



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS
Te Kauae Kaimahi

**NZCTU 2008
Election Policy Statement**

The Council of Trade Unions supports the election of a worker-friendly government in 2008 which will deliver progressive policies in the interests of workers, their families, and communities. Our main objective is to improve the well-being of working people and their families.

The CTU acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand and formally acknowledges this through Te Runanga o Nga Kaimahi Māori o Aotearoa (Te Runanga) the Māori arm of Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU) which represents approximately 60,000 Māori workers¹.

The CTU represents over 40 affiliated unions which have over 350,000 members in total. As such, we are a large democratic organisation with a vital interest in a wide range of policy issues.

A Lot Done but Much More to Do

The CTU acknowledges that much has been done in recent years to listen to the concerns of workers. Improvements have been made to employment rights, holidays, the minimum wage, state sector pay and conditions, and in many more areas. There have been more jobs and more support for workers through paid parental leave, cheaper visits to the doctor and family tax credits.

But the fact remains that we have relatively low wages embedded in our labour market, collective bargaining coverage is at only 9 percent in the private sector, and unions are not adequately resourced to support workers in the context of globalisation and economic transformation.

¹ Further information about the work and the policy focus of Te Runanga is available.

The key policy position for the CTU is to support measures which are integrated and balanced around the objective of a:

- high wage
- high skill
- high trust
- quality economy that is
- sustainable
- socially just, and is supported by
- a strong state sector.

Wages

- Increase the minimum wage to 2/3's of the average wage and remove the new entrants' rate and trainee rate.
- Amend ERA to ensure more workers can benefit from collective bargaining.
- Support union capacity to deliver improved wages and conditions for workers.
- Implement good employer and responsible contractor policies in the State sector.
- Lift investment in skills and technology and improve workplace practices to boost productivity.
- An ongoing programme to close the gender pay gap.

Social Partnership

- Continue with dialogue and social partnerships that lead to co-operation between unions, employers and government.
- Move to the next stage in the development of social partnership that can lead to a negotiated framework for sustainable development.
- Underpin social partnership with new institutions
- Build closer civil society relations between the union movement and other stakeholders.

Employment Relations and the Minimum Code

- Recognise that unions are legitimate representatives of workers that workers benefit from union representation, and ensure that law and policy supports and recognises the representation of workers by unions regardless of where they work.
- Ensure all workers, including those on low wages, have the ability to negotiate through unions, including at an industry level and in multi employer collective agreements, for improved wages and conditions, and have opportunities for development and training.
- Ensure that the ERA fully complies with the ILO Convention 87 in respect of the right to strike.
- Introduce a legal entitlement to minimum redundancy compensation.
- Provide greater protections for casual workers, contract workers and those with precarious work arrangements generally.
- Legalise collective bargaining by specified contractors and extend minimum employment standards to these groups.
- Increase paid parental leave to 26 weeks and increase the payments.
- Promote opportunities for an increasingly diverse workforce, including older workers, disabled workers, migrant workers and other groups.

Strong public services

- Oppose user pays in public services.
- Promote collective bargaining in the public sector.
- Ensure that the “good employer” EEO obligations in the Crown Entities Act 2004 are properly monitored and resourced.
- Oppose privatisation and public-private partnerships that introduce the profit motive into public services.
- Support transparent agreements which entrench quality union- employer relationships in the state sector.

Women’s Policy

- Accelerate the Pay and Employment Equity Plan of Action and require state sector employers to take respond to practices identified as causing gender pay equity.
- Increase paid parental leave initially to 26 weeks, progressively to 56 weeks, including 4 weeks leave for the other parent.
- Family friendly policies to improve work-life balance.
- Greater promotion and financial support to recruit more young women, Maori, Pacific and people with disabilities into modern apprenticeships.
- That the right to request flexible working hours be available to all workers.

Economic Policy

- Introduce tax policy changes, including a more progressive income tax scale.
- Lift the real value of benefits, and index them to wage movements.
- Develop, implement and monitor a plan to end poverty, with a particular focus on the impacts of child poverty.
- Inflation adjust KiwiSaver tax credits and phase in compulsory employer contributions to all workers at 9% of gross wages.
- Impose new capital adequacy requirements and ethical lending practices on banks.
- Amend the Reserve Bank Act and reword the Policy Targets Agreement by making specific reference to the impact of a high exchange rate on export performance and employment; give Monetary Policy decisions to the Board of RBNZ; introduce a more comprehensive capital gains tax by reviewing current wording in the Income Tax Act, and; remove the ability to offset expenses in rental properties.

Trade

- Support trade promotion and fair trade policies and practice that reflect a commitment to economic development and social equity in New Zealand and internationally.
- Not agree to any limitations on the state’s ability to govern or regulate any area of activity in the public interest.
- Strengthen the New Zealand Trade and Labour Framework.
- Oppose commitments on Mode 4 in bilateral and regional free trade agreements.
- Increase overseas aid with the aim of reaching 0.7% of GNI.

Productivity

- Engage workers and unions as well as employers in processes to improve productivity on the basis of investment in people, technology, infrastructure, innovation and workplace best practice.
- Continue to support union education programmes on productivity issues while providing funding for a stronger and more permanent institutional base for initiatives on productivity in both the public and private sectors.

Environment

- Investment in public transport, home insulation, solar water heating and other energy efficiency initiatives.
- Support a 'just transition' approach to climate change in respect of firms and workers affected by emissions trading.
- Work with social partners, tertiary education organisations and other stakeholders to develop skills for sustainability and 'green jobs'.
- Greater promotion of quadruple-bottom-line reporting.

Industry Partnerships

- Establish industry meetings in all major sectors to scope new and sustainable industry partnerships.
- Review the Textiles, Clothing, Footwear and Carpets Strategy and support industry development and modernisation in these sectors.
- Provide transitional support for workers in the Textiles, Clothing, Footwear and Carpets industry impacted by the NZ-China Free Trade Agreement and other agreements.
- Continue to provide support for industry groups such as the Tripartite Meat Industry Group, the Sea Change and the Maritime Transport Sector Reference Group, and the Horticulture & Viticulture Seasonal Labour Strategy.
- MSD Industry Partnerships should promote decent work in all their engagements, build transferrable skills and not subsidise training that employers should be providing.

Immigration

- Immigration issues should be dealt with in the context of broader economic development and specific industry development processes so that migration policy and implementation does not conflict with wider goals of developing a high value, high skill high wage economy.
- Treatment of migrant workers should also reflect a rights-based approach to migrant labour as established under the relevant international instruments.
- Good employers should be required to demonstrate evidence of training, with particular emphasis on training of the existing workforce, to develop the skills they are seeking to recruit overseas.
- Employers who are found to have breached good employer standards should be barred from employing any migrant labour for three years.

Occupational Safety and Health and ACC

- The retention of ACC as a public agency providing the full range of accident prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and compensation services.
- The development of safe systems of work within the workplace focussing on all hazards, including psychosocial hazards and work

organisation.

- The development of guidelines on maximum exposure limits to substances which are hazardous to health and the regulation of their use within the workplace, including monitoring and enforcement.
- The development and effective resourcing of the elected worker health and safety representative system with trained representatives having effective rights and roles in the development of best practice codes at industry level.

Industry Training

- Increase participation in quality industry training with particular attention to increasing enrolments, completion rates and the range of industries where training is being undertaken by women, Maori, Pacific peoples and those from lower socio-economic groups.
- Increase funding for language, literacy and numeracy workplace initiatives.
- Recognise the role of unions and workers as social partners in learning for work, including ITO involvement of workers/learners and employers in strategic industry planning.
- Continue support for Skill NZ and the unified skills strategy.
- Investigate those sectors where there is no current Industry Training Organisation so that recommendations can be made to ensure coverage applies.

Health

- That cost barriers to accessing primary health care are reduced and the significant efforts to date to reduce user charges in primary care are continued.
- No further privatisation and contracting out of DHB-provided services.
- That a national hospital strategy, complementary with existing health strategies, be developed which will focus on more efficiency and effectiveness of health services, greater cohesion and improved co-ordination between hospital and other health services.
- That collective bargaining is promoted throughout the health and disability sector as an essential part of developing and maintaining safer, higher quality and more accountable health and disability support services.
- That more attention be paid to improved recruitment and retention, safe staffing and healthy work environments, our reliance on overseas health professional and the growing international skill shortages of health workers and professionals.

Education

- Universal access to life-long learning through the provision of free, well-resourced, universal and quality education from early childhood to tertiary level.
- Continuation and extension of the 20 hours of free early childhood education (ECE) with stronger support for public providers of ECE.
- A universal student allowance for tertiary education students and increases to the student allowance that are commensurate with cost of living increases.
- That there are meaningful increases in the schools operations grant to enable targeted funding of school support staff wages to ensure fair wages, security for, and retention of school support staff.

- That there are comprehensive and detailed plans established throughout the primary and post-primary education sectors to decrease class sizes/ pupil: teacher ratios.

Housing

- Support housing policy initiatives which recognise that the health and well-being of workers and their families depends on access to quality affordable housing.
- Address supply issues through more state housing, regulations against land-banking, affordable housing zones, incentives for brownfield development, integrated development of housing and transport, and improvements in the supply of skilled labour.
- Introduce more community and healthy third sector housing initiatives.

Transport

- Complete the investment in rail including electrification and the development and expansion of urban rail.
- Amend s198 of the Maritime Transport Act to ensure that domestic coastal shipping is not disadvantaged in relation to foreign ships.
- Tenders for public transport services to be considered net of labour costs with provision for local government, employer and union participation in the setting of wages and conditions and funding agreements determined accordingly.
- Implement the Sea Change strategy.

Arts and culture

- Funding to ensure sustainable workforce development and quality labour standards within New Zealand's creative industries.
- Minimum code provisions within the industry, including legislated minimum pay and conditions for independent contractors. These independent contractors should also have access to the provisions of the ERA, including dispute resolution processes and the ability to bargain collectively.
- Increase funding to Creative NZ and NZ on Air in order to build sustainable creative industries, particularly through higher levels of financial support for administration and infrastructure.
- Ensure organised labour is represented on boards of cultural governance.
- Maintain cultural independence by excluding Arts and Culture from any free trade agreements.
- Acknowledge and support the critical role that Maori media play in transmitting cultural norms and values and in revitalising Te Reo Maori.