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TERRY O'SULLIVAN President, Laborers' International Union of North America; Chairman, AIL Labour Advisory Board

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STEVE GREER Chief Executive Officer, American Income Life Division; President, AIL Labour Advisory Board

SUSAN FULDAUER Division Vice President, Public Relations, American Income Life Division; Secretary, AIL Labour Advisory Board

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NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

Retailers Challenged on Living Wage

Australian hardware chain Bunnings is the latest major retail brand to raise staff wages, inking a new national collective agreement that puts long-term staff on levels at least equal to the living wage from September. The living wage jumps at that point to \$22.75 an hour.

"Bunnings staff have been busier than ever since the first wave of the pandemic, and we've heard their workloads have never quite returned to 'normal' again," said **First Union** Secretary for Retail, Finance and Commerce Tali Williams.

The agreement comes on the heels of a victory for other First Union members who won a living wage increase at Aotearoa's biggest supermarket, Pak n' Save Lincoln Road.



(Mark Taylor/Stuff)

"It's time retail employers who are not paying a living wage took a moment to reflect on the huge profits made in the sector despite the pandemic, and truly consider the people on the shop floor who make that windfall every year for the company," said Williams.

K-Mart was recently the first major retailer to agree to a living wage component in its agreement, putting established staff on the current rate of \$22.10 an hour. Others in the retail sector, however, are still slow to follow. Despite lengthy negotiations, First Union has been unsuccessful with fashion chains Cotton On and H&M, although wage talks with H&M NZ are set to resume this month.

The union also called out a group within the Mitre co-operative which owns four stores in New Lynn, Albany, Warkworth and Whangaparaoa, where union members have unsuccessfully been trying to get beyond the \$20 an hour minimum wage.

Riviera Hardware Holdings, which owns the four Mitre 10 stores, said it had been "meeting with the union in good faith" and had worked through and resolved a range of claims already, but "is not able to promise



(FIRST Union)

outcomes at this point."

Williams said First Union was looking forward to the government's proposed Fair Pay Agreements which would stop people who work for different brands or in different cities earning "vastly different pay packets, despite doing the same job as each other."

Lobby group Business NZ has criticised the agreements, saying they amount to compulsory, nationwide agreements. "This is against international law, which says collective agreements should always be negotiated voluntarily," said Business NZ chief executive Kirk Hope. The new changes are closely based on the Australian Fair Work Act introduced in 2009.

Maritime Union Warns of Supply Chain Crisis

The **Maritime Union of New Zealand** (MUNZ) says New Zealand is facing a deepening crisis in their maritime supply chain, which requires bold thinking and speedy action to fix.

MUNZ national secretary Craig Harrison says the global COVID-19 pandemic exposed pre-existing weaknesses in their logistics sector, and created enormous problems.

"Global congestion has been complicated for New Zealand due to our over-dependence on global shipping operators," said Craig. "International shipping services were currently disrupted, some port calls were being missed, freight costs had risen by unprecedented levels, and shippers could get more profits from concentrating on other larger markets. A change in our approach is required and the time for change is now."



(Sunlive/MUNZ)

Craig says New Zealand transport policy has been dominated by a "leave it to the market ideology," but the industry was abandoning those failed ideas in favour of a more co-ordinated approach that prioritises resilience and reliability.

The country needs to quickly rebuild its shipping capability. "New Zealand flagged coastal shipping could assist by ensuring regional ports had a reliable service (and) coastal shipping could be built on by expanding New Zealand flagged shipping services to Australia and the Pacific," said Craig.

That, however, would require changes to the Maritime Transport Act.

CTU Calls on New Zealand to Sign Up to Treaty to Protect Workers from Violence and Harassment

The International Labour Organisation, an agency of the United Nations, adopted the Violence and Harassment Convention in 2019. The new international law to keep workplaces free from violence and harassment came into effect on Friday 25 June.



New Zealand working people, employers and the government all supported the convention when the ILO adopted it, but the New Zealand government has not yet taken meaningful steps to implement the terms of the convention.

"We are calling on the government to make ratifying this convention a priority and to demonstrate the government's commitment to doing more to ensure working people are safe." said **Council of Trade Unions** Vice President Rachel Mackintosh.

"It matters that New Zealand takes the formal step of ratifying the

The ILO Committee following the adoption of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention and Recommendation 2019 (ILO)

convention, because once this happens our government will be required to report to the ILO on this issue, and specifically what measures our country is taking to ensure that we can make the world of work free from harassment and violence," Mackintosh said.

COVID-19 Vaccination Hubs Failing Firefighters

The COVID-19 vaccination Hub system is failing firefighters as those who respond to MIQ facilities, airports and border facilities are not even being offered dates, let alone priority for COVID-19 vaccinations.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) confirmed in April that Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) personnel were Tier 2A for the national Covid-19 vaccination roll out, meaning many metro firefighters have not even been offered the vaccination.

The Ministry of Health has control of the vaccination rollout and that MedPro has been contracted to administer vaccination hubs for FENZ personnel, but FENZ should be able to inform and influence a practical and sensible roll-out to its employees and volunteers.

In January 2021, the **New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU)** discussed the prioritisation of vaccination programmes with FENZ.



(NZPFU)

FENZ was expected to align with Government policy and risk profiles so that firefighters responding to MIQ and border facilities including airports and ports would be prioritised and those that undertake medical response following closely behind. FENZ, however, failed to influence a roll-out on that basis and there is now the absurd situation where more vaccinations are being made available to rural and small towns and those responding to MIQs and borders are being left out.

NZPFU members in Auckland, Waikato and Wellington have all reported either a total lack of vaccinations being made available to them through the Hub system, or very few being made available. Instead, firefighters are seeking assistance from GPs and through DHB vaccination centres. The NZPFU understands for some this failure to have access to vaccinations is becoming a mental health issue.



(News One)

Early Childhood Teacher Vacancies at Record Levels

The number of jobs on offer at ECE's has doubled in the last six months, reaching 500 vacancies.

"What this shows is that early childhood education is not a desirable career for people and we need to turn this around," said Virginia Oakly of the **New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)**, New Zealand's largest education trade union.

The union says it wants smaller teacher-to-children ratios, allocated non-contact time for admin, and better pay. While the government has increased salaries, this only applies to those at the lowest end of the pay band.

"It will help entice people into the profession but it's not retaining people, and we can't have centres run with just beginning teachers," says Megan White from Capital Kids Cooperative.

The Early Childhood Council says the shortage was getting to a critical point and some centres have had to shut their doors. Peter Reynolds, the council's chief executive, estimates at least one ECE was shutting a week.

The Education Ministry says it recognises the shortage in the early childhood education workforce, saying its "priority is to have more domestically trained teachers and our work with the ECE sector is ongoing about the best way to do this." The ministry's initiatives include a national marketing campaign to get teachers who have quit to re-join, as well as a financial assistance to those studying towards an ECE qualification.

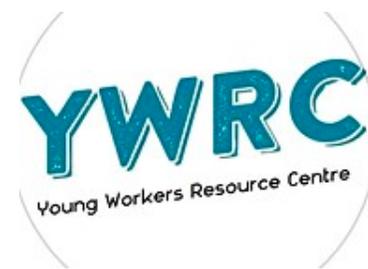


PSA organiser Andrew Skelly (PSA)

Parking Issues at Auckland Hospital

Parking is a major issue for Auckland Hospital employees, which causes a great deal of stress. Over the years it's become very difficult for hospital staff to find a carpark when they drive to work. For many workers it has also become increasingly unaffordable. Free staff parking has gradually been taken away.

Public Service Association (PSA) Andrew Skelly said it is only getting worse, affecting most "low paid workers who quite generally, or pretty much daily, will be sleeping in their cars so they don't have to pay for an expensive car park. It's clogging up the streets in the area. There is no easy solution but it's important that people know just how big the problem actually is."



Learn More: www.ywrc.org.nz

Half of the funds from parking go to Auckland Hospital, and the other half goes to the parking companies AMP Capital and Wilson Parking.

Help Centre for Young Workers

The Whare Kaimahi Rangatahi (Young Workers Resource Centre) focuses on empowering rangatahi to have meaningful employment experiences, and be able to speak up for themselves in a work environment.

The Centre says it advocates for employment rights for young workers because they're the group most exploited. YWRC provides free employment support to anyone under 35, and employment education workshops specifically designed for young workers.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

US-Teamsters Pass Nationwide Amazon Unionisation Campaign

United States. As reported by *The Verge*.

The **International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union** is launching a nationwide campaign to unionise Amazon workers. During the Teamsters international convention the union passed a resolution to make the "Amazon Project" a top priority and said it would commit "all resources necessary" to making the initiative successful.

"Amazon presents a massive threat to working-class communities and good jobs in the logistics industry," said Randy Korgan, national director of the Amazon Project, in a statement. "Amazon workers are calling for safer and better working conditions, and with today's resolution, we are activating the full force of our union to support them." As part of the initiative, the Teamsters will create a special Amazon Division tasked with "taking on the threat that is Amazon for the next five years." It's designed to help the Teamsters roll out a unified strategy across its 500 local unions.

According to Korgan, the union has been focused on organising Amazon for quite some time, well before the recent union drive at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. In April, the National Labor Relations Board announced that warehouse workers in Bessemer, Alabama, had voted against unionising with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU). The news came after months of Amazon's brutal union-

busting campaign, which included pressuring the postal service to install a mailbox outside the warehouse to collect ballots, which gave some workers the impression that Amazon controlled the vote. RWDSU challenged the results of the election in a complaint filed with the NLRB.



(Facebook)

"In my more than two decades of service as Teamsters General President, I've yet to see a threat quite like the one Amazon presents to hardworking people, small businesses, the logistics industry and our nation's middle class," said Teamsters President James P. Hoffa in a statement. "Our 1.4 million Teamster members, their families and communities stand together in solidarity with Amazon workers, and we commit our union's full support as they build worker power for a better future."

Canada's Unions Elect New Leaders to Help Chart a Hopeful Post-pandemic Future for Workers

Canada. On 18 June, Bea Bruske from United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) was elected the new President of the the **Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)**, the country's major umbrella organisation of national unions, provincial federations of labour and local labour councils representing over three million workers.

She replaces retiring President Hassan Yussuff who has held the position for two terms spanning the past seven years. Bruske, who received overwhelming support from convention delegates, was previously Secretary-Treasurer and a negotiator with UFCW 832 and a Vice-President of the UFCW Canada National Council.



(CLC)

"I am honored to be elected as CLC's new President and I'm looking forward to working with a dedicated team committed to advancing the interests of the nation's workers and their families," said Bruske. "We are committed to building a Canada that works for everyone. Among our key priorities will be to ensure workers are centered in the post-pandemic recovery."

Lily Chang was elected to replace outgoing Secretary-Treasurer Marie Clarke Walker. Chang was previously Treasurer of Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 79. Returning Executive Vice-President

Larry Rousseau was re-elected for a second term. Rousseau was first elected to the position at the 2017 CLC Convention in Toronto. Newly elected Executive Vice-President Siobhán Vipond replaces outgoing Executive Vice-President Donald Lafleur. Vipond was the Secretary-Treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Nearly 4,000 delegates from across Canada participated in the CLC's first-ever virtual convention and debated issues including pharmacare, the creation of good jobs and how to ensure a strong COVID-19 pandemic recovery plan that addresses racial and gender inequities. Resolutions were also passed on combating Islamophobia and Anti-Asian racism, as well as a resolution calling for the federal government to fulfill the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Delegates to the Convention also elected labour council and equity representatives who will lead for the coming mandate. These positions include representation for LGBTQ2SI, young workers, workers of colour, Indigenous workers and disability rights, as well as regional representatives across Canada.

Williamstown Railyard Workers Win Fight Against Casualisation

Australia. According to Australia's **Electrical Trades Union**, more than 70 ETU members at the Williamstown Railyard, together with their colleagues from other unions on site have struck a blow against casualisation, reaching an in-principle agreement that brings a long-running dispute to an end.

The workers are employed by Downer Group to work on the Evolution Rail consortium's High Capacity Metro Trains project. They have been engaged in negotiations with Downer Group over their next EBA since February 2020.

The main sticking point in negotiations had been the issue of casualisation. There are currently 32 fixed-term workers on contracts plus a number of casual workers at the site. Over the last year, 15 full-time workers have left the project, but none of the contract workers have been converted to full-time.



(ETU)

The unions demanded a clause in the EBA that converts fixed-term workers to full timers in order to address the issue. Downer initially refused to accept this claim, but the unions dug in for a fight. In reaching an in-principle agreement with the company, ETU members have won an important battle in the fight against casualisation in the rail industry.

"Members have been strongly in support of this position throughout this campaign. They have seen their workmates miss out on full-time work and were left to wonder if they would have a job in six months' time. The Metro Tunnel project is staffed by full-timers, and now more of the people who are building the trains that will run through those tunnels will be too," stated Organiser Aaron Douglass.

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American Income Life Insurance Company ~ 1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 300 ~ Washington, D.C. 20006 ~
(202) 833-2030

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