

# October 2013 Newsletter

## Update from NCHENZ Executive Committee

Over the last six months we have:

- More than tripled NCHENZ membership.
- Created a more vibrant NCHENZ Facebook group (join by going to [www.facebook.com/groups/NCHENZ/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/NCHENZ/); note, you need to be a member of NCHENZ first).
- Completely revamped and updated our website.
- Negotiated a reduced subscription to Reading Eggs and enrolled 310 children.
- Been in touch with Jetstar to ensure equal access to unaccompanied airfares for homeschoolers after being approached by a homeschooling family who was denied flights due to not having a school ID.
- Negotiated with ISIC to enable home educated students to access this service.
- Dealt with MOE concerning a denied Early Leavers Certificate for a member family.
- Achieved an extended subscription to Studyladder for homeschoolers.
- Given advice to several visitors to NZ regarding applying for an exemption.
- Written a “go-to” list of experienced home educators who can help with exemption applications.
- Been approached by the media on three occasions and provided positive information about homeschooling in NZ.
- Linked into the Language Perfect offer which gives 70% discount for homeschoolers.
- Contacted a number of other service providers to negotiate favourable terms for homeschoolers.
- Made a few operational changes to the way we do things as a Committee so that we are more efficient, etc.

And of course, we've all been homeschooling our own children along the way as well as running homes, businesses, etc 😊

We would also like to formally welcome Lynn Peake to the Committee. If you want to see who is on the Committee, check out [the NCHENZ Executive Committee](#).

## Declaration Form

The Ministry of Education sends out the homeschooling declaration form at about this time, so you should have it in your letterbox soon if you haven't already received it. Your signature will need to be witnessed, most homeschoolers find that the local police station is the easiest place to get this done. Please note that a statutory declaration is different to a sworn oath – with a statutory declaration the person you see will probably want to see some ID, they may ask “Do you solemnly and sincerely declare that you are the person referred to in this declaration and that the contents of this document are true and correct?” and they will want to witness you signing the form. For more information about the difference between a statutory declaration and a sworn oath check out [this Law Society document on Swearing Affidavits](#).

Post the form back to the Ministry of Education by 22nd November and your allowance will be paid on about 10th December. The supervisory allowance covers the preceding six months, if you have not been homeschooling for the full six months then you will receive a part-payment. More information can be found on our page about the [Supervisory Allowance](#). The statutory declaration must be completed and returned even if you don't wish to receive the supervisory allowance. It is your responsibility to ensure that you return the declaration form – if it isn't completed correctly and returned to the MOE then your child's exemption certificate will be automatically revoked, so contact the MOE if you don't receive it by post over the next week or so.

## Education Review Office (ERO) Reviews

There is a lot of discussion on Facebook and Yahoo about families who are having very negative experiences with ERO lately. It is an unsettling trend that we are very mindful of. One of those families requested our support and we have been providing advice and assistance. In order to respect the privacy of the family concerned, we cannot go into specifics in this newsletter except to say that some circumstances surrounding the review may be unlawful and the family are obtaining legal advice. We have not been asked to provide more than advice and support, so our role is limited at the moment.

We have made several Official Information Act (OIA) requests to the Ministry of Education about their procedures. One OIA request we submitted shows that there has been an increase of failed reviews compared to successful reviews. With these failed reviews in mind, we are undertaking further research to see if we can get a copy of the review reports so that we can identify trends, etc. We have also focused on building financial reserves to enable two or three key Committee members to attend a meeting in Wellington with the ERO and MOE in order to address the issues that have arisen lately.

Other OIA requests have given us information relating to the procedure for making a complaint about an ERO review, the process following a failed ERO review, and what options a parent has for challenging a negative ERO review report. This information is now on our website, see [ERO Reviews](#). Other documentation we've received relates to the training review officers receive, we will be following this up in our face-to-face meeting with ERO.

## Members Survey

We would like to get your views on a range of issues affecting homeschoolers at the moment – please keep an eye out for our survey over the next few days.

## Record Keeping & Planning

We have had a lot of requests for record keeping and planning ideas, and would like to provide more information on our website. If you have a system that works and you don't mind sharing it (identifying information will be removed), please email examples to [info@nchenz.org.nz](mailto:info@nchenz.org.nz).

## Mathletics

We have secured a reduced subscription to Mathletics for \$42 per child for a year, instead of the usual \$99. Spellodrome can be included for \$25 per year (instead of \$50). We will only be doing one intake of 100 students starting in about February/ March 2014 and we are currently half full. If you want to enrol one or more of your children into Mathletics please email their name, birthdate, and exemption number (if 6yrs+) to [mathletics@nchenz.org.nz](mailto:mathletics@nchenz.org.nz). You can find out more about Mathletics at [www.mathletics.co.nz](http://www.mathletics.co.nz) but it is not possible to try it out for free before signing up. With this in mind we have negotiated a ten-day trial period – if you find it's not for you then you will be able to get a refund within the first ten days of the course beginning (less \$2/child service fee). Payment won't be due until January so some members are planning to put their December allowance towards the subscription.

## Upcoming Projects

We have several other projects under way and will be sharing those in the next update, including meeting with MOE/ERO and our survey results.

## About NCHENZ

The National Council of Home Educators New Zealand is an incorporated society which was set up in 1998 for the purpose of advancing the cause of home education in NZ at a national level. We are the only national homeschooling body in NZ, and we have no affiliation to any political or religious group. The group is run by an elected Executive Committee who are all homeschooling their own children and who volunteer their time for the benefit of NCHENZ.

If you are not yet a member of NCHENZ please join us, it's free – just fill out our [Membership Form](#).

We also invite you to join us on Yahoo Groups and/or our Facebook page where you can be part of more regular discussions about homeschooling in NZ if you wish. Both groups are for NCHENZ members only and are moderated to ensure that content is relevant. You can find out more on the [About NCHENZ](#) page.