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IHC Members Fight the Freeze

Union members at IHC are into their fifth week of action against an attempt by their employer to impose a 12 month freeze on their wages.

Action started on 15 March with bans on paperwork and driving of personal vehicles and then stepped up to escalating bans on overtime and sleepovers.

It is now including short stoppages of work, pickets and other public action to bring increased pressure on IHC to lift the wage freeze.



Idea Services members protest outside IHC's National office in Wellington on 6 April.

Union does all the Compromising

The Union's original claim was for pay parity with therapy assistants and healthcare assistants employed by District Health Boards, who do the same or similar work to IHC community support workers but get paid a start rate of \$15.95 an hour.

On 15 March, the first day of our action, we reduced our claim to a small 2% pay increase – the same increase IHC has agreed to with the Ministry of Health for residential services.

The Union arranged a session with a Department of Labour mediator for 29 March, the first day of our sleepover ban, and said that any IHC wage offer, no matter how small, would be put to our members for a vote.

IHC resolutely refused to move from their wage freeze position.

The Union was not put off by this refusal. We applied to the Employment Relations Authority on 29 March to get them to intervene in the dispute and make a non-binding decision after considering the arguments from both sides.

IHC lawyers have fought tooth and nail to keep the Authority away from the dispute arguing that the union action is ineffectual and there is no public interest in the dispute.

The Employment Relations Authority has rejected their position and has agreed to hear a case on Wednesday 14 April as to whether it will make a non-binding decision in the dispute.

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**For more information call
0800 UNION1 (0800 864 661)**

Timata Hou Action

While IHC were telling the Employment Relations Authority that there was no “public interest” involved in the wage freeze dispute and the action was ineffective, they were telling the Employment Court a different story.

They told the Employment Court that the union action in Timata Hou of banning paper work and sleepovers was causing them major difficulties, meant that they could not fulfil their funding contracts and was a risk to both the clients and the staff.

The Court decided that 14 days formal notice of action needed to be given and granted IHC an injunction against action when that notice had not been given.

Last Friday we gave IHC notice of a Timata Hou paper work ban starting from Saturday 24 April.

IHC Managers Already Receive Pay Increase

While IHC is telling our community support workers, administration workers and family/whanau coordinators that there will be no wage increase for them this year, in December 2009 they signed off on a two-year deal with the Union for union members employed as CSMs or Family/Whanau managers.

Their pay settlement was for a \$500 one-off payment (1% on the base CSW rate) and a guaranteed Consumer Price Index movement from 6 November this year.

Letter to Client Relations

The Union has distributed a letter to client relations in response to one that IHC have been circulating.

If members don't have a copies of this letter please ring SFWU Member Support on **0800 UNION1 (0800 864 661)** for some to be sent to you.

Disciplinary Action Against Striking Workers

IHC have instigated disciplinary action against some members in Otago who took strike action in support of the union campaign.

Members are entitled to take strike action and apart from Timata Hou, where the Court has decided formal notice is necessary, there is no requirement to give notice.

We will be fighting vigorously any attempt by IHC to discipline any members for supporting the union campaign.

Relief to Striking Members

The Union has a Strike Fund for use in situations where members have taken strike action for a week or more.

If you have done 5 days or more of strike action and you need some assistance then please let your delegate or organiser know urgently and they will let you know how this support can be accessed.

How Can Our Friends and Communities Help?

Encourage your friends, family, and fellow union members to call IHC on 0800 442 442 and ask them to be fair to those who care. Community Support Workers deserve a payrise. Ask IHC to do the right thing!

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SFWU
Nga Ringa Tota