

Work and Wages

New Zealand Workers are Falling Behind

Kiwis are finding it harder to get by because wages aren't keeping pace with the cost of living. Under National the cost of living has gone up by 9% but median household incomes have risen by just 2.5%.

Over the past 20 years workers have delivered more value to businesses for less with productivity rising at more than double the rate of wages. A good day's work no longer means a fair day's pay. A cleaner, caregiver or courier driver can work a 10 hour day, yet barely earn enough to live on. A fitter working for a small engineering firm can do the same job as a fitter in a large company but earn just half the wages.

While some workers are able to negotiate a fair deal, others receive wages and conditions well below the standard for the industry.

A Decent Living Wage

Labour's Work and Wages policy will ensure all New Zealanders receive a decent living wage to stop them from falling further behind. Labour's plan includes:

- A system for extending minimum industry wage and conditions standard agreements (ISAs) in suitable industries.
- An independent Workplace Commissioner in the ERA to agree appropriate ISAs.
- \$15/hour minimum wage.
- Repealing National's 90-day law.
- Mondayising Waitangi Day and ANZAC Day to ensure 11 days of public holidays each year.

Labour's plan includes a new system to achieve fair pay for a fair days work – Industry Standard Agreements.

These agreements allow employers and workers to establish minimum work and wage standards that apply across their industry to ensure that every worker – union and non-union receives a fair deal.

Other countries, including Australia, have had industry standards for years. Far from hurting businesses, they've actually helped them grow, increased incomes, and created more jobs.

The process for setting these standards is straightforward, fair and will take account of the needs and expectations of both workers and employers. It will ensure that unfair and unrealistic standards won't be enforced. Workers will not be able to strike over these Industry Standards and nor will they have to join a union.

The policy recognises that each industry is in different circumstances and allows different minimum standards for different industries. Standards shouldn't be set by the lowest common denominator across all industries; the system should be designed to encourage higher wages, which in turn leads to higher productivity and growth.

Labour's work and wages policy will ensure that our lowest paid workers don't keep falling behind. It's a fairer system where everyone shares the load – and the rewards.