

# The Northern News

CONFIDENTIAL INTERNAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN AMALGAMATED WORKERS UNION

## SUPER CITY

After months of pressing the Transition Agency to deal with this Union's issues and not the PSA issues; all of our members transferred to the new Council with no changes to their Terms and Conditions of Employment. This was no mean feat considering the pro PSA attitude of some involved. Apart from that, I believe we can create a fair working relationship with the Auckland Council.

## ACC Proposed Changes

ACC is planning to change the design of their Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Currently ACC contracts out Vocational Rehab Services to 500 VOC Rehab providers who provided services to 29,000 injured people last year.

### ACC's Proposed Changes to Vocational Rehab include;

- The introduction of a new screening process where ACC Claimants are assessed and allocated to a low, medium or high complexity stream.
- Once the complexity of the Claimant's injury is assessed they will be allocated to a fixed price 'band' of services provided by the Vocational Rehab provider.
- Previously VOC Rehab Providers were paid on a fee for service basis so the cost of returning a person to work would vary depending on the number and types of services they needed. Under the proposed system, Providers will be paid a set amount based on the band the Claimant is assigned to.

### This could lead to;

- A greater emphasis on fast return to work over safe sustainable returns to work for injured people.
- Greater pressure on VOC Rehab providers to meet KPI's which may return people back to work before they can safely do so.
- System may pigeon hole Claimant's injury into bands which may be inflexible in terms of treatment needs.
- Vocational Rehab Providers will compete with each other on who will do more for less ultimately disadvantaging the injured person.

## IT'S YOUR CHOICE, IT'S YOUR RIGHT

All Employees must realise it is their choice and right to join a Union, just as Employers have EMA, the Employers Manufacturers Association (their Union). This is the opportunity to improve your wages and conditions in your workplace. There is nothing to fear from Employers. It is your right as stated in the Employment Relations Act. "Freedom of Association", this means that Employees have the freedom to choose whether or not to be a member of a Union. Some Employers believe that with this Government, they have the right to veto your rights.

For advancing the purpose of seeking a Collective Agreement, no person eg the Employer; in relation to employment issues, may approach Employees about their preference or apply any undue influence directly or indirectly on any other person, because the other person is or is not a member of a Union. We believe fear amongst Workers is very real. Don't be frightened because there is nothing to fear. ***Be strong and take a stand, we can help you.***

# PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL

Earlier this year, National MP Raymond Henare (now known as Tau) introduced a Private Member's Bill to require Unions to run secret ballots for strike action. At the time, the Council of Trade Unions gave its 'support in principle' to the Bill, since it "reflected current practice". This was a grave error.

Predictably, the moderate-sounding wording of the original has been amended by the Select Committee, so now Employers could challenge strike ballots with injunctions. Now the CTU have come out against the Bill. Didn't the 90-Day "Sack at Will" law, brought in by Henare's party, give them a clue about the Government's intentions with regards to Employment laws? Is it really surprising that a Bill proposing further restrictions on Unions wouldn't also include the right of Employers to challenge the process? Workers ought to be free to determine what form of democratic decision-making they adopt, without meddling from the State. Even if the Bill "reflected current practice", better that the Law stays silent on the matter than give the Bosses an opportunity to undermine our collective decision making.

Unions are already among the most democratically run organisations in New Zealand. For instance, our Union cannot put our fees up without the members voting for it at an AGM. *Imagine the Power Companies giving you a vote on any price increase!* This is not about Democracy. This is all about giving Employers more control over Workers, and that is why we must oppose this latest 'kick in the guts' from the Government.

# National & The Hobbit Films

In the latter part of 2010 we saw Prime Minister John Key step in to save the Hobbits. The films will now be made in New Zealand but every man, woman and child will pay for it via the tax concessions given to the film makers over and above the existing tax credits. No doubt Sir Peter Jackson will now be able to afford to fly his personal jet and we will all get a free concession ticket to go and see the movies - yeah right!

You may recall this dispute started with a Union seeking to negotiate a Collective Agreement and the Employer stonewalling that Union, despite the provisions of the law. So clearly the Hobbits receive more protection than Workers. Overseas film makers get more protection than workers and National is the party to protect the rich and famous, rather than New Zealand workers.

# REDUNDANCIES AT TAUPO DISTRICT COUNCIL

We have just been advised by Taupo District Council of their decision to invite ALL employees to consider applying for voluntary redundancy. From discussions with this Council, who were once considered to be one of the richest in New Zealand, it would seem that the predicted growth did not happen and that they could, if they do nothing be looking at up to a 17% increase in rates.

They currently employ some 440 people made up of casual, part-time and full-time workers or 340 permanent full time workers. They are looking to cut some \$2m from the wages bill or 10% of the full time workforce. However the Council are reserving the right to pick and choose who gets accepted for voluntary redundancy. It is anticipated that those close to or over the age of entitlement to National Superannuation will not be accepted. Applicants will know by 18 December if they were successful. The second phase is due to start early 2011.

# Just A Reminder

As was determined at our Stop Work Meetings, the current Union fee of \$7 will remain unchanged for at least another year and as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2011 the Koha on the Death of a Financial Member will increase from \$4,000 to \$6,000 and the Koha on the death of a Financial Member's Spouse / Partner or Child (up to the age of 16 years of age) will increase from \$2,000 to \$3,000. *Have a good Holiday and watch the kids!*

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