

Rail and Maritime Transport Union backs locked out Kawerau Essity workers

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One of New Zealand's biggest transport unions – representing rail and port workers – has thrown its support behind a group of Kawerau workers locked out from their jobs.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says the Union has made a substantial donation to the Pulp and Paper Workers Union to help the workers and their families.

145 union workers have been locked out of the Kawerau paper mill for the past three weeks by their employer, the global corporate Essity.

Mr Butson says unions are moving quickly to support the locked out workers and the community in the employment dispute.

“These workers are simply wanting their wages to keep pace with the cost of living – the company offer will mean they are going backwards.”

He says it is unacceptable a highly profitable overseas company is using heavy handed tactics on a local workforce.

“This group of workers are long term, loyal employees who went the extra mile throughout the pandemic to produce essential products for New Zealand.”

Mr Butson says 62 of the workers have been personally threatened with legal action, along with their Union, over a minor issue with a strike notice.

“This is nasty stuff and this company need to be made aware they are damaging their global brand and their social license by their actions.”

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions is backing the Kawerau workers and has launched a new fundraising campaign as well.

Essity is a Swedish-based multinational company that made \$1.8 billion of profit globally last year. Its brands in New Zealand include Purex, Sorbent, Libra and Handee.

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