

THE ACTIVIST



Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 8 March 2013

NEW NORTHERN ORGANISER APPOINTED

We are pleased to announce that Stuart Johnstone has been appointed to the Northern Organiser position to replace Scott Wilson. Scott has reluctantly resigned for family reasons and this has created the opportunity for Stu. Stu was previously employed as a tradesperson in Hillside Workshops and was the branch chair. Stu has been at the forefront of the branch's activities fighting for the workshop's survival and showed us all he had the passion for Union work. Stuart commences in Auckland on Monday 11 March and Scott Wilson will have his last day at work on 19 March 2013.

We know all members will join with us in wishing Scott all the best on the walnut farm in the Naki.

NOMINATIONS CALLED

In accordance with Rule 24 of the Rules & Standing Orders of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union nominations are hereby called for the position of National President.

Nomination Forms are available from the RMTU National Office by contacting Julia on 04-499-2066, fax 04-471-0896 or julia@rmtunion.org.nz.

Nominations shall be in writing and contain the signed consent of the candidate, and be proposed and seconded by financial members (Rule 1) of the Union.

Correctly completed nominations must be received by the National Returning Officer

at the National Office of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union, PO Box 1103 Wellington 6140 no later than 0800 hrs. on Friday 29 March 2013.

The term of office is 2 years (Rule 24.2) and the duties are as contained in Rule 27 of the Union's Rules and Standing Orders.

***Nominations
are hereby
called for the
position of
RMTU National
President.***

For the information of members it is advised that the incumbent will be seeking re-election.

Howard Phillips
National Returning Officer

KIWISAVER

As of 1 April 2013, the minimum contribution for employers and employees rises from 2% to 3%. While largely

an arithmetic exercise where KiwiSaver employer contributions are paid "on top" of wages or salary, this may present difficulty where an already negotiated employment agreement relies on the concept of "total remuneration" already inclusive of the old 2% rate.

MANUFACTURING INQUIRY HITS DUNEDIN

The Parliamentary Inquiry into the crisis in manufacturing is holding hearings around the country and the RMTU is scheduled to make an oral submission next Monday in Dunedin. The closure of Hillside Railway workshops late last year was one of the catalysts for the Inquiry being held and it is fitting that the RMTU will be heard in Dunedin.

The hearings will be in the Kakapo Room in the Otago Museum, 419 Great King St, Dunedin.

This is for the information and guidance of RMTU members only!

We have been advised that ex Hillside Branch Sec Les Ingram has a slot from 1000 to 1030 and John Kerr will present for RMTU 1100 to 1130.

TODAY IS IN'TL WOMAN'S DAY

International Women's Day has been observed since the early 1900's. IWD is now an official holiday in Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, China (for women only), Cuba, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Eritrea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar (for women only), Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal (for women only), Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Vietnam and Zambia.

The unfortunate fact is that women are still not paid equally to that of their male counterparts, women still are not present in equal numbers in business or politics, and globally women's education, health and the violence against them is worse than that of men.

Annually on 8 March, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women and celebrate achievements. Many global corporations have also started to more actively support IWD by running their own internal events and through supporting external ones. For example, on 8 March search engine and media giant Google some years even changes its logo on its global search pages. Year on year IWD is certainly increasing in status.

Do your bit to ensure that the future for girls is bright, equal, safe and rewarding.

LYTTELTON PORT BRANCH

A busy couple of weeks as we had three days in the Employment Court fighting the Company's appeal against the Employment Relations Authority Decision that upheld our members' rights in the Inland Port, also

known as 'City Depot', to be covered by the RMTU-MUNZ-LPC Collective Agreement.

A big thank you to Mike Tasker, Alan Williamson, Tim Lawton and Daryl Haines for giving testimony. It's never easy fronting up in court but you did us proud.

We'll now wait while the wheels of justice grind away and look forward to getting a decision.

We have a Branch Executive and Delegates' meeting on Friday 8 March, which will be discussing, amongst other things, the behavior of Toll Tranz Link and how they are treating our members who used to work for Northern Southland.

KIWI RAIL (FREIGHT) INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL UPDATE

The KIC 17 meeting was held this week in Wellington. It was a full two days with many important issues debated and discussed with

clear outcomes for progress, there were also some big projects initiated by KiwiRail which will require plenty of input from our Freight members to ensure both a safe and fair introduction.

One of the responsibilities of KIC is to review H&S stats to attempt to identify trends and suggest solutions for improvement. The stats presented for the last 12 months are trending badly towards

a high likelihood of serious events occurring in the near future. These stats include – Signals Passed at Danger type A (SPADS), Terminal Collisions and Derailments, Mainline Collisions and Derailments and Level Crossing Collisions. The only stats that are showing improvement from the previous year(s) are terminal and mainline derailments. SPAD's and Terminal Collisions are of the most concern nationwide and especially in the Auckland Suburban network. Hours of Work statistics were not flash as well.



At previous KIC meetings, the forum has worked on identifying a list of Critical Rules for Terminals. This list will be placed at the start of each set of minutes and will now include the Critical Rules for Terminals, LE's and CT sites. Members are encouraged to review these rules and provide comment back to the regional KIC Rep.

Other agenda items included –

- KR fuelling changes
- Energy Miser (an in cab tool that KR have purchased to assist with fuel savings)
- Time and Attendance Project, electronic booking on/off, Freight only
- Air-conditioning for mainline loco's
- Injury prevention – an update on transition heads
- Terminal Training project and LE training trail updates
- EF headlight alert safety issue
- ROM S3 – LE rostering
- DSG overhauls
- IAB Mk2 wagons
- Heat Restrictions, Dust in Terminals
- CT pay and progression working party
- HSAT reviews and discussion on a need for Terms of Reference for these forums (Freight only)

And much more!

The KIC 17 meeting minutes will soon be distributed and will be available on line via KR's intranet (<http://rsg.trl/kic>).

The next meeting, KIC 18, will be 22 & 23 May in Wellington.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE FROM ENGLISH ON DOLLAR

Bill English has caved into the pressure on the high dollar but needs to go much further and overhaul our out-of-date

Reserve Bank Act, says Labour's Finance spokesperson David Parker.

"Bill English has given in to the unrelenting pressure from manufacturers, exporters, workers, unions and political parties to change monetary policy but he needs to go much further. The new tools are useful but on their own they won't be enough to make our currency competitive and help our exporters flourish.

"The Reserve Bank has a tunnel vision mandate that requires it to primarily consider inflation. Our retro

Reserve Bank Act was made in the 1980s when inflation was the main demon. It's time to bring it into the post-financial crisis world.

"The Reserve Bank must be given more firepower. It needs to be able to give appropriate weight to other critical issues such as employment and our overvalued dollar as well as inflation.

"Bill English is only doing half the job. He risks making it harder for first home buyers without the benefits of creating better jobs and higher wages that full reform of the Reserve Bank Act will help bring.

"National's economy isn't working for ordinary New Zealanders. Manufacturing outside primary industries is in trouble and jobs are being cut every week. We need to remove the tunnel vision mandate and give the Reserve Bank a 20/20 perspective for the economy.

"Labour has long argued that the Reserve Bank must be able to look beyond inflation and give equal weight to other important issues such as the exchange rate and jobs. That would help our exporters and manufacturers and create better paying jobs for New Zealanders."

MINIMUM WAGE

This is also set to increase from 1 April 2013, from \$13.50 to \$13.75. The training and new entrant rates will also increase on 1 April, from \$10.80 to \$11. Watch this space, however, as there is also a bill before Parliament which if enacted would provide for a new "starting-out wage" for eligible 16-

19 year olds, to be set at "no less than" 80% of the minimum wage. At present, this would commence in May 2013.

CANTERBURY RAIL BRANCH VOWS TO SUPPORT TOLL TRANZ LINK MEMBERS

At last week's Branch Meeting of the RMTU Canterbury Rail Branch, attended by members and delegates from both KiwiRail and Toll Tranz link, a resolution of support for former staff of Northern Southland Ltd, now employed by Toll Carriers Ltd, was passed unanimously.

The resolution stated that the Canterbury Rail Branch would take 'any action necessary' to support their fellow members who are trying to negotiate a collective agreement with Toll Carriers.

Readers will remember Toll Carriers unilaterally called off negotiations with the RMTU last month.

LAST DAY CONTRACT EXTENSION FOR SOLID CE

Tony Ryall was receiving month-to-month monitoring reports on Solid Energy when former chairman John Palmer on his last day renewed chief executive Don Elder's contract, says Labour's SOEs spokesperson Clayton Cosgrove.

"Tony Ryall has been receiving information on Solid Energy 'month-to-month' since June last year. Since then the outgoing chair gifted a new contract to chief executive Don Elder on the chairman's last day, August 31 last year. That presumably would have meant that the taxpayer would have paid out substantially more in severance pay a few months later when the chief executive resigned.

"Tony Ryall knew about this under the no-surprises policy. He would have known about it but he did nothing. Yet again he's been asleep at the wheel.

"The collapse of Solid Energy wasn't due to coal prices alone; it was due to serious mismanagement and lack of oversight by this Government.

"National has run Solid Energy into the ground. John Key tried to lay the blame on the last Government but back then Solid Energy was an export award-winning company returning millions of dollars to the taxpayer, now it's a train wreck."

REVIEW OF THE MIDLAND LINE SAFETY AGREEMENTS

A meeting with KiwiRail is scheduled for Friday 8th March and has been prompted by the impending retirement of Barry Drummond, the Ganger at Cass.

The RMTU will be represented by delegates and members from Christchurch and the West Coast including Mike Williams, Fred Miles, Ian Walker, and Mike Morgan as well as Organiser John Kerr.

If you work the Midland Line and have concerns

then please contact one of the above. Watch out for report backs from this meeting – remember you are the Union and your representatives need to hear from you.

KEY OUT OF TOUCH ON LONGSTONE PAY OUT

John Key is completely out of touch if he thinks the \$425,000 golden handshake for Lesley Longstone is a relatively small sum of money, says Chris Hipkins, Labour's Education spokesperson.

"I don't know how much John Key keeps in his wallet, but \$425,000 isn't "small" – it is a

**NATIONAL'S
\$425,000
PAYOUT TO LESLEY LONGSTONE
WOULD GIVE
1,000 KIDS
FOOD IN SCHOOLS
FOR A YEAR**

LABOUR.ORG.NZ/EDUCATION



huge amount of money to 99.99% of New Zealanders.

"To put it into perspective, it is about ten times the median wage for a year's work in New Zealand. Alternatively, it would pay the average wage of six teachers for an entire year.

"John Key might be happy to pay out so much taxpayer money so that Hekia Parata has a scapegoat to blame for her failings as Minister of Education, but parents and teachers won't be. They'd rather see that money spent on helping schools clean up the mess Hekia Parata has created with Novopay.

"The only problem is, they sacked the wrong person.

"The Prime Minister might hope axing Lesley Longstone and blaming her for his Government's education woes will be the end of the matter. But with Hekia Parata's record of botch-ups, bungles and back-downs, I seriously doubt it," says Chris Hipkins.

INVERCARGILL BRANCH ENFORCES MECA PROVISIONS OF CONTRACTING OUT

Last week Invercargill Networks delegate Mark Burton was told that Tradestaff Contractors were being paid below MECA rates in breach of a clause we had fought hard for in the last wageround.

Not only did Mark notify National Office, he went two steps further and signed up the contractors' staff into the RMTU and organised a stop work meeting of RMTU Invercargill track workers who unanimously passed a resolution calling on KiwiRail to abide by the MECA. Within 24 hours the contractors received an increase to their hourly rate backdated to 1 July 2012.

We're now arguing with KiwiRail about the application of penal rates for these staff when they work at the weekends. Watch this space!

ITF KEEPING PORT AND VESSEL UNDER OBSERVATION

The ITF is keeping the vessel Long Beach under observation after it reportedly loaded at the Mitsui-UGC terminal at the port of Vancouver, Washington State, USA, where unionised dock workers are currently locked out.

The ITF is keeping the port under close watch. Following the Long Beach incident it will be contacting the vessel's owners and crew and explaining the situation at the port and what action seafarers are expected to take and not to take in these circumstances – in line with the solidarity clause in their collective bargaining agreement. The vessel's next stop is Nagoya in Japan, where it is expected to arrive on March 23.

LOAN TO VALUE RATIO RESTRICTIONS

The Reserve Bank is considering restricting the amount that lenders can advance on residential property, to 85% or 90% of the property's value. It is interesting that they are even considering this option. This move will most likely hurt first home buyers, who are trying to borrow as much as possible to get into their first homes. Investors, to whom this is probably targeted, generally own more than one property, and are lower loan-to-value ratio borrowers. Most investors do not borrow 85-90% on a number of properties, as cash flows just do not support this level of borrowings.

This proposal will ultimately hurt those it is designed to protect – higher leveraged first home buyers and those wanting to borrow right up to maximum on their homes in order to say purchase a business or to acquire plant and equipment to make their enterprises more profitable.

WHOLE BODY VIBRATION

"Shake, rattle and roll" was the headline for an article in the New Zealand Herald in 2005 about research into whole-body vibration by David McBride, associate professor in occupational health at the University of Otago in Dunedin.

Exposure to whole-body vibration (WBV) is a hazard for drivers and machine operators, especially where jolts and jars or "shock" vibration occurs with movement over uneven surfaces. It's quite OK for short periods, but it can get close to the limits of tolerance if severe. In an occupational setting we do not wish to explore the limits of comfort, and as locomotive engineers (ie: train drivers) had been complaining of sore backs and necks the study was carried out to see if WBV had an association with low back pain (LBP) or neck pain (NP).

The design of the study came down to two fundamentals: measuring the vibration, and assessing how much the locomotive engineers were reporting low back and neck pain.

The good news is the study is about to be published.

BULLER GORGE SAFETY

Following the January washouts in the Buller Gorge which damaged 42 sections of track, KiwiRail commissioned a Geotechnical assessment of the damage to the Stillwater-Ngakawau line.

The inspection identified slope damage considered to be high risk including where further rock falls could occur and recommended urgent repair and a monitoring fence.

The report said much of the damage to the track was as a result of the existing drainage (culverts, bridges and cess drains) being overwhelmed by the large volumes of water. Damage from future intense rainstorms may be reduced by increasing the capacity and efficiency of the drainage network including replacing culverts with larger diameter pipes and reducing reduce the amount of debris entering the culverts by constructing catch basins or weirs upstream of the track.

The rock fall monitoring fence was recently installed at 113.75 km to trigger a track inspection if there are signs of moving debris.

RMTU Reps in the Buller gorge will review the Geotech report and provide feedback at the next Buller Gorge safety meeting.

GOVERNMENT SELLING US DOWN THE MIGHTY RIVER

The asset sales programme will ultimately see millions of dollars go into the pockets of private and Australian investors while most New Zealanders lose out, say Labour Leader David Shearer and SOEs spokesperson Clayton Cosgrove.

David Shearer says: "Currently our state assets are 100% Kiwi owned. This programme will mean New Zealanders lose their assets. Kiwis are being asked to purchase what they already own. John Key says he's committing to keeping 85 per cent in New Zealand hands but to do that thousands of Kiwi families will have to spend at least \$1,000.



"The assets will be listed on the Australian stock exchange and open to investment from overseas companies. John Key can't explain how he is going to ensure that at least 70% of the shares go into the hands of New Zealanders, apart from spending \$1 million on an advertising campaign. He still refuses to explain how his loyalty programme

will work.

"Over 80 per cent of New Zealanders have consistently said they are against asset sales. There are 390,000 Kiwis who have signed the petition calling for a referendum. New Zealanders must have their say. The Government should hold the referendum this year and listen to the will of the people," says David Shearer.

KR TRANSITION HEADS

Kiwirail are behind schedule on the manufacturing of alliance couplers.

The manufacturing of the alliance couplers has been delayed due to the sale of the Hillside foundry to Bradken Engineering. We understand that Bradken wish to charge an additional 15% on top of the previous Hillside rate (sounds familiar outsourcing result).

KiwiRail expect to have 250 wagons retrofitted by the end of March and they are focused on retrofitting alliance couplers on the CFT- UK container flat top wagons. They are hoping to fit 130 wagons per month in the Westfield and Christchurch depots and deploying the fitted rolling stock into the South Island with the intention to 'ring fence' within the Christchurch and south of Christchurch area.

Kiwirail have undertaken to improve communication with the Union and provide monthly updates on the retrofitting process.

The RMTU considers the hazard of transition heads should have been identified in the pre-planning phase of the introduction of the IAB, IAC wagons and has asked KiwiRail to review its project management process to integrate health and safety into the project planning and design phase with direct input from RMTU representatives.



EMPLOYEES WITH STUDENT LOANS

A further change as of 1 April 2013 is that the minimum deduction for employees with student loans increases from 10% to 12%.

Please contact us if you would like any advice on how these changes may affect your circumstances.

INSURANCE ISSUES

Since the Christchurch earthquake, household insurance has not only become more expensive, and harder to obtain, but insurers are asking more questions. If you

are purchasing a property you just cannot leave obtaining insurance to the day before settlement. If the insurer wants more information - for example on a property built before 1940, they may require a wiring certificate. It is best to address your insurance issues well before settlement rather than holding this up, as you will be inconveniencing not only yourself but other parties as well. If you have problems obtaining insurance, why not ask the vendor which insurer they used, as their insurer already knows the property.

ASBESTOS HAZARD AT SOUTHDOWN

The RMTU commissioned a review by Carol McSweeney of Air Matters of the monitoring results. We expect to get this independent report late Friday or early Next week. We will circulate to our Auckland members upon receipt.

WHAT KILLED KEN CALLOW?

CTU has launched a YouTube clip and campaign aimed at trying to get the Government to agree to an inquiry into the forestry industry, and to implementing health and safety and employment standards that stop the deaths and injuries of forestry workers. Helen Kelly said "forestry is the most dangerous industry in New Zealand. In 2013 there have already been two deaths - since 2008, 23 workers have died and almost 900 have been seriously injured. Each death is a family, community, workplace losing someone who was loved. Each injury is someone's life being changed forever by something that happened at work."

"We need to bring attention to this, the government and the industry to step up and stop this from happening." CTU last night launched a YouTube clip of Caroline and Roger Callow talking about the tragic death of their son, Ken Callow, at work, and are using the One Big Voice website to raise funds for a billboard campaign to draw attention to the dangers in the sector. For more information, see

www.whatkilledkencallow.org.nz

KIWI RAIL ORDINARY SAFETY ASSESSMENT

The NZTA will commence the KiwiRail Ordinary Safety Assessment from the 6 May 2013. The RMTU has asked the NZTA to investigate the following health and safety concerns as part of their audit.

1. The Kaimai tunnel incident- reported in the March 2013 RMTU Transport Worker
2. Communication and evacuation issues in both the Rimutaka Tunnel and the Buller Gorge
3. Manual handling of transition heads
4. Non-compliant Audio Shunting Procedures (ASP) radios



RMTU Delegates and H&S Reps will be asked to attend parts of the audit to represent the views of the workers and discuss how safety works in practice.

HEADS UP – PORTS FORUM

The RMTU Ports Forum is being held in Wellington mid-year. Port Branch Secretaries are asked to formalise their representation and to advise numbers of attendees to National Office as soon as possible.

Suggestions for agenda items are encouraged from branches.

DON ELDER GETS \$1.3M FOR SITTING ON HIS SOFA

Former chief executive Dr Don Elder is earning a salary of \$1.3 million per annum to sit at home and answer phone calls from Solid Energy managers explaining how the company went from an award-winning exporter to a basket case, Labour's SOEs spokesperson Clayton Cosgrove says.

"Don Elder is being paid \$1.3 million per annum for a 'transitional role', which seems to be little more than sitting at home and telling Solid Energy what went wrong over the phone.

"An SOE going belly up in this fashion is unprecedented in my lifetime. Why, when the taxpayers going to have to fork out \$389 million, is the former chief executive being paid \$1.3 million to sit at home.

"Dr Elder's \$1.3 million sofa-salary is the epitome of the culture of extravagance that helped bring Solid Energy to its knees.

"There were \$23 million in bonuses paid over two years when the company was falling apart, a 50 per cent increase in travel spending and PR staff, the hiring of lobbyists, and now they've created a new position – the couch executive.

"Solid Energy's collapse is the fault of the ministers. They knew what was going on and did nothing to stop it. They could have sacked the board at any time. They could have directed the company under section 13 of the SOE act. They could have made it clear that the huge spending was wrong when the company was going south.

"But ministers sat there and did nothing.

"New Zealanders deserve answers and they need them now. I am calling for a full Select Committee Inquiry and Don Elder and all those responsible must appear before it," says Clayton Cosgrove.

CTU OUT@WORK KAMP

The CTU Out@Work Council is the constitutionally recognised structure for Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Takaatapai, Fa'afine and Queer Workers of the 36 CTU affiliated unions. Out@Work works with unions to raise awareness of the issues that LGBTI issues and to end discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We also analyse and comment on employment, social and economic issues particularly as they affect queer union members. The Out@Work Council holds a two day event every 2 years to review our activities and organise and plan ahead. This is an event with a range of speakers, panel discussions and workshops and will be held on the **3rd and 4th May 2013 at Paekakariki Holiday Kamp, Paekakariki.**

Membership to the Kamp is available to all CTU affiliated union members and those who identify as Queer. The theme of this year's Kamp is Empower, Energise, Act! Growing Workplace Leaders. For further information contact the RMTU National Office or the CTU's Eileenb@nzctu.org.nz Phone 04 802 3813

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL

International Workers Memorial Day is 28 April 2013. The day is about remembering those workers, especially RMTU members, who have been killed whilst at work.

All Branches are asked to commence formal arrangements for services at memorial sites.

All members are requested to attend a memorial service organised near them.

As usual we ask all members to stop what they are doing at midday to "Mourn the dead – Fight for the living" and to think about how important personal safety is to us all going home safe at the end of our days' work.

As usual we will be requesting KiwiRail to approve all trains stopping at midday on the 28th for 1 minute.

The services (that we have been informed of to date) will be held at;

Dunedin – the memorial garden 1200hrs

Hutt Shops – 1200hrs at the workshop memorial garden.

Please advise us of all services to be held on the day?

NAT'S TO SPEND \$30 MILLION ON TRANSMISSION GULLY CONTRACT

National is planning to spend over \$30 million just on the contracting process for the \$3.4 billion Transmission Gully highway, Green Party transport spokesperson Julie Anne Genter said today.

Answers to Parliamentary Written Questions received from the Minister of Transport show that the Government has spent \$33.7 million on the Transmission Gully project so far and is planning to spend a further \$30.7 million just on the contracting process for the recently announced Public-Private Partnership to build the project.

Last week, New Zealand Transport Agency CEO Geoff Dangerfield conceded to the Transport and Industrial Relations Committee that the PPP would treble the cost of the project to \$3.4 billion.

"Taxpayers will be stunned to learn that National is spending \$30 million just to sign the contract on Transmission Gully before a sod is even turned," said Ms Genter.

"Public-Private Partnerships are supposedly about getting value for money but, once again, we see they are in fact cash cows for financiers and lawyers, while taxpayers foot the bill.

"The \$30 million for contracting the PPP is just the tip of the iceberg. All up, Transmission Gully is expected to cost \$3.4 billion for a project that is expected to deliver only \$360-\$500 million worth of benefits.

"If National persists with wasting taxpayers' money on the uneconomic Transmission Gully project it will mean vital projects, such as the City Rail Link that is the only way to keep Auckland moving, won't get built.

"Do we want to throw away a fortune on Transmission Gully, or should we invest that money in sustainable, vital projects such as the City Rail Link?" said Ms Genter.

WELLINGTON CLOSE CALL

Information released by Maritime New Zealand said the 193 metre cargo ship AAL Brisbane was headed for Pencarrow Rocks in Wellington harbour when the pilot came aboard.

An internal memo stated the ship's course was being plotted by a cadet, supervised by a master mariner.



"Fortunately the harbour pilot came onboard, noticed the error, and adjusted the course of the ship, avoiding a grounding," the report said. The ship was temporarily detained in port.

The incident has been described as one of 13 "near misses" since the container ship Rena ran aground on Astrolabe Reef in the Bay of Plenty in October 2011.

The incidents have prompted calls by politicians for greater scrutiny of shipping.

SLEEPOVER PAYMENT DELAYS ADD INSULT TO INJURY

The Public Service Association is accusing the Ministry of Health of adding insult to injury for hundreds of community support workers who are still waiting for their rightful sleepover payments.

A Court of Appeal decision in 2011 ruled that support workers on sleepover shifts must be paid the minimum wage, and that backpay should be awarded.

The PSA says hundreds of carers are still waiting because of Ministry of Health delays in getting Cabinet approval and final funding sign off.

"These workers, who are already among the lowest paid, have been waiting for years to have their work fairly recognised and are now facing further delays. Well over a year later the government has yet to deliver on the settlement deal and give these workers what they are entitled to and what they deserve," says PSA National Secretary Richard Wagstaff.

As part of the settlement it was agreed that workers be paid the minimum wage during sleepover work time.

Richard Wagstaff says Ministry delays means that is still not being paid out.

"The Ministry has told providers that if they start paying the full minimum wage to their workers before the final Order in Council

sign off, the Ministry will not reimburse them for its share of the sleepover backpay."

"The Ministry is essentially preventing people being paid what they are due. The delays are unacceptable and the Ministry needs to move quickly to ensure the funding is made available to honour these sleepover settlements," he says.

DREDGING AT TAURANGA GETS GREEN LIGHT

The controversial expansion of the port of Tauranga will officially go ahead after the minister of conservation Kate Wilkinson gave final approval. Stage one of the multi-million dollar project would start at the end of this year and take up to another year to complete, according to port chief executive Mark Cairns.

A port statement outlined that the dredging project would widen and deepen the shipping channel from 12.9 metres to 16 metres at low water. As a result Tauranga Harbour will be able to accommodate ships of up to 347 metres in length and 14.5 metres draught. Stage one of the dredging would cost up to NZ\$50m and would allow containerships of 6000 teu to access the port. The second stage of dredging would allow access to 8200 teu ships, future-proofing the port for the next 15 to 20 years, the statement said. The expansion would also allow larger bulk cargo and cruise ships to visit Tauranga.

LET'S BE SAFE OUT THERE & REMEMBER.....

"WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER"!

