

# WORKERS FIRST

A FIRST Union Publication

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## SUPERMARKET SURVEY SHOWS WOOLWORTHS MUST STEP UP



**As bargaining with Woolworths continues for our largest national agreement, we asked workers what matters most.**

Over 1500 of our supermarket members have contributed to our new survey that shows grocery retail workers are struggling with the high cost of living while dealing with regular incidents of customer abuse in systemically understaffed supermarkets, with a majority paid less than the living wage.

It's especially worrying that over 90% of the supermarket workers who responded to the survey said the store they work in is understaffed, which is a huge contributor to workers' stress and burnout and makes supermarkets much more unsafe workplaces than they should be. These issues are all crucial in present negotiations with Woolworths while we bargain for our largest single collective agreement, representing over 10,000 retail

workers at the chain. Woolworths likes to say that they look after their workers, so we're fighting for a deal where Woolworths puts their money where their mouth is.

Today's situation is exacerbated by the fact that the coalition Government's repeal of Fair Pay Agreement (FPA) legislation last year after being elected has denied workers a collective pathway to negotiate minimum pay and safety standards across the supermarket industry in one national effort. In the past, major negotiations for the full Countdown workforce have set a standard that many of our individual negotiations at Foodstuffs sites work towards, but a recent RNZ comparison of pay across the supermarket and grocery retail sector shows Woolworths is no longer the market leader on pay, with FIRST's Auckland-based Costco members earning more than the current living wage and some strongly unionised Foodstuffs stores (e.g. Pak 'N' Save Kilbirnie, Lincoln Road) now paying higher starting wages for new staff than Woolworths.

While bargaining between FIRST Union and Woolworths is ongoing, we are concerned that so far, Woolworths is not taking our members' concerns around pay and staffing seriously enough and this may result in an industrial dispute.



### WHAT SUPERMARKET WORKERS TOLD US:

- Over 90% of respondents said the store they work in is understaffed, either "sometimes" (36.2%), "regularly" (30%), or "continuously" (24.7%). 39% of workers identified understaffing as the "single most important workplace issue for supermarket workers"; the most popular response to this question.
- 69% have considered leaving their workplace over the last two years. The most common reason for considering leaving was to look for another job in a different industry (56.8%); 22.5% had considered another job at a different supermarket; more than a quarter had considered emigrating to Australia or another country.
- Nearly three-quarters said that their wages were not sufficient to cover their regular living expenses, and 61.9% felt that their wage increases over the last two years had not kept pace with the rising cost of living.
- Only 21% said that if they received an unexpected \$500 expense tomorrow, they could pay it. 53.7% said they could not, and 25.3% said they were unsure.

TO READ THE FULL SURVEY, VISIT:  
[shorturl.at/lfj1y](https://shorturl.at/lfj1y)

### Survey information:

In May 2024, we circulated an online survey to over 9000 supermarket worker members via SurveyMonkey, with 1,514 respondents over a two-week period. No questions were mandatory. 14 of the 16 questions received responses by more than 98% of survey participants. 90.1% of respondents were from a Countdown or Woolworths supermarket.

## UNDERFUNDED, UNDERPAID, LEFT IN LIMBO



St John ambulance officers were left out in May's Budget 2024 and are in the process of escalating industrial action amid silence and evasion from Government figures who previously campaigned on fixing the ambulance service.

FIRST Union delegates have been bargaining with St John since December last year and enduring a game of 'pass the buck' between the partially charity-funded ambulance service and the Government, but despite a coalition agreement pledge between National and

NZ First to "renegotiate the Crown funding agreement with St John with a view to meet a greater portion of their budget," the actual Budget 2024/25 came and went without a whisper more about it.

Shane Reti, now Minister of Health, who went on ill-advised "fact-finding" missions with St John ambulance officers last year before the election (and was reprimanded for it by health officials), has been absent from the discussion throughout. New Zealand First do not seem disappointed to have failed to secure fulfilment of a key coalition pledge. Prime Minister Chris Luxon has made misleading claims that St John doesn't actually want to be 100% Government-funded, and ambulance officers have been left scratching their heads.

FIRST Union members voted for a "media strike" around the Budget to make their concerns heard publicly - an industrial action where union members legally and knowingly break restrictive clauses in their Collective Agreement to speak about the reality of their workplace or industry. FIRST Union delegate and ambulance officer Tom Bannan told TVNZ that the service was in a worse state than he had seen in his 36 years working with St John, and others are now speaking out about the

disappointment of being unable to provide an adequate service to New Zealanders when we need it most.

Industrial action is currently ramping up - ambulance officers are wearing strike badges (pictured) in place of name plates, chalking ambulances with messages, and taking procedural strike actions behind the scenes that will effectively remind St John that there are major issues nationally not just with pay, but staffing levels and recruitment, safety and wellbeing on the road, and emergency response times that meet public expectations.

With migration at a record high in the year to May, ambulance officers say the pull towards Australia is stronger than ever, where a National Award and oversight through the Fair Work Ombudsman means higher minimum pay and much fairer penalty and overtime rates. We can't afford to continue losing experienced ambulance officers as well as new graduates to the industry due to St John's low wages and mismanagement in Aotearoa - for someone, it will be a matter of life and death.



WORKERS FIRST  
**FIRST  
UNION**

# ACROSS THE MOTU



**May Day protest**  
Auckland



**Picket at  
Jaychem Ltd**  
Auckland



**Striking workers at  
Baxter Healthcare**  
Auckland



**May Day protest**  
Wellington



**St John  
members on  
strike**



## VACANCIES

FIRST UNION CURRENTLY HAS VACANCIES IF YOU WISH TO BECOME PART OF FIRST UNION'S GOVERNANCE BODY.

Once elected, the term will be until November 2025. The deadline for submissions is 18 August 2024. Please email: [Jo.Wilson@firstunion.org.nz](mailto:Jo.Wilson@firstunion.org.nz) to register your interest.

- National Executive representative for **TRANSPORT, LOGISTICS AND MANUFACTURING** Central region
- National Executive representative for **RETAIL, FINANCE AND COMMERCE** Northern Region

**THE  
VACANT  
POSITIONS  
ARE:**

## WHO'S THE UNSUNG HERO IN YOUR WORKPLACE?



## DELEGATE DELEGATE OF THE YEAR 2024

We're calling for your nominations for Delegate of the Year, 2023/24!

**LET US KNOW BEFORE 18 AUGUST 2024** by emailing [Simon.Hartman@firstunion.org.nz](mailto:Simon.Hartman@firstunion.org.nz) and tell us a little bit about your Delegate of the Year to enter them in the running for the recognition they deserve!

Info: Please provide as much information as possible about your Delegate of the Year's achievements and accomplishments, such as those related to recruitment, leading industrial action, bargaining, supporting in disputes, or other forms of solidarity. You should focus on work-related issues explicitly to explain why you've nominated this person. Supporting material such as photographs, newspaper clips, and links to blogs/websites are welcomed.



# Delegate forums 2024

## WORKERS FIRST FIRST UNION

We're inviting FIRST Union delegates from all industries to your local forums for 2024, where we will discuss and vote on important issues related to our workplaces, our union and our collective future.

Please see the dates below and come along to your local meeting.

**Please note: these forums are for FIRST Union delegates only**

DATE (2024)	REGION	VENUE
Tue 23 July	GISBORNE	<b>GISBORNE COSMOPOLITAN CLUB</b> 190 Derby Street, Gisborne
Wed 24 July	NAPIER	<b>TARADALE CLUB</b> 55 Wharerangi Road, Greenmeadows, Napier
Tue 30 July	TAURANGA	<b>TRINITY WHARF</b> 51 Drive Crescent (City) – Pool House 1 & 11
Wed 31 July	NEW PLYMOUTH	<b>PUKEKURA FUNCTION CENTRE</b> New Plymouth Raceway, Rogan Street, New Plymouth
Wed 31 July	ROTORUA	<b>RIPPLE ROTORUA</b> (formerly Braeside), 4 Barnard Rd, Rotorua
Thu 1 August	HAMILTON	<b>TE RAPA RACECOURSE</b> 12 Sir Tristram Avenue, Te Rapa, Hamilton – Lodge Lounge, Level 3
Tue 6 August	KAITAIA	<b>FAR NORTH RSA</b> 12 Matthews Ave, Kaitaia
Thu 8 August	WHANGAREI	<b>DISTINCTION HOTEL</b> 9 Riverside Drive, Whangarei – Marina Room
Tue 13 August	AKL WEST	<b>NETBALL WAITAKERE</b> Te Pai Place, Henderson, Auckland – Kowhai Room
Wed 14 August	AKL NORTH SHORE	<b>KINGS LOUNGE</b> Argus Place, Wairau Valley, Auckland
Thu 15 August	AKL EAST	<b>ST COLUMBA CHURCH</b> Botany, Auckland – Lower lounge
Tue 27 August	AKL CENTRAL	<b>ROYAL OAK BOWLING CLUB</b> 146 Selwyn Street, Onehunga, Auckland
Wed 28 August	AKL SOUTH 1 (TRANSPORT, LOGISTICS, MANUFACTURING SECTORS)	<b>PULMAN ARENA FUNCTION ROOM</b> Bruce Pulman Park, 90 Walters Road, Takanini, Auckland
Thu 29 August	AKL SOUTH 2 (RETAIL, FINANCE SECTORS)	<b>PULMAN ARENA FUNCTION ROOM</b> Bruce Pulman Park, 90 Walters Road, Takanini, Auckland
Tue 3 September	NELSON	<b>CLUB WAIMEA</b> 345 Lower Queen Street, Richmond
Thu 5 September	PALMERSTON NORTH	<b>AWAPUNI FUNCTION CENTRE</b> 67 Racecourse Road, Awapuni, Palmerston North
Thu 5 September	CHRISTCHURCH	<b>RICCARTON PARK</b> 165 Racecourse Road, Sockburn, Christchurch – The Tea House
Tue 10 September	WELLINGTON	<b>TOITU PONEKE COMMUNITY &amp; SPORTS CENTRE - THEHUB</b> 49 Kilbirnie Crescent, Kilbirnie, Wellington
Wed 11 September	HUTT VALLEY	<b>THE DOWSE ART MUSEUM</b> 45 Laings Road, Hutt Central, Lower Hutt
Wed 11 September	DUNEDIN	<b>THE VICTORIA HOTEL</b> 137 Saint Andrew Street, Central Dunedin, Dunedin
Thu 12 September	INVERCARGILL	<b>ASCOT PARK</b> Corner of Tay Street &, Racecourse Road, Invercargill – Takitimu Room



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Bill Bradford



Less than three years ago, FIRST Union was part of a group that was announcing its collective recommendations on the former Government's 'Better Protections for Contractors' review; the result of a tripartite effort between unions, business representatives and Government to identify ways to fix our broken contracting model and make better legislation for the future. The group recognised that contractors are vulnerable to misclassification by employers and lack both the protections offered to permanent employees and the power to effectively negotiate in their best interests. Everyone knew there was a problem that needed fixing.

Fast forward to 2024, and we're now watching the ACT Party stage a new, expedited consultation on a potential law change to make it even easier for bad employers to misclassify permanent workers as contractors, and remove their right to challenge that employment status in court. FIRST Union has been informed that we won't be invited to contribute this time (instead, we're encouraged to make our views heard via the Council of Trade Unions, who collectively represent the unions of over three hundred thousand people and now have the near-impossible task of combining the feedback of so many distinct groups of negatively-impacted workers into a single coherent argument).

Perhaps all of this comes back to those four Uber drivers, who took a case against the corporation to the Employment Relations Authority (ERA) in 2021 because they knew they were being misclassified as contractors in the deceptive gig economy. They had no control over their "business" as contractors and were labouring at Uber's direction at all times; dependent on them for work and bound to their schedules and policies. The ERA agreed, ruling in the drivers' favour and potentially opening the door for many other misclassified workers to pursue their day in court or claim back-pay for years of injustice. Inevitably, Uber appealed the verdict, and their argument has now been heard in the Court of Appeal - we await the verdict any day now.

Meanwhile, Minister Brook Van Velden has already met with Uber about her potential law changes. She met with them on May 1st this year - yes, May Day - when thousands of you were out in the streets, protesting this Government's anti-worker agenda and celebrating what we've built through collective struggle. While we were marching, the Minister was chatting with Uber about how weakening our employment laws could make things easier for them.

You might not be a contractor, but if you're any kind of worker, you may be worried. If your employer decides one day in the future that they'd prefer to "re-employ" you as a contractor, because they can - or as some kind of new "third" classification for workers that a libertarian politician has dreamt up on the fly - you may have no means to challenge it in court. Contractors can legally be paid less than the minimum wage, are not entitled to sick leave or holiday pay, and cannot join a union. Their employment is precarious by definition.

The Minister doesn't want to hear from FIRST Union during the process because she wants these law changes to happen quickly, stealthily, without objection or reflection, like the proverbial bull taking out the china shop with a drone strike.

I encourage you all to take note, start talking to your family, friends and colleagues about this law change, and prepare for a collective response from workers that meets the magnitude of what this Government is trying to do. We can't let this happen in silence.

# AROUND OUR UNION BARGAINING

Here are our news highlights from across FIRST Union since our last issue in April:

- BUS VIOLENCE:** Driver and passenger safety in the bus industry has been back in the news following a fatal attack at Dunedin's central station in May and several recent reports of violence on Auckland's buses. Drivers have repeatedly raised the issue of growing violence around the country, and been disappointed by the national response. Bus drivers need increased security at stops and on buses, and while Auckland Transport have pledged to rapidly install protective security screens on the city's buses, union representatives are now beginning work on a charter for the health and safety of drivers and seeking the support of transport authorities in its development.
- FOODSTUFFS PROGRESS:** Foodstuffs DC members have won a stunning new agreement that includes a roughly 26% pay rise over two years and more - staunch delegates and organisers made this possible. Members at three large Pak'N'Save stores have also secured new agreements that demonstrate progress across the chain: FIRST Union members at Taupo won an important victory after a strike and leafleting campaign that moved the employer's initial offer from a 1-3% pay increase to an average 8.3% increase over two years, alongside additional bereavement leave, gift cards, and more security of hours. At Pak'N'Save Rotorua, members ratified a new deal that included a 4% pay increase, a no pass-on clause for six months, two extra union-only sick days and a \$350 union-only payment. Finally, at Pak'N'Save Royal Oak in Auckland, workers achieved a 4.25% pay increase, with a significant majority of FIRST Union members now earning above the current living wage of \$26 per hour.
- ALLIED LAUNDRY SERVICE:** FIRST Union members at Allied Laundry Services have again negotiated a minimum rate above living wage, with pay increasing from last year's \$26 per hour start rate (the current living wage) and rising to \$27.80 per hour from 1 July, ahead of the new living wage being confirmed in September. This 7% increase on pay and allowances has been driven by a strongly-unionised site, and the agreement includes a 3-month deferment for non-members, who will not receive back-pay.
- BEVCHAIN ERA WIN:** In late June, there was a major victory for almost 70 FIRST Union members in their ERA case against beverage logistics company Bevchain. Bevchain did not pay these workers the redundancy compensation they were entitled to under their Collective Agreement, and FIRST Union filed proceedings. The Authority has now confirmed that the workers were entitled to redundancy compensation and that Bevchain breached their Agreement.

**Leisure**

Crossword No XC250901

**Across:**

1 Arctic plan almost could be workable (9)

6 Bachelor remains for party (4)

9 Horrible beheading initially caught by mobile camera (7)

10 Panesar in form, dismissing Australian opener twice, could be so described (7)

11 Cruel sort makes some progress (4)

12 Debauched renegade went Lawrence (10)

14 They're happy to go downhill fast (6)

15 The French go over to Spain for game (8)

18 Instinctively let in answers (8)

19 Lessons lead to more examinations (6)

22 Untidy woman's a hospital attendant (10)

24 Daily tea (4)

26 Worry about receptacle for gun (7)

27 Pay attention after goalie's beginning to shine (7)

28 Spike is heard from river (4)

29 Morocco nuns' rate for a change (9)

**Down:**

1 Self-important old politician tucked into fresh soup (7)

2 Agreement with one playing instrument (9)

3 Underground pipe (4)

4 Smart company's opening bar (6)

5 Girl entertains star in US city (3,5)

6 Newlywed needs to prepare for her partner (10)

7 Boy with yen to meet a girl (5)

8 Writer is jealous we hear (6)

13 Keep company with awfully tense friar (10)

16 Type of Western food (5)

17 Ignorant solver can't do anything with such a crossword (8)

18 Bring on popular Italian leader (6)

20 Unusual arrangement of garnets (7)

21 Affliction makes British leader delicate (6)

23 Grumpy, certainly, but not rude ultimately (5)

25 Outspoken member of House of Lords gives support (4)

**SOLUTION Across:** 1 practical, 6 bash, 9 macabre, 10 spinner, 11 ego, 12 degenerate, 14 skiers, 15acroise, 18 innately, 19 morals, 22 disorderly, 24 char, 26 carbine, 27 glisten, 28 tyne, 29 satumine.

**DOWN** 1 pompous, 2 accordion, 3 tube, 4 clever, 5 Las Vegas, 6 bridgegroom, 7 Sonya, 8 Greene, 13 fraternal, 16 spaghetti, 17 clueless, 18 induce, 20 strange, 21 blight, 23 surly, 25 pier.