WIL: Experience or Exploitation?
The New Zealand Perspective

Karsten Zegwaard
University of Waikato
Internships not directly identified in the law, unpaid placements deemed as ‘volunteering’.

NZ labour laws allowes volunteering – however, it is unregulated (but there are laws on explicit exploitation)

Apprenticeships are identified in legislation. These must be paid, but can be paid less than minimal wage.

Minimum wage $13.50/hr (and steadily rising)

Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) covers any person, any where, any accident, no matter who is at fault. Includes cover for volunteering.

Workplace is responsible for the safety of everyone in the workplace – employees, volunteers, visitors, etc.

Volunteering does not give access to same privileges as paid employees

However, volunteering (unpaid work) is seen as something in limbo, ready to be challenged

Australia laws probably ahead on NZ laws
NZ Practice

- Some NZ placement programmes explicitly require students to be paid
  - Most universities shy away from discussing it – leaving it up to the student
- Most employers make some sort of payment
  - Seasonal/casual employment
  - ‘Payment’ (untaxed contribution)
  - Study award
- Occasional employers requests that university pay them
  - Stems from a previous governmental initiative, where government paid incentives to employers to take students on
- Some workplaces rely heavily on volunteerism (e.g., DoC), however, tend to provide housing and food instead
- Many employers argue the morality of allowing unpaid useful contributions to the workplace (some have policy disallowing such activity)