

# WORKERS FIRST

A Workers First Union Publication

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## PAY AND HOURS CUTS FOR THOUSANDS: WOOLWORTHS RESTRUCTURE

**Woolworths members have been shocked and dismayed to learn of an impending restructure of supermarket operations that could negatively affect thousands of our members.**

Woolworths has confirmed a sweeping restructure of supermarkets that will leave thousands of workers worse off, with roles like department managers and duty supervisors facing disestablishment and potential replacement with lower-paid positions. Our union has submitted feedback on the restructure on behalf of members and is arguing that it should not go ahead in its current form.

The restructure, presented as a “customer experience” initiative, is a cost-cutting exercise that will affect more than 4,400 Workers First Union members, with many facing the loss of income, hours, and security. While some workers may benefit from new roles with higher pay, most department managers could lose between \$10,000 and \$17,000 per year in

income. These are members who have spent decades on the shop floor, building skills and careers, only to now have their lives and livelihoods upended due to the company's plans.

In some areas, redeployment into other stores or roles may be possible, but in small towns and remote communities, comparable jobs may not exist. For many, that means being forced to accept downgraded roles on significantly lower pay. At the same time, Woolworths is investing heavily in rebranding and acquiring new land and stores. They can afford to protect wages, but they're choosing not to.

We're calling on Woolworths to protect pay and conditions for current staff in these roles. It's simply not fair or reasonable for

someone with twenty years' experience to absorb a massive pay cut because Woolworths want to reorganise their store operations.

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We are actively supporting members through this process – from consultation to redeployment and redundancy – and we will continue to challenge Woolworths to protect jobs and incomes through the variations process and every legal means available.

## VET NURSES JOIN OUR UNION WITH PAY EQUITY CLAIM

This March, on International Working Women's Day, veterinary nurses who work in private clinics across Aotearoa lodged an historic pay equity claim with the support of Workers First and the Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA). We're pleased to welcome these members into our union and stand alongside them in taking this important step to improve pay and recognition in their profession!

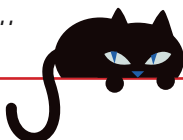
*Veterinary nursing is a skilled and demanding job that requires formal qualifications, ongoing training and significant responsibility...*

Veterinary nursing is a skilled and demanding job that requires formal qualifications, ongoing training and significant responsibility for animal care.

Despite this, many veterinary nurses are paid well below the living wage and face growing workloads, low staffing levels, and high turnover across the industry. Because the profession is made up largely of women, historical assumptions about gender and care work have contributed to low pay and undervaluation. The pay equity claim for veterinary nurses seeks to address this by assessing whether current pay rates fairly reflect the work and skills involved when compared to similar roles.

The pay equity claim is the beginning of a broader effort to secure lasting improvements in the workplace for

veterinary nurses. We're excited to welcome this new group of skilled workers into our union and are committed to supporting vet nurses in creating a fairer and more sustainable future for their industry.





# THIS MAY DAY STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS! 1 MAY 2025

## Whangārei

Tarewa Park  
12.00 – 1.00pm

## Auckland

Manukau Plaza  
12.00 – 1.00pm

## Hamilton

Hamilton Lake Rose Garden  
12.30 – 1.30pm

## Mt Maunganui

Hopukioire Reserve (Mt Drury)  
12.00 – 1.00pm

## New Plymouth

Huatoki Plaza  
12.00 – 1.00pm

## Rotorua

Ranolf & Arawa St Roundabout  
12.00 – 1.00pm

## Palmerston North

Arena 3  
12.30pm – 1.30pm

## Wellington

Queens Wharf  
12.00pm – 1.00pm

## Nelson

1903 Square (Red Square)  
12.30pm – 1.30pm

## Christchurch

Addington Raceway  
12.00pm – 1.00pm

## Dunedin

Museum Reserve  
12.30pm – 1.30pm

## Invercargill

Workingmens Club  
12.30pm – 1.30pm

Join your friends and  
colleagues to resist  
the attack on workers

**E tū tāngata,  
hui me kōrero**

When workers  
rights are  
under attack...

**Stand Up!  
Fight Back!**

**NZCTU**

Te Kauae Kaimahi

workersfirst.nz

**WORKERS  
FIRST  
UNION.**



# NORM HOLLEY, REST IN PEACE

Retired union official Ian McGovern reflects on the life of longtime delegate and former secretary Norm Holley, who passed away in February.

Norm was originally a baker at Home Style Bakery in Whakatane, where he took it on himself to be the delegate. At that time, the Bakers and Pastrycooks Union did not have any full-time organisers, only a retired baker as secretary. When the union decided to have a full-time secretary, I was elected. After 3 years and I had quadrupled the membership, we advertised for an organiser. Norm was the preferred candidate and was appointed.

He had a steady but eventful career. Once, he was arrested at a picket he organised outside La Patisserie in Herne Bay. He rang me from the police station to bail him out (he caused me no end of problems, but I enjoyed every one.)

Members at the group of bakeries he was responsible for thought a lot of him, and he also managed to get more out of employers when negotiating employment agreements, because they just trusted him in his everyday dealings with them. Although we used to discuss each other's jobs and negotiations, we seemed to be a great pair working together, even having different views sometimes, we both had similar beliefs in working for employees. We always bounced ideas off each other and arrived at the best for the members.

When I retired in 2006, Norm became the Secretary, and although we kept in touch occasionally, it was more on a personal basis than his work for the union; and of course he arranged the amalgamation of the Bakers and Pastrycooks Union with FIRST Union.



## SUPPORT OUR AMBOS!

On May 22nd, the Government's Budget 2025 will arrive, and we will be watching closely to see if funding for St John and Wellington Free ambulances will meet the growing needs of the service in order to fund fair pay increases for staff over the four years of the next service agreements. Politicians have promised to increase funding for St John, but we're concerned about the future of the service and the people who work in it, and we must hold those politicians to account.

Please show your support for a fully Government-funded ambulance service by signing our petition at [together.org.nz/full\\_ambulance\\_funding\\_now](https://together.org.nz/full_ambulance_funding_now)!

Our emergency health services are too important to underfund, and we can't afford to lose more skilled ambulance officers to better-paid positions overseas where overwork and understaffing is less of a problem.



## IN BRIEF: SUPPORTING MILL WORKERS



Image source: Marae, TVNZ

In March, Workers First delegate Jude Sinai spoke to TVNZ's Marae about his new role under the umbrella of local iwi Ngāti Rangī in supporting workers who have lost jobs at the Tangiwai and Karioi pulp mills in Ruapehu following their closure by Winstone Pulp International (WPI) last year. The community has struggled following the loss of over 200 jobs, and we're proud that with the assistance of our union, Jude has secured six months' worth of funding to provide crucial pastoral care for mill workers in the community. You can find a full clip of this story on Marae's Facebook page ([facebook.com/maraeofficial](https://facebook.com/maraeofficial)).

The closure of the Ruapehu mills was followed by more redundancies at Oji Fibre's Penrose mill, which announced its closure and the loss of 75 jobs in September. Workers First Union organiser Justin Wallace told media that it was a terrible outcome, driven by high wholesale energy costs and a lack of Government intervention when it matters most.

*...it was a terrible outcome, driven by high wholesale energy costs and a lack of Government intervention when it matters most.*

**PRESIDENT'S COLUMN**

Bill Bradford

**Fighting Back Together:** This May Day – International Workers Day – thousands of workers from many different unions will be attending events across Aotearoa as we demonstrate to the Government that New Zealand's working class will not roll over and accept lower pay, diminished power, and corrupt law-making at the behest of politicians' shady corporate donors and foreign interests. You can expect to see our supermarket workers and bus drivers standing shoulder to shoulder with teachers, nurses, service workers and public servants – we all have a lot to lose, and we're in this together.

Workplace Relations Minister Brooke Van Weldon is a hardcore right wing Act Party MP. She has no time for workers and will bend over backwards to implement any change that make our struggle to make a decent living more difficult if corporate donors or dodgy far right think tanks ask her to.

These ruling class people see workers simply as labour units to be exploited as cheaply as possible and discarded at will. They do not want strong unions or enforceable workers rights. Nothing challenges them more than when we gather in solidarity and demand that we be treated with dignity and respect.

Make it a priority to attend your local May Day events this year. Feel the power and excitement of uniting with other workers to send the Minister and her government a message that we will continue resisting her attacks and fighting for a better country and for a better world.

You can find details for May Day events, times and locations on page 2 of this issue.



The first quarter of 2025 has been a busy and active one for industrial action, with a number of different groups of workers on strike around our union, and one major political issue on the horizon.

- Workers First members at Independent Petroleum Laboratory (IPL), a key fuel testing company owned by Channel Infrastructure, undertook a six-day strike in late March and early April. IPL tests and certifies fuel for airports and petrol stations, playing an important role in New Zealand's fuel supply chain. The strike followed failed mediation over a bonus scheme that excluded union members, which Workers First says breaches the Employment Relations Act.
- Briscoes and Rebel Sport members have launched a "media strike" after rejecting a pay offer that failed to keep pace with inflation. Briscoe Group posted over \$60 million in annual profits last year but has offered workers a "raise" that doesn't even keep pace with inflation, which is an effective wage cut. The strike involves staff speaking out publicly and will continue until a fair deal is reached.
- The Government, led by ACT's Brooke van Velden, is seeking to push through a law that would let employers dock workers' pay for taking any form of so-called "partial strike" action. Workers First Union has slammed the Bill as a deliberate attempt to limit lawful industrial resistance and strip workers of their already limited rights to bargain collectively. The proposed law is dangerously vague and would allow employers to define almost anything as a "partial strike" and punish workers with pay cuts, even when productivity isn't affected. Rather than reducing disruption, this foolish Bill would likely drive more full strike actions and deepen workplace conflict. We submitted to the Parliamentary Select Committee that the Bill breaches international labour standards and must be scrapped in its entirety.

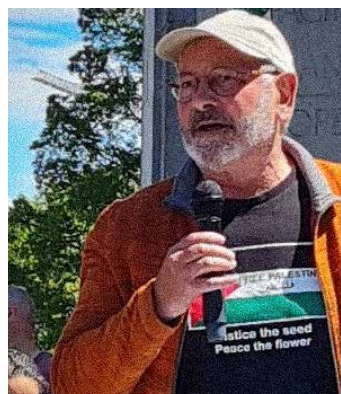
**FAREWELL PAUL WATSON, SOUTHERN REGIONAL SECRETARY!**

After an extraordinary 42-year career in the trade union movement, Paul Watson has retired from his role as Southern Region Secretary of Workers First.

Paul began his organising work in 1983 with the Clothing Workers Union in Ōtautahi, representing apparel workers across Te Waipounamu. He fought against seismic changes in workplace rights, from the Employment Contracts Act in the 1990s to decades of deregulation, always advocating for the rights and wellbeing of working people.

Following the amalgamation of the South Island Clothing Union with the National Distribution Union (NDU) in 1998, Paul was appointed Southern Region Secretary. He also served as Central Region Secretary for three years and played a vital part in shaping the foundation of the original FIRST Union when it was formed in 2011.

Paul has improved wages and conditions for tens of thousands of workers and mentored generations of union leaders and delegates. We want to congratulate Paul on his well-earned retirement – a week before his 70th birthday – and thank him for a lifetime of service.



**FOR UNION MEMBERS ONLY**

**FUNERAL INSURANCE**

**NO HEALTH QUESTIONS, BLOOD TESTS OR MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS**

**FOR TERMS AND CONDITIONS VISIT:**

**WORKERSFIRST.NZ**

**FOR YOU AND FOR YOUR WORKPLACE UNION NOTICEBOARD**

**HOURS OF WORK RIGHTS**

**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

**YOUR RIGHTS ON STRIKE**

**POSTERS WORKERSFIRST.NZ POSTERS**

**MEMBERS AND WHANAU ONLY**

**KIWISAVER**

**LET'S SUPPORT A KIWI PROVIDER, PAY LOW FEES & SUPPORT OUR UNION**

**WORKERSFIRST.NZ**



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