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## NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

### Unions Welcome Residency Announcement For Working People And Their Families

New Zealand's labour unions are applauding Minister of Immigration Kris Faafoi's September 30<sup>th</sup> announcement on granting residency to 165,000 working people and their families on temporary visas.

The Government has come under increasing pressure this year over the issue of immigration. Temporary migrant workers have left, frustrated at major delays and backlogs within the immigration system that have left some applicants waiting for decisions on their applications since 2019.



*Kris Faafoi says an estimated 165,000 will be eligible for the new pathway  
(Robert Kitchin/Stuff)*

"We are providing a way forward for our migrant families who have been long disrupted by COVID-19, while ensuring businesses have the certainty they need to... continue driving the economic recovery," said Minister Faafoi.

"The changes give migrants certainty about their future here, allowing them to continue putting down roots, and will help reunite many families who were separated by the border restrictions that prevent COVID-19 entering the community.

"This is something employers have asked for and we are delivering. Employers will now have the opportunity to retain their settled and skilled migrant workers, reflecting the critical part they play in our economy, essential workforce and communities," Faafoi said.

"This will be transformative for these working people and their families, who will now be able to plan their future in Aotearoa with security," said the **Council of Trade Unions** (CTU) President Richard Wagstaff, whose union had previously called for changes to give migrant workers more secure status.

"Working people on temporary visas can face great uncertainty, and for some the restrictions on their employment have left them vulnerable to exploitation. The CTU believes that this will significantly reduce migrant exploitation and is a welcome step towards ending this scourge in New Zealand," said Wagstaff.

"CTU is looking forward to working with the government on the rest of its immigration reset programme, to

ensure a balanced approach to migration policy that supports our shared goals of a high-wage, highly skilled and productive economy."

The **Union Network of Migrants NZ** also welcomed the announcement of the "one-off" resident visas, saying it provides certainty to migrants and New Zealand businesses.

The 2021 Resident Visa will be available to most work-related visa holders, including Essential Skills, Work to Residence, and Post Study Work visas and their immediate family members, as long as they were in New Zealand on September 29.

The **New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO)** also praised the news of the visas, but said more work was needed in training and retaining home-grown nurses to properly address the gaps in the workforce.



*(VisaGuide)*

NZNO Industrial Services Manager Glenda Alexander said, "We asked that Immigration NZ opens up Expressions of Interest for the Skilled Migrant Category, and that they place all application by health workers into the priority queue."

Immigration New Zealand estimates that the eligible visa holders will include over 5,000 health and aged care workers, around 9,000 primary industry workers, and more than 800 teachers. There are also around 15,000 construction and 12,000 manufacturing workers on relevant visa types, some of whom will be eligible for the one-off pathway.

Applicants will need to meet one of six criteria: have lived in New Zealand for three or more years, earn above the median wage (\$27 per hour or more), work in a role on the long-term skill shortage list, hold occupational registration and work in health or education, work in personal care or other critical health worker roles, or have jobs within the primary industries.

Applications for the 2021 Resident Visa will open in two phases; on 1 December 2021 and 1 March 2022, with a majority of applications granted within a year of the category opening.

### **The "People Must Be Paid" Campaign**

**First Union, E tū** and **Unite Union** have joined forces in calling on the NZ Government to make it compulsory for all workers to get paid during the lockdown, whether or not their company decides to apply for, or is eligible for, the wage subsidy.



*(First Union)*

In an open petition to the Government, the union said, "We are all doing our bit to help eliminate the latest COVID outbreak in New Zealand. While some of us may be essential workers, most of us will be off work, staying at home as required by the Government.

"The Government will again spend billions of dollars on wage subsidies for employers to help pay our wages while we stay home to break the chain of transmission. This is the right thing to do – but it also means that employers should deliver on their responsibilities too.

"But some employers aren't applying for the subsidy. They are just asking their workers to stay at home without pay. They are refusing to pay employees who are required to stay at home due to the lockdown, or if they are immune-compromised. That's not right – and we are asking the government to make sure that they are enforcing the law as quickly and rigorously as possible.

"The union movement is calling on the Government to make sure that all workers are getting paid during the lockdown, regardless of whether their company decides to apply for, or is eligible for, the wage subsidy. It's the law. Employees shouldn't have to wait months for pay or have to take their employer to court for the money they are owed.

We ask you to sign this petition to call on the Government to ensure that all companies pay their workers during the lockdown. All workers should get the pay they are owed so that they can look after their families and whanau."

*Sign the campaign [HERE](#) today.*

### **Tip Top Baker Union Members Won Living Wages**

**FIRST** union members at George Weston Foods' plants in Tāmaki Makaurau ratified a new collective agreement September 29 that brings on every single one of them up to at least the living wage of \$22.75. That's a 7.5 per cent increase for many.

The deal also brings in extra compensation for night shifts, in recognition of the personal sacrifices these workers make to keep the company's operations running 24 hours a day.



This victory is a direct result of the collective action these workers took over the past couple of weeks. The 95 members across the two sites (almost everyone is in the union) participated in an overtime ban, limiting their week to 45 hours. They stuck together and showed unwavering strength – with big results.

### **Voices of Oranga Tamariki Workers Heard**

The **Public Service Association** welcomes the initial report of the Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board, Kahu Aroha. PSA, which is Aotearoa New Zealand's largest union with more than 80,000 members, represents more than 3000 members at Oranga Tamariki.

PSA general and Rūnanga convenors for Oranga Tamariki, Helen Foley and Bronny Pegler (Ngāti Kahungunu, Rangitāne Nui) are encouraged by the recommendations in the report.

Foley said, "There is nothing more important than the children and families we work with, they are the reason we come to work every day. This report validates PSA members, who have been raising issues around workload pressures and the corporatisation of statutory social work, which has resulted in the diminution of the social work profession."



*Minister for Children Kelvin Davis, "This is systematic change. This is true treaty partnership."  
(RNZ)*

National Rūnanga convenor, Bronny Pegler was heartened that the report not only captures the voices and struggles of kaimahi, but has also restored the dawning light of Pua Te Ata Tu. "The report reveals the profound understanding of the place tamariki and rangatahi have in Māori society and the relationship with whānau, hapū and iwi.

"It is appropriate that the state is not stepping away from its responsibility for whānau and mokopuna, and it is correct and timely to be shifting its focus to building stronger communities and relationships."

PSA national secretary Kerry Davies said, "Social workers work long hours in very difficult situations, often to the detriment of their own lives and families. If the recommendations in this report are implemented, social workers and other staff within Oranga Tamariki will be supported to work sustainably, and properly resourced.

"We are also pleased to see the report acknowledge that the care and protection of children is a society wide job. Social workers who work in organisations outside Oranga Tamariki are also involved with families and must be supported. A profession-wide solution and workforce plan is needed, and we welcome this."

He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

### **E tū Union Wāhine Mark Suffrage Day**

In 1893, New Zealand became the first nation in the world to grant women the right to vote, making September 19, Suffrage Day, a significant day in New Zealand's history.

The day provides an opportunity for individuals and organisations to celebrate New Zealand's suffrage achievements and to remember that the fight is still going for many women.



(E tū)

Research shows that during emergency situations such as the COVID-19 crisis, gender-based violence gets worse. According to an online survey by researchers at the University of Otago, around nine per cent of New Zealanders said they'd experienced some kind of family harm over the lockdown period last year.

**E tū Women's Committee** Convenor Wheeti Haenga said, "We are hearing stories about women who have been affected by domestic violence, and there's a real concern during COVID, because we know this tends to get a lot worse.

"Every woman and child in Aotearoa should live in homes that are free from violence," said Haenga, saying the committee wants all women to know there is help out there, including places such as Women's Refuge. Family Violence Leave is also available for up to 10 days, she added.

Despite the many issues that remain for women, Haenga wanted to recognise their mahi and strength during the COVID crisis. "A shout out to our wonderful wāhine everywhere in Aotearoa New Zealand, including our Māori and Pasefika women – they've all done a brilliant job...Suffrage Day is about remembering all our wāhine and their individual struggle to secure their rights as a collective."



(Scott Hammond/Stuff)

### **MERAS Settles with DHBs**

Hospital midwives who are members of the **Midwifery Employee Representation and Advisory Services** (MERAS) have settled their Multi-Employer Collective Agreement (MECA) with the country's DHBs.

The MECA expired on 31 January this year and MERAS midwives postponed a planned 17 August strike action due to Covid. MERAS members were presented with the offer in early September and the voting closed 17 September, resulting in the settlement.

MERAS Industrial Co-Leader Jill Ovens, says it is a relief to have reached an agreement because it means "we can concentrate on settling the pay equity claim for DHB-employed midwives."

Ovens says an increase of \$5800 on midwives' salary rates includes a \$4000 "down payment" on the pay equity settlement that will result in new salary rates now, with more to come when the pay equity negotiations have been concluded. There is a \$6000 pro-rated lump sum, also from the pay equity, payable on ratification of the MECA.

"All MERAS members covered by the MECA will get an increase backdated to August 2. We are confident that that the pay equity process (which will hopefully be concluded before Christmas) will result in a new salary scale for midwives with a significant pay increase."

### **NZ Tramways Union Calls For Action**

**Tramways Union** is calling for action after a bus driver was seriously assaulted last month in Auckland's Waterview.

An Auckland bus driver was in hospital after a passenger dragged him from his seat and struck him repeatedly in an 11-minute "violent and unprovoked" attack during a late-night suburban run. He is now in

stable condition but faces a long recovery.

The attacker fled the scene but police were able to swiftly locate and take him into custody. Police revealed it was the second time in a month the same driver had been assaulted while on the job.

There are now plans to increase police patrols and visibility on and around buses to ensure the safety of drivers.



(Haydon Woodward)

Tramways Union president Gary Froggatt told the Herald the beating may have been sparked by the driver using a radio telephone after the passenger got on the bus without paying a fare.

Union President Gary Froggatt says drivers need more tools to deal with unruly passengers, and should be given more training in how to deal with these types of incidents.

## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

### Numsa Strike Brings Concerns Over Minimum Wage Into Focus

*South Africa.* As reported by City Press.

The national minimum wage and wage exploitation by employers during the COVID-19 pandemic are some of the concerns that have been raised by the metal and engineering workers, according to **National Union of Metalworkers of SA** (Numsa) Secretary Irvin Jim.

The union has declared an indefinite strike due to deadlocked wage negotiations with employer associations.

Numsa had initially demanded a one-year, 15 per cent pay increase across the board but eventually brought down its offer to 8 per cent after declaring a dispute at the Metal and Engineering Industries Bargaining Council.

Jim Numsa stated, "As a union, we have been very clear that we are in an unfortunate situation whereby government, which is led by the ANC in the majority, has failed to take measures that ensure that employers cannot continue with the super exploitation of black and African labour and that there must be a national minimum wage which must be a living wage in the country."



*National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) Secretary Irvin Jim protests the low rate of national minimum wages (Archive)*

He said the government had set a terrible precedent when it decided to withdraw a 7 per cent increase in a collective agreement with workers in the public service and when it passed a national minimum wage of R21 an hour. That set the tone for bosses and employers across all sectors in the economy, including the engineering and motor industry, where employers have decided to whittle down workers' wages and benefits targeting this R21 an hour.

"That is why workers are alone [in this fight]. They must take the future in their own hands and embark on a strike to improve their wages and conditions," he added.

Early this year, Labour Minister Thulas Nxesi announced a 9 per cent increase in the national minimum wage from R20 to R21.69 per hour. This change comes into effect from March 1.

Ongama Mtimka, a political analyst, said It appears that Numsa's main concerns are industry-specific issues and the arguments being raised are legitimate issues [and not politicking during elections period]. "There is a case to be made to think deeply about the effectiveness of collective bargaining and industry-wide negotiations as opposed to firm-specific discussions or negotiations on wage."

Mtimka added that there was always a challenge when an industry-wide wage deal is imposed as it tended to negate firm-level dynamics and may actually not be better for employers or even employees.

Meanwhile, economist Duma Gqubule said that the minimum wage should have been set higher, "The minimum wage is far too low. I do not think that R3 500 a month is enough for most people to survive on in South Africa.

Gqubule added that there were different measures of what people need to survive. For example, the Living Standard Measure (LSM) determined R7 200 as a measure that most people need to survive monthly.

"The LSM marketing segmentation research tool is used in South Africa to divide the population into groups where ten is the highest level, for those with the most wealth, and one is the lowest level – the poorest population who own no measurable wealth.

"Many people in South Africa are working but are poor because they earn too little or are doing part-time work where they are exploited. We need to open this debate around the minimum wage," he said.

### **Metrolink: Tram Strikes Resume After Pay Talks Break Down**

*United Kingdom.* As reported by the BBC.

The Metrolink union has reversed its decision to call off tram driver strikes in Manchester after pay talks broke down. A fresh strike was now planned for 10 October, the day of the Manchester Marathon, and described the pay offer as poor.

Keolis/Amey said it was disappointed with **Unite** and had put "robust contingency plans in place." Last week, the union said it would be recommending its members accept what it described as a "greatly improved pay offer."

However, it changed its mind after further talks with bosses and said negotiations "broke up when the contractor Keolis/Amey refused to improve" its offer.

Regional officer Dave Roberts said: "The tram contractor, Keolis/Amey, can avoid disruption to the Manchester Marathon and our city's other big sporting events by tabling a respectful and decent pay offer."

Unite has also announced strikes for Friday 15 October and Monday 18 October, and a further strike on Sunday 24 October, when Manchester United will play Liverpool at Old Trafford. About 300 tram drivers and supervisors had originally been offered a 1 per cent pay rise over 15 months.

Guillaume Chanussot, Managing Director at Keolis/Amey Metrolink, said, "I'm disappointed that Unite has returned to talks only to demand yet another increase to the already greatly improved, inflation-protected offer we made on Monday 20 September. This offer was being recommended for acceptance by Unite to their members only a few days ago. I still hope that we can reach a resolution which avoids damaging strike action.

"Our focus now shifts to doing all we can to put robust contingency plans in place to ensure as many customers as possible can continue to make their journeys in the event of strike action."

### **UFCW and RWDSU Wins National Agreement for Several US Meatpacking Workers**

*United States.* As reported by IUF.

The **UFCW** and **RWDSU** reports on a new national agreement between IUF affiliates UFCW & RWDSU and Tyson Foods, the meat and poultry processing giant, includes the first national paid sick leave agreement for US meatpacking workers as well as a vaccine mandate that applies to the 120,000 U.S.-based employees of Tyson.



*The industrial action will hit the Manchester marathon (Transport for Greater Manchester)*



(IUF.org)

In early 2021, UFCW launched a national vaccine campaign, hosting community vaccine clinics in California, Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, and many other states to help essential workers get vaccinated and protect their families.

The UFCW organized digital vaccine education town halls with Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical advisor to the US President, as well as health experts from other leading agencies, to answer questions from workers hesitant about the vaccine with a focus on Latino and African-American workers who have been among the hardest hit by COVID-19.

- Tyson workers will be able to earn up to 20 hours of paid sick leave as an outcome of the union's negotiations
- The UFCW and RWDSU are calling for similar paid sick leave policies for all companies across the industry to ensure that more frontline workers can access the vaccine without fear of losing pay
- Under this agreement, the Tyson vaccine mandate will include exemptions on medical and religious grounds and includes other protections

In announcing the deal, UFCW International President Marc Perrone stated, "Vaccine mandates, like all COVID workplace safety policies, must be negotiated with workers to build the trust and strong consensus needed for these safeguards to be effective. This historic agreement helps to ensure policies like paid leave are not just helping us increase vaccinations during the pandemic, but are also permanent improvements that strengthen these jobs and protect these workers for years to come."

### **Nabisco Workers Return to Their Jobs Following 5-Week Strike**

*United States.* As reported by Huffington Post.

The workers who make and distribute Oreo cookies, Ritz crackers and other Nabisco snacks are back to work following a five-week strike that brought national attention to the working conditions inside their plants.

The work stoppage involved nearly 1,000 employees at sites in Portland, Oregon; Aurora, Colorado; Chicago; Richmond, Virginia; and Norcross, Georgia. They were resisting an attempt by Mondelez International, the company that owns Nabisco, to end some of their overtime pay premiums and put newer hires on a more expensive health care plan, among other proposed changes.

The **Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco and Grain Millers (BCTGM)** union representing the workers, reached a tentative agreement with the company and members voted 590 to 201 in favor of ratifying it. That breaks down to 75 per cent in favor of the agreement and 25 percent against it, suggesting that a sizable minority wanted to remain on strike and return to the bargaining table with Mondelez.

Mike Burlingham, Vice President of BCTGM Local 364 said the strike succeeded in many ways. Perhaps most significantly, the union resisted the company's attempt to make changes to the health care plan. What Mondelez had proposed is commonly called a two-tier system: Current employees would retain their same high-quality plan, while new hires would pay more in deductibles and premiums.



(AP)

There were other wins in the contract, as well. Mondelez will double its match to workers' 401(k) plans and increase short-term disability payments. Workers will receive a 60-cent-per-hour raise every year of the four-year contract, and receive a \$5,000 ratification bonus for approving the contract.

For Burlingham and other employees in Portland, it was about changes in the agreement regarding scheduling and overtime. "It's because of the verbiage of the weekend crew," Burlingham said. "Many of us feel it's just that foot in the door for an alternative workweek, which was a big thing that we went on

strike for."

Burlingham was referring to a proposal from Mondelez to move to a scheduling system in which some workers would clock in for three 12-hour shifts between Friday and Monday. This was a nonstarter for many members because they had long enjoyed weekend pay premiums that boosted their wages and discouraged the company from scheduling weekend work. Workers received time and a half on Saturday and double time on Sunday.

The two sides ultimately reached a compromise. No current workers would be forced into the three-day weekend shifts, but Mondelez would have the ability to hire new crews to work that schedule without much of a premium (they would work 36 hours and be paid for 40). The amount of work given to these new crews would be limited so that current workers could still get some weekend overtime if they wanted it.

Burlingham said it could be a while before workers see how the company implements the weekend shifts and how the new language affects their jobs. Even though he doesn't like that change, he said workers never would've won what they did had they not taken a stand and garnered so much public support, from Portland locals to actor Danny DeVito.

"For most of us, this was the very first time we've ever gone out on strike before. You don't know what to expect," he said. "More and more people started showing up, holding rallies. It was amazing. It lifted our spirits. It's what helped us go on. We got stronger because of it."



(Vale/USW)

### **Sudbury Miners and Rescue Crews Safely Above Ground**

*Canada.* As reported by USW.

Thirty-five miners trapped deep underground in eastern Canada have been brought to the surface, two days after an accident damaged the mine's lift.

The workers at the Totten mine in Sudbury, Ontario climbed about 4,000ft (1.2km) using a series of ladders, with the support of a rescue team.

According to **United Steel Workers** Local 6500, all workers have been evacuated from the Totten Mine, outside of Sudbury, following the incident that affected the shaft and mine cage (elevator) that transports workers into and out of the mine. All rescue crew members made it up safely to the surface, ending a two-and-a-half-day mission.

"We are immensely grateful for the tireless work of the rescue crews who helped bring everyone up safely," said Nick Larochelle, United Steelworkers union (USW) Local 6500 president, representing 30 of the 39 workers who were stuck underground. "In Sudbury, we have some of the best rescue crews in the entire world – workers who voluntarily train on an ongoing basis, in case an emergency like this ever happens. Our union and the entire Sudbury community thanks them for their service."

Many of the rescue crew members made four trips per shift, carrying heavy packs of supplies to ensure miners had any necessities during the ordeal. As miners and rescue crew members emerged, they were checked by medical staff and will be screened again in the coming days.

"Unions have made important advances in mining safety over decades, which is part of why miners found safety underground and were able to be brought to the surface safely," said Marty Warren, USW District 6 (Ontario and Atlantic) Director.

"When something like this happens, our heart stops for a moment – not just in Sudbury but in mining communities across the country and around the world," said Warren. "Mining is much safer than it once was. This work builds entire northern communities, but miners take a great deal of risk every time they go underground. We must never forget that."

The union expresses its appreciation to the miners, their families, the mine rescue crew members, Ontario Mine Rescue (OMR), the community of Sudbury and members of the media who shared stories of the mine rescue.

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