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NEW ZEALAND LABOUR NEWS

Lyttelton Port and Waterfront Unions Sign High Performance High Engagement Charter

In a historic agreement, Lyttelton Port Company (LPC) and waterfront labour unions signed a Charter 29 October introducing the High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) model to the Port.

The **Maritime Union of New Zealand** (MUNZ), the **Rail and Maritime Transport Union** (RMTU) and the **Amalgamated Workers' Union of New Zealand** (AWUNZ) represent 95% of LPC's collectivised workforce.

The Charter jointly commits LPC and the unions representing LPC employees to each other's success and the development and fostering of a safe, cooperative and inclusive culture. It lays out shared aims and outcomes for Lyttelton Port and its workers, and specifies decision-making and engagement protocols for HPHE processes.



The Charter was signed on 29 October in the LPC Boardroom by LPC and The three unions (LPC)

members and the Port."

Roger Gray, LPC's CEO, welcomed the agreement, saying, "LPC is committed to creating a more cooperative and positive workplace, and to giving our unions a genuine voice. The history of the Port has been one of industrial conflict, but we want to move forward to create an environment of mutual respect and problem-solving based on an understanding of each other's interests."

"We entered into the process to discuss HPHE with some trepidation," said Gerard Loader, President of MUNZ Local 43 (Lyttelton Branch). "However, as we learnt more about HPHE and what it involves, we can see that it is necessary for MUNZ to be involved to help deliver key priorities for our

"MUNZ Local 43's priorities include security of employment and superior conditions for our members, facilitating LPC's role as the crucial link in the Canterbury and wider South Island economy, better consultation enabling improved productivity and leading safety standards, and helping to keep Lyttelton Port in the ownership of the ratepayers of Christchurch, which benefits everyone in the region.

Heiner Benecke, RMTU Lyttelton Branch Secretary called the Charter "a landmark in industrial relations"

which "lays the foundation for a new way of doing things at Lyttelton that is based on cooperation and mutual respect. It is a marked departure from the very entrenched adversarial approach that has been the hallmark of the relationship between LPC and the waterfront unions for many years."

Errol Walker, LPC AWUNZ Delegate, said, "We look forward to contributing to HPHE with the common aim in place of achieving a more profitable and sustainable company, a safer and healthier work environment, security of employment, and improved wages and conditions."

PSA Welcomes New Ministry for The Disabled

PSA Te Pukenga Here Tikanga Mahi welcomes the creation of the Ministry for Disabled People. The **Public Services Association** represents over 9000 care and support workers who work closely to support disabled people."

PSA Assistant Secretary Melissa Woolley said, "The catch cry of the disabled community - *nothing about us, without us* - has borne fruit today, with the announcement of the development of a Ministry governed by disabled people and whanau-led.

It is the result of good engagement with the disabled community and the workers who support them, and a recognition of disabled people's rights. The PSA supports the Enabling Good Lives principles.

To support lasting change, substantial investment into the disability sector is crucial. It is a sector that has always been massively underfunded. To create a genuinely transformed disability system for Aotearoa NZ, the current and future workforce should participate in the design of services, to ensure delivery of high-quality services that enable good lives for disabled people, workers and communities."

COVID-19: FIRST Union and E tu Repay Wage Subsidy

Two of New Zealand's biggest unions, E tu and First Union, have repaid a total of \$1.6 million in wage subsidies.

The Government has paid a total of \$17.5 billion in COVID-19 since the pandemic hit in March 2020, of which \$761m has been repaid. The scheme aimed to keep businesses afloat and employees in work, but there has been criticism of companies that claimed the support and were subsequently profitable.



(E tu)

E tu has repaid \$984,005 and First Union has repaid \$617,145, the total wage subsidy claimed by the unions. Both made the repayments voluntarily because their circumstances had changed since applying, according to the Ministry of Social Development.

E tu had 55,000 members across industries, a lot of them in aviation, and "just got hammered when COVID-19 hit," said E tu National Secretary Bill Newson. "We lost a lot of money and a lot of members, we haven't regrown and got the money back," he said.

To be eligible for the 2020 wage subsidy, the applicant's actual or predicted revenue had to decline at least 30 per cent over a month or 30 days compared with the same period a year earlier.

The union is funded by membership fees it receives monthly or bi-monthly, and due to the timing of income its biggest losses came after the estimated period. The union arranged an audit, which found the money lost in the period did not hit 30 per cent. "We paid it back not because we've done better, but largely because it was outside the timeframe," Newson said.

First Union also lost members, but not as many as feared, said General Secretary Dennis Maga. "Given our normal growth, we would have expected to achieve a target of 30,000 members by the present date,



Health Minister Andrew Little and Disability Issues Minister Carmel Sepuloni announced the new Ministry 29 October (Newshub)

but due to some closures and redundancies, we're currently sitting at around 29,000 members. This is much better than we had initially expected."

First Union chose to pay back the wage subsidy because it wanted to show it was a good employer. "Staff have all been paid 100 per cent of wages throughout the various periods of lockdown, and we think paying back the wage subsidy is the right thing to do – businesses should do the same as soon as they're able to," said Maga.

However, another prominent union, **Unite**, says it's not in a position to pay back the subsidy. Unite Union was struggling and not in a position to repay the \$144,792 wage subsidy it received for 21 employees, said Assistant Secretary Gerard Hehir.

The union, whose members worked mainly in hospitality, had cut staff hours by 22 per cent through redundancy and by not replacing vacant positions. Further cuts were possible, Hehir added.



(First Union)

"Coupled with lower new recruitment at nearly all employers and uncertainty leading to lower staffing levels overall, our membership has dropped by over 1500 members since the beginning of 2020, a 23 per cent reduction in raw numbers.

"The wage subsidy was essential for us to cope during the first Level 4 lockdown and aftermath, but the ongoing restructurings and intermittent restrictions since then have prevented any significant recovery to date.

"So the wage subsidy has been very much needed last year and Unite, like many businesses in the hospitality sector, is very much still trying to maintain viability in difficult circumstances," Hehir said.

The Post-Primary Teachers' Association, the secondary school teachers' union, did not suffer a significant cut in income and had not claimed the wage subsidy, said General Secretary Michael Stevenson.

The Police Association has repaid the \$370,000 in wage subsidy it received after the level 4 lockdown began in 2020. When the country moved to level 2 the association became aware its losses fell short of the requirement, and immediately repaid the amount, a spokeswoman said.



NZNO Urges Booster for Frontline Workers

The **New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO)** wants a programme of COVID-19 booster shots for frontline workers and vulnerable populations put in place as soon as possible.

NZNO Industrial Services Manager Glenda Alexander said the first vaccinations started more than six months ago, and people receiving those early shots may now have waning immunisation.

"They're still much better protected than the unvaccinated, but recent infections among presumably vaccinated health workers confirms that this is a significant health and safety issue – and one for which we could reduce risk."

Alexander said while NZNO is fully behind the Government's robust approach to vaccination and wants to see all its members vaccinated, frontline workers should be prioritised for the boosters.

She agreed with Director General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield who said that boosters showed a good response in helping lift people's immunity and in reducing hospitalisations and serious illness, but "waning immunisation after six months is a health and safety issue we can and should address with our frontline workers and vulnerable communities as soon as we possibly can."

Early Childhood Educators Call For Pay Parity

Early childhood educators (ECE) took to the streets last 7 November, supported by a small group of Southland teachers and parents, as part of the union's National Day of Action for pay parity.

There is a chronic shortage of trained teachers in centres around the country, driven by the pay gap of up to 52% between ECE teachers and their school and kindergarten colleagues who have the same skills, qualifications and responsibilities.

"It's time that people who've gone and got a degree and are doing the same job should get the same pay," said **NZEI Te Riu Roa** union member Karyn Flett. "We need to make sure people know, and that Government hears us."

Minister of Education Chris Hipkins committed \$170 million to deliver pay for early childhood teachers, but once details of the pay parity scheme were announced in September, the union said it did not cover all educators.

Education Institute president Liam Rutherford said at least 5300 teachers were excluded from the plan, based on their pay scale. Employers must opt into the scheme, and only 62 per cent of early childhood centres in New Zealand have done so.



7 November National
#Loud4ECE protest (Stuff)

In a letter to Minister Hipkins, the teachers called on the Government to "finish the job and fully fund pay parity in Budget 2022," saying, "slow progress on pay parity, a chronic shortage of trained teachers and a lack of investment in our services means our children are being short-changed in the fundamental early years of their life."

Early childhood matters to us. Our teachers are skilled people who need the right conditions to be able to provide the best environment they can for our young learners."

Kaitia Rest Home Workers: "Our employer's not listening"

Workers at Claud Switzer Rest Home in Kaitia are striking again over proposed pay cuts to their allowances and other problematic clauses in their new collective agreement.

E tu members at the rural Northland town's sole rest home have been in negotiations since May, and in desperation for their employer to listen, took a strike action Saturday 30 October.

The employer wants to cut or reduce members' allowances and other benefits, notably reducing pay for weekend work, removing workers' job security with a force majeure clause, and other changes to their conditions of employment.



(E tu)

Management also circulated documents to workers that threaten possible redundancies and a decrease in the number of beds, due to an implied lack of building and refurbishment funds if workers don't accept the new collective agreement.

Longtime worker at Claud Switzer and E tu member Kam Wijohn, who only works weekends so she can care for her grandchildren during the week, said, "We feel that our employer isn't listening to how we're feeling."

E tu organiser Annie Tohill says the proposed agreement will only exacerbate the short staffing situation in the home and increase turnover. "Staff turnover is already increasing, rosters issued are full of gaps, and staff levels on the weekends are becoming unsafe. Staff morale is very low."

Tohill said the employer has not acted well during the negotiation process, including shifting the goalposts by going back on their word to make additions that hadn't been previously discussed.

Members will continue to take action until they reach a fair agreement, she said Tothill, saying, "The positive support and response they've received from the community only reinforce their commitment to stand together for decent pay and conditions, which are so badly needed in the aged care sector."

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR NEWS

Historic Win For Farm Workers Union in New York

United States, New York. As reported by IUF.org.

Agricultural workers employed at Pindar Vineyards in Peconic, New York, USA have made history with the registration of the first agricultural workers union in New York State, IUF Affiliate **RWDSU/UFCW Local 338**.

New union member Rodolfo M. explained why he and his coworkers organised: "My coworkers at Pindar and I joined Local 338 because we want dignity and respect. Our work should be valued and only by receiving equal treatment and things like sick days and paid time off to spend with our loved ones will it be. We know that being a union member will help us get the recognition we deserve for all of our efforts."



(IUF.org)

* In 1935, the United States passed the *National Labor Relations Act (NLRA)* which officially excluded agricultural workers from labour rights protections.

* For decades agricultural workers were deprived of many basic workplace protections before New York State passed The Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act in 2019 which grants agricultural workers the right to organise and bargain collectively.

* The IUF recently released a report which emphasises the ongoing importance of ILO Convention 11 for the right to organise for agricultural workers globally.

John Durso, President of RWDSU/UFCW Local 338, stated, "We are incredibly proud to represent the workers at Pindar Vineyards and are looking forward to securing a strong collective bargaining agreement."

Ontario Federation of Labour Re-elects Officers

Canada, Ontario. As reported by the Ontario Federation of Labour.

Delegates at the **Ontario Federation of Labour's** 16th Biennial Convention re-elected Officers Patty Coates, Ahmad Gaied, and Janice Folk-Dawson with a vision to galvanise Ontario's labour movement in the fight for our future.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is Canada's largest labour federation representing over one million Ontario workers belonging to more than 1,500 locals from 54 affiliated unions.



(Twitter)

Patty Coates, of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), was re-elected as Ontario Federation of Labour President. Coates serves as the first woman President of the OFL. She was first elected to the position in 2019.

"I am honoured to once again be elected as President of the Ontario Federation of Labour. Over the past two years, workers have faced some of the most difficult circumstances of their lifetimes, we have also remained a powerful force through our collective power and solidarity," said Coates. "We are ready to build on our momentum, defend workers' rights, and ensure that no one in Ontario forgets the harm that the Ford government has caused workers since 2018."

Ahmad Gaied was re-elected as Secretary-Treasurer. Gaied is from the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and previously served as OFL Executive Vice-President. He is a dedicated community advocate who will continue to fight systemic racism and mobilise and support workers from equity-seeking groups.

Janice Folk-Dawson, a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), was re-elected as Executive Vice-President. Folk-Dawson is a fierce advocate for workers' health and safety, and disability rights. She will continue to demand greater rights and protections for all workers.

Workers from across Ontario were participating in the OFL's 16th Biennial Convention, held virtually. Delegates are discussing, debating, and strategising to ensure that workers' issues are at the forefront of the 2022 provincial election and beyond.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees and the New Brunswick Government at an Impasse as Strike Moves Continues.

Canada, New Brunswick. As reported by CBS.

Premier Blaine Higgs said Saturday that he was shocked the union didn't accept an offer his government presented last week.

Steve Drost, **CUPE** New Brunswick President, said Sunday the union sent the province a counter-offer on Friday, but has yet to receive a response. Drost said there are no plans for the two sides to meet.

On Friday, the province ordered striking healthcare workers back to work. Those mandated back include more than 2,000 workers in locals 1252, 1190 and 1251, which represent support staff in vaccination clinics and hospitals, and those providing laundry services to hospitals and nursing homes.



(Jacques Poitras/CBS News)

The order only applies to striking workers in the health sector. School staff, jail guards, court stenographers and others on strike are not affected and are continuing strike action. The union's lawyers are looking into how they could challenge the order, Drost said Saturday.

The most recent offer from the union seeks a wage increase of two per cent per year, plus an additional 25 cents per hour per year for the first three years, and 50 cents per hour for the fourth and fifth years.

The province's most recent offer includes the same two per cent increase each year, plus an increase of 25 cents per hour in each of the five years. There is also a demand that some locals concede to pension changes.

The province's newest offer says a review must be conducted on the pension plans for Locals 1253 and 2745 — the only CUPE locals not part of the existing shared-risk plan.

The province was previously explicit about its desire to convert the locals to shared-risk, but the new offer would leave it up to independent actuaries to decide what "a new retirement vehicle" would be.

Both the province and the union agree that casuals should have wages increased to 100 per cent of the applicable regular rate of pay, up from the current 80 per cent.

Because of the labour dispute, all schools across the province will continue with at-home learning Monday for the second week in a row.

Victory for Staff at Five London Colleges Over Pay and Condition

England, London. As reported by UCU.

Staff at five London colleges have won improved pay offers from employers after taking strike action.



(ucu.org.uk)

University and College Union (UCU) members at Croydon College overwhelmingly voted to accept a deal on pay and conditions. Members had previously taken seven days of strike action.

The deal includes a backdated 2 per cent pay increase for all staff and 5 per cent for lower-paid members in learning support roles and a minimum salary for qualified teachers of around £30k. There are additional commitments around workload protection, a four week summer leave period and simplified pay progression.

South Thames Colleges Group, which includes South Thames, Merton, Kingston and Carshalton colleges, has offered a pay rise for all staff, which for staff on under £23k includes an increase of over 2.25 per cent. The offer also includes a commitment to review and level up terms & conditions across the group including lecturers' contact hours and holiday arrangements, as well as a new pay and grading structure. UCU members in the colleges are voting on whether to accept the offer in a ballot that closes on Monday 8 November. Members had previously taken a day of strike action.

In July, fifteen colleges had voted for strike action over pay demands. The latest offers mean ten of the colleges have now received improved pay offers, as staff at City College Plymouth, New College Swindon, City of Bristol, Sheffield and Weymouth colleges had previously reached deals with employers since voting to strike, but without needing to take action.

The dispute with Capital City College Group remains unresolved. The employer has seen ten days of strike action and facing a further ballot as members of the National Education Union at the college vote on whether to join UCU members in taking industrial action.

UCU General Secretary Jo Grady said, "This is a fantastic win for all our members at Croydon, Carshalton, Kingston, Merton, and South Thames colleges. By taking industrial action they have won long overdue improvements to their pay and terms and conditions, which will particularly benefit lower paid staff."

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