clearly indicate in your cover letter or email with your submission if you have any objection to the release of any information in your submission, and which parts you consider should be withheld, together with the reasons for withholding the information. Your views will be taken into account when responding to requests under the *Official Information Act 1982*. Any decision to withhold information requested under the *Official Information Act 1982* can be reviewed by the Ombudsman.

## How to make a submission

Please send your written submission on the options and questions in this consultation document by **5pm on 26 April 2022**. You can make your submission (preferably using this submission template) as follows:

1. Include your name, the name of your organisation (if applicable), and contact details. We may contact submitters directly if we require clarification of any matters in submissions.
2. Your submission may respond to any or all of the questions in the consultation paper. Where possible, please include information or evidence to support your views. We also encourage your input on any other relevant aspects of the income insurance scheme in the "Other comments" section.
3. Sending your submission:
  - a. Attach as a Microsoft Word document or searchable PDF and email to:

[incomeinsurance@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:incomeinsurance@mbie.govt.nz) (preferred), or

b. Mail your submission to:

Social Unemployment Insurance Tripartite Working Group  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment  
PO Box 1473  
Wellington 6145

If you have any questions on the submissions process, please contact [incomeinsurance@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:incomeinsurance@mbie.govt.nz).

# Submission on A New Zealand Income Insurance Scheme

## Your name and organisation

Name	Michelle Pye
Organisation (if applicable)	Pye Group Ltd
Contact details	Privacy of natural persons

## Responses to consultation document questions

### Chapter 4 – How a new income insurance scheme could achieve our objectives (Pg 30-48)

The Forum considers the benefits of income insurance for job loss due to displacement or health conditions would outweigh its costs.

1 *Do you agree New Zealand should introduce an income insurance scheme for displacement and loss of work due to health conditions or disabilities?*

No. We do not see a need for this scheme. NZ has record low unemployment so we fail to see the problem that is being solved here. Businesses and employees in NZ would be better served by investments into building resilient businesses that can sustain economic shocks.

There are many companies that restructure on a regular basis and make numerous redundancies as part of normal business. Why should the rest of the businesses and their employees pay for these companies to restructure at will? We have never made anyone redundant in more than 20 years so fail to see why our employees and ourselves need to contribute to this scheme.

There is already a scheme for loss of work due to health conditions or disabilities. It would be better to look at enhancing the existing scheme rather than creating a new user pays scheme.

We do not agree with this scheme but have provided feedback on some of the particular points below should a scheme be introduced.

### Chapter 5 – Honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Pg 49-51)

Kawanatanga – Good governance and partnership

2 *How can we ensure the proposed income insurance scheme honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi?*

3

*What are the opportunities for partnership and Māori representation in the proposed income insurance scheme's governance and operations?*

4

*How can we ensure equity of access, participation, and outcomes for Māori in the proposed income insurance scheme?*

5

*How can we reflect and embed te ao Māori in the proposed income insurance scheme's design?*

## Chapter 6 – Coverage for displaced workers (Pg 53-72)

### Displacement and standard employment (full- and part-time permanent employees)

6

*Do you agree with defining displacement as the involuntary loss of work due to the disestablishment of a job?*

Yes but something needs to change to ensure companies that routinely restructure are contributing more to the scheme and companies and their employees that have never made anyone redundant contribute less.

7

*Do you agree with excluding poor performance and gross misconduct as reasons for claiming insurance?*

Yes

8

*Do you agree with excluding resignation as a reason for claiming insurance?*

Yes

### Coverage provided for complete job loss only

9

*Do you agree that income insurance should cover only the complete loss of a job, and cover situations where a person loses only one of several jobs that they hold?*

No. If you are paying a levy to protect your income you should receive the benefit if some of your income is lost. No different to if you have a car insured and it gets damaged (as opposed to being written off).

10

*Do you agree that insurance would be payable only where income loss was greater than a minimum threshold, such as a 20 percent loss of total earnings, counting income from all of their jobs?*

Yes. There needs to be a sensible balance between the cost of processing claims and the benefits provided.

#### Displacement and non-standard employment – a principle-based approach

11

*Do you agree that it is important to provide income insurance coverage to non-standard workers, where practical?*

If they are paying the levy they need to benefit. If they are not going to benefit from the scheme they need to be excluded from the scheme.

12

*Do you agree that income insurance should cover the 'loss of reasonably anticipated income'?*

13

*Do you agree that income insurance entitlements should be based on an 'established pattern of work'?*

#### Coverage provided for fixed-term and seasonal employees

14

*Do you agree that income insurance should cover fixed-term and seasonal employees if they are displaced before the end of an employment agreement, with the duration of the payment running to the scheduled end of the employment agreement, or the maximum insurance entitlement duration, whichever is shorter?*

If they are paying the levy they need to benefit. If they are not going to benefit from the scheme they need to be excluded from the scheme.

15

*Do you agree that income insurance should cover fixed-term and seasonal employees, where their employment agreements are not renewed, and they can show a regular pattern of work and reasonable expectation of future income?*

#### Coverage provided for casual employees

16

*Do you agree that income insurance should cover casual employees who can show a regular pattern of work with an employer and a reasonable expectation of future income?*

By definition a casual employee does not have a regular pattern of work.

If they are paying the levy they need to benefit. If they are not going to benefit from the scheme they need to be excluded from the scheme.

17

*How would these design choices work in practice? What risks can you see with the approach to establishing a regular pattern of work?*

### Coverage for self-employed workers

18

*What risks do you see with covering, or not covering, people in self-employment?*

Self-employed workers should be excluded from the scheme. They have a solution to this already with private income protection insurance.

19

*Are there some groups of self-employed who should and should not be covered?*

All of them.

20

*How can we practically distinguish between contractors who resemble employees, and those with a high degree of independence?*

You don't need to if you exclude them all from the scheme.

21

*Because a self-employed person cannot technically be made redundant, what types of events would be appropriate 'triggers' for insurance payments?*

Sickness and they can take out private insurance for this so they should be excluded from the scheme. There are far too many variables with self-employed people and how their income is derived and as there is already a solution (private insurance) they should be excluded.

22

*How do you think the levy should be collected from self-employed workers?*

## A modest minimum contribution period

23

*Do you agree with the proposed minimum contribution period of six months over a period of 18 months preceding the claim?*

Should be like insurance. Once you start paying you are entitled to benefit. Risk of redundancy/sickness when you have just been employed should be low.

## Limits on subsequent claims

24

*Do you agree limits should be placed on the number claims people can make?*

No. You might just be incredibly unlucky. Remember people won't be making a claim through anything they can influence. Being made redundant or getting so sick they can't work is not in their control.

25

*Do you agree with limiting claims to a total of six months within an 18-month period?*

No. For the same reasons as above. If you are not going to be covered by the scheme for whatever reason you should not be paying for it.

26

*Could the risks associated with a low contribution history be managed in other ways?*

## Coverage for New Zealand citizens and residents

27 *Do you agree with limiting coverage of the proposed income insurance scheme to New Zealand citizens and residents?*

Not really. If you are contributing to both the scheme and NZ society you should benefit.

28 *To ensure New Zealand workers are not disadvantaged by lower cost international workers, do you agree that working holiday makers, international students and temporary work visa holders – and their employers – should contribute to the proposed income insurance scheme’s costs?*

I do not agree with the concept of “lower cost international workers”. We employ international workers and they are not lower cost. They should not be subsidising a scheme they can not be part of.

## Chapter 7 – Entitlements for displaced workers (Pg 73-95)

### Income caps and income replacement rates that match the accident compensation scheme

29 *Do you agree with a replacement rate set at 80 percent?*

Yes.

30 *Do you agree with a cap on insurable (and leviable) income set at the same rate as the accident compensation scheme (currently \$130,911)?*

Yes. But does this also mean you do not pay levies on income over that rate like ACC?

### Only personal exertion income would abate (reduce) insurance entitlements

31 *Do you agree that only the insurance claimant’s personal exertion income should affect their insurance entitlements?*

32 *Do you agree that income insurance should have individualised entitlement, meaning a partner’s income would not affect the rate payable?*

Yes. Again, if they are paying premiums they should benefit like everyone else. The premiums they pay are not based on what their partner pays so why should the benefit be based on a partner’s income.

### Abatement rates would ensure a claimant is not financially better off as a result of their loss of work

33 *Do you agree that someone should be able to earn some income from paid employment before it affects their entitlements to income insurance?*



Yes. We do not want perverse outcomes where people are incentivised not to work like the current unemployment benefit.

34

*Do you agree that insurance should abate 'dollar for dollar' when earned income and insurance combined reach 100 percent of previous income?*

Yes.

#### Insurance would generally be treated as income, to determine eligibility for welfare and student support

35

*Do you agree that insurance should be treated as income for assessing eligibility for income support such as main benefits and Working for Families tax credits and student support?*

Yes

36

*Given the purpose of the In-Work Tax Credit and Minimum Family Tax Credit in encouraging people into employment and helping with in-work costs, do you agree that income insurance claimants would not be eligible for these tax credits?*

Yes

#### Insurance claimants could also receive New Zealand Superannuation or the Veteran's Pension

37

*Do you agree that income insurance claimants could also receive New Zealand Superannuation or the Veteran's Pension?*

Yes

38

*Do you think a limit should be placed on the amount of time someone can receive New Zealand Superannuation or the Veteran's pension and income insurance?*

No

#### Where eligible, insurance claimants could choose whether to access Paid Parental Leave or income insurance and may receive both sequentially

39

*Do you agree that income insurance and Paid Parental Leave could be accessed sequentially but not at the same time?*

Insurance claimants could also receive ACC weekly compensation where it covers a different income loss

40 *Do you agree that claimants should be able receive both ACC weekly compensation and income insurance at the same time for differing income loss subject to independently meeting the eligibility criteria for both?*

A sufficient base entitlement period

41 *Do you agree with a base insurance entitlement length of six months, plus a four-week bridging payment paid by the employer?*

It depends on the circumstances. A four week bridging payment for a small business that is struggling and needing to make redundancies is not going to be affordable.

42 *Would you support a longer or shorter length of base insurance entitlement?*

Extending the maximum period in specified circumstances

43 *Do you think the scheme should allow extensions to the base period of income insurance entitlements for training or vocational rehabilitation?*

Enhancing the income insurance scheme with notice periods

44 *Do you agree that employers should give at least four weeks' notice to employees, and the insurer, before redundancy takes effect?*

No. If this policy is partially the result of the effects of Covid on the workforce, small business that are struggling and need to make people redundant are not going to have the luxury of being able to give four weeks' notice. What difference does having a notice period do to an employee if they are guaranteed an ongoing income in the short term?

## Avoiding unnecessary redundancies

45

*Do you agree that employers should pay former workers for the initial period of unemployment for four weeks?*

As above. It depends on the circumstances. You need to consider redundancies that are a part of a re-structure versus redundancies that are made to ensure the survival of the business going forward and redundancies because the business is no longer viable and closing down.

46

*Should bridging payments be applied to all workers, including those not eligible for income insurance?*

No. What exactly are you "bridging" if they are not eligible for income insurance? That just sounds like a compulsory redundancy payment scheme.

47

*Should the income insurance scheme finance bridging payments in circumstances where the payments are not forthcoming from employers, and refund employers for bridging payments if workers find work within this period?*

If an employee is paying into the scheme in good faith there entitlement to a benefit from the scheme should not be at risk due to the actions of others.

48

*Do you consider that stronger integrity measures are necessary to manage the risk of spurious claims to the income insurance scheme?*

Definitely. The government didn't have any integrity measures in place for wage subsidy payments in relation to Covid?

## Chapter 8 – Coverage and entitlements for loss of work due to health conditions or disabilities (Pg 96-112)

### No restrictions on the types of conditions covered by the income insurance scheme

49

*Do you agree there should be no restrictions on the types of conditions covered by the scheme?*

Only restriction should be those covered by ACC.

### No restrictions on the working arrangements covered by the scheme

50

*Do you agree that all work arrangements should be covered (assuming other eligibility criteria are met)?*

If you pay and suffer a loss you should benefit.



Coverage for loss of at least 50 percent of capacity to work, for at least four weeks

51 *Should the scheme cover partial loss of earnings due to a health condition or disability reducing work capacity?*

Yes. If you pay and suffer a loss you should benefit.

52 *If partial loss is to be covered, do you agree claimants should have at least a 50 percent reduction of capacity to work caused by a health condition or disability and that reduction is expected to last for at least four working weeks?*

Claimants' medical practitioners would assess work capacity, with final eligibility assessed by the scheme administrator

53 *Do you agree that the claimants' health practitioner should be main the assessor of work capacity?*

Are they suitably qualified to assess a person's ability to return to work? Without visiting or engaging with the workplace do they fully understand the type of work performed and the options for light duties etc?

54 *Do you agree that, where appropriate, employers could provide supporting information to inform the claimant's work capacity assessment process?*

Yes. Any decision needs to be made in consultation with the employee, employer and an appropriate health practitioner.

Employers would remain responsible for taking reasonable steps to support an employee to continue working

55 *Are the current requirements on employers to make workplace changes sufficient to allow health condition and disability claimants to return to their regular employment (or alternative work)?*

56 *How could employers be supported to help workers with health conditions or disabilities to remain in or return to work?*

If it reduces the need for a long term claim for the employee maybe some funds could be made available to assist with the cost of any alterations, equipment or re-training required to keep the employee at work.

**Employers would be expected to make reasonable efforts to keep a job open where a return to work within six months is likely**

57 *Where an employee must stop work entirely because of a health condition or disability, do you think employers should be expected to keep a job open and help with vocational rehabilitation where a reasonable prognosis is made of return to work within six months?*

I think they should have to make reasonable efforts. Fixed term employees can be difficult to find and in situations where housing is provided (eg farming) this is even more complex.

58 *Should this be a statutory requirement placed on employers or an expectation?*

An expectation.

**The scheme would generally meet the full cost of income replacement once a claim is accepted**

59 *Do you agree that employers should only pay a bridging payment to employees leaving work because of a health condition or disability when the employment is terminated by the employer?*

No. This is potentially outside of the control of the employer and most employees would have sufficient sick days to cover any bridging period.

**Chapter 9 – Insurance claimants’ obligations (Pg 113-120)**

**Reasonable obligations for people receiving income insurance payments**

60 *Do you agree claimants should be obligated to look for work or prepare to return to work while receiving insurance?*

Yes – unless they are unable to work due to sickness/disability.

61 *Do you agree that claimants would not be expected or required to accept offers of employment that provide lower wages or conditions?*

I think employees should be able to provide legitimate reasons for not accepting offers.

62 *Do you agree the insurer could waive obligations partially or fully where a claimant is unable to meet those obligations?*

63 *Do you agree claimants should be obligated to remain in New Zealand to remain eligible for income insurance?*

Not in principal but it would be hard to determine if they were earning income/have other employment if they were not in NZ.

64

*Do you think a period of time, such as 28 days, should be allowed for travel overseas, for example, to support ill family?*

Yes

#### Specific obligations for claimants with a health condition or disability

65

*Should claimants with health conditions or disabilities be subject to obligations to participate in rehabilitative programmes and other support, where appropriate?*

66

*Should claimants with health conditions and disabilities be subject to obligations to search for work or undertaking training where they are able to?*

#### Consequences for non-compliance

67

*Do you think financial penalties should be in place for people who do not meet their obligations while receiving insurance payments?*

68

*Do you agree that payments could be fully suspended in cases of serious, intentional non-compliance with obligations?*

69

*Do you think any other consequences should be in place for people repeatedly not meeting their obligations, such as permanent suspension of entitlements?*

**Chapter 10 – Delivering income insurance (Pg 121-134)**

**Independent and effective delivery**

70 *Do you think it is best for ACC to deliver the income insurance scheme alongside the accident compensation scheme?*

If there has to be a scheme on the face of it ACC would seem best placed to deliver it.

71 *Would the income insurance scheme be better delivered by a government department or a new entity?*

Which ever is the most efficient in terms of governance, management, system setup and delivery.

**Accountable and effective governance**

72 *How could employer and worker perspectives best be incorporated to strengthen the income insurance scheme's delivery for New Zealanders?*

73 *How could Māori perspectives best be incorporated to ensure the income insurance scheme is delivered equitably and with aspiration?*

**Displaced workers: Getting back to good jobs**

74 *What practical support should be available to insurance claimants to return to work?*

75 *Who should provide that return-to-work support?*

76 *What type of claimants would need an employment case manager, and who could self-manage?*

77 *What do you think a 'return-to-work plan' should include?*



## Health condition and disability claimants: Getting back to good jobs

78

*What practical support should be available to income insurance claimants with a health condition or disability to return to work?*

79

*Who should provide that support to return to work?*

80

*What type of claimants would need a case manager, and who could self-manage?*

## Dispute resolution

81

*Do you agree with the proposed four-step dispute resolution process for the scheme?*

82

*Are there specific aspects to the scheme's dispute resolution you think should be considered?*

## Scheme integrity and enforcement

83

*Do you agree with the proposal to establish an effective offences and penalties framework to protect the scheme's integrity?*

## Information collection and sharing

84

*Do you agree with the proposal to develop information sharing agreements and sharing arrangements with employers, other agencies and service providers?*

**Chapter 11 – Funding income insurance (Pg 135-144)**

**Most funding would come from compulsory levy payments on income**

85 *Do you agree the income insurance scheme should be funded from compulsory levies on the income that is insured, rather than from general taxation?*

**Levy payments would be shared by employers and workers**

86 *Do you agree that levy contributions should be equally split between the employee and employer?*

87 *Do you agree that levies for health conditions and disabilities and for redundancy should be set separately?*

**Both the employee and employer would be charged at a flat rate**

88 *Do you agree that employees should be levied at a flat rate on income below \$130,911?*

89 *Do you have any other suggestions for how the employee levy should be structured?*

90 *Do you agree that experience rating would not be an appropriate design setting for the employer levy?*

There needs to be some way of creating equity and fairness for business that have never had redundancies versus those who often make people redundant.

**Levies would adjust smoothly over time, with independent fund management**

91 *Do you agree that an independent fund with a stable levy-setting system should be established to finance the income insurance scheme?*

92 *Do you favour a Pay As You Go or Save As You Go funding approach?*

## Building in scheme adaptability, while protecting levy sustainability

93 *Do you agree that the legislation for the income insurance scheme should provide the flexibility to vary entitlements and eligibility in times of crisis, over and above the proposed income insurance scheme?*

No. To me that sounds like all employers and employees faithfully pay into a scheme and then they government can decide on a whim not to pay out.

94 *Does such flexibility create risks that require additional mitigations?*

## Other comments

I do not think there is ever a good time to introduce a scheme as proposed but the timing of this proposal could not be worse. We are still coming out of a pandemic which has devastated parts of our economy and now we have rising inflation putting pressure on the cost of living. Neither employers nor employees can afford or have the appetite for any extra cost or compliance at the moment.

This scheme also appears to cut out the need for private insurance. Rather than government schemes that require investment in systems, governance and management we might be better placed to encourage the uptake of private insurance by offering incentives for those do.