

FACTSHEET:

May Day 2024 events and FIRST Union / Unite Stop-Work meetings



What is May Day and why is it celebrated?

May Day, also known as International Workers' Day, is a global date that celebrates the historic struggles and achievements of the labour movement. It originated in the late 19th century and over time, May Day has evolved into a day of solidarity for workers worldwide, advocating for fair pay, workers' rights, and social justice.

What's going on this May Day in Aotearoa?

On May 1st, workers from across the union movement are organising public meetings in some of the major cities around Aotearoa to celebrate International Workers Day 2024 and demonstrate their opposition to destructive Government policies and cuts that threaten workers' rights and collective wellbeing in workplaces.

Among this year's May Day events, FIRST Union and Unite will also be holding Stop-Work meetings for local union members at locations specified below. Union members from other Council of Trade Unions (CTU) affiliates have been invited, along with supporters and anyone else who wants to show their support on International Workers' Day.

Where and when are the May Day events/Stop-Work Meetings happening this year?

May 1st, 12:00PM – 12:45PM

- Auckland - Britomart Te Komititanga
- Wellington - Midland Park
- Christchurch - The Bridge of Remembrance

What's the theme of May Day events this year?

While International Workers' Day is a celebration of united workers' historic achievements like the 8-hour workday and the 40-hour working week, this year's May Day is also a show of opposition against the National-ACT-NZ First Government's political policies and the resultant cuts to public services, which are similarly being made across the private sector.

FIRST Union General Secretary, Dennis Maga, has highlighted five of the new Government's most damaging attacks on workers ahead of May Day:

| Government policy | Effect |
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| Repealed Fair Pay Agreement legislation under Parliamentary urgency and cancelled industry-wide negotiations for bus | Reduced wage growth in historically underpaid industries and a diminished voice for workers, more unsafe workplaces and more difficulty establishing minimum safety standards across industries, disproportionately |

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| drivers, supermarket workers, cleaners, security guards, hospitality workers, and more. | negative economic effect on marginalised groups, e.g. women, Māori and Pasifika. A massive step backwards for everyone, including employers. |
| Used Parliamentary urgency to reintroduce 90-day “trial periods” at work | Increased unemployment and precarity, more income insecurity and casualisation of work into the ‘gig economy’, more prejudicial firing without consequence, and a terrible example of anti-evidentiary policy being enacted without scrutiny or logic applied. |
| Forced budget cuts to WorkSafe (113 roles disestablished with further cuts expected) | More deaths at work and less accountability for employers who cause fatal accidents, decreased capacity for workplace investigations, fewer employee protections, continuing high mortality rate in dangerous target industries e.g. forestry, construction, agriculture. |
| Over 3000 job cuts to public services to date, including in Health, Education, Environment and Conservation, with further cuts expected | Huge, wide-ranging implications in every area - more biodiversity and species loss, lower emergency health capacity and responsiveness, more unemployment and migration away from NZ, a more threadbare public service that will struggle in a crisis with lost resilience and responsiveness. |
| Instituted \$2.9bn tax cut for landlords while preparing to press ahead with the election promise of personal tax cuts | An embodiment of the new Government’s priorities: landlords can once again evict without cause and earn more profit on rentals with fewer obligations to their tenants, and any upcoming personal tax cuts will simply redistribute more wealth from the poorest to the wealthiest New Zealanders. |

What is a Stop-Work meeting?

In New Zealand, a Stop-Work meeting is a gathering of union members during work hours to discuss issues affecting their working conditions and employment interests, and settle strategic resolutions and potential actions. It is provided for under the Employment Relations Act 2000 and allows employees to attend paid meetings to discuss work issues without fear of reprisal from their employer. Unions hold Stop-Work meetings to collectively discuss and strategize on imminent matters affecting their members' working conditions and rights.

FIRST Union members will vote on a series of resolutions to guide the union’s strategy over the coming year and formally seek support from politicians and representatives to develop alternative proposals to the current Government’s policies.

Which unions are holding Stop-Work meetings this year?

FIRST Union, a union of around 31,000 members in the retail, finance, transport, logistics and manufacturing sectors.

Unite, a union of around 6000 workers in service industries, including hospitality, fast food outlets, restaurants, cinemas, call centres, hotels and casinos.

Can anyone attend these events to celebrate May Day?

Yes! These are public events and the unions want everyone's support.

Can I stop work at my job to come to an event?

If you are not working that day, you are more than welcome to participate in the events.

If you are working and you have permission from your employer to attend, or are on annual leave, you are free to attend the events.

Unions are encouraging anyone in a non-unionised workplace who wants to attend but is scheduled to be at work to discuss the possibility with their employer openly and seek their permission before leaving work. It could be useful to note that May Day events are not protests targeting them or any specific employer/s.

What if I want to attend my Stop-Work meeting but there isn't a May Day event in my area?

If you aren't able to attend May Day events, there will be alternative meetings offered by unions individually in your region where possible. Union members in worksites that have been given notice by their union organiser/s to attend Stop-Work meetings in Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch must either record their attendance in-person at the event or attend work as normal.

Who will be speaking at May Day events/meetings?

Representatives from FIRST Union, Unite, the CTU, and local politicians have been invited to speak, though the line-up may vary in each city.

How can I support the event and May Day if I can't attend in person?

Unions will be in touch through various social media pages in the coming days to ask people to share images and posts to show their support on the day.

To find and join your union, people can use the CTU's 'Find Your Union' [webpage](#) to check which affiliated union represents workers in your industry and how you can become a member.

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