



ALWU NEWSLETTER



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AOTEAROA LEGAL WORKERS' UNION

he waka eke noa - a waka that we are all in together

From the Co-Presidents

This month has been a busy one, following the release of the **Employment Information Report** and the harrowing (although unsurprising) findings about overtime and poor mental health. The Report received significant coverage in RNZ, Stuff and Radio Waatea. We're hugely appreciative of the ALWU members who completed the survey, and have since shared it widely within their workplaces!

We've also been busy supportive a group of members wanting to initiate bargaining for a **collective agreement**. This will be the first for ALWU and the legal sector! **YAY!**

As most of you will have seen, the Law Society has appointed the reviewers (Professor Ron Paterson, Jane Meares, and Professor Jacinta Ruru) for the **Independent Review** to examine the regulation and representation of legal services in Aotearoa. We're meeting with the reviewers to discuss what this means for our members, and how they can engage with the profession in their review.

Finally, we know they lots of you have been affected by the current **Omicron peak** and many have been sick, or isolating. It's a hard time for all of us, so please make sure you're getting the rest (and time off!) that you need to get well.

In union,

Tess Upperton & Isabella Lenihan-Ikin
Co-Presidents

Employment Information report 2021

ALWU recently compiled, analysed and reported on your survey responses. You can read the full report [here](#).

TL;DR... our key findings were:

- Minimum wage breaches continue to decline (we look forward to these reducing to zero!).
- Salaries have stagnated in the public sector.
- Overtime pay and TOIL remain shrouded in mystery.
- 74% of respondents stated that their mental health had suffered as a result of their work.

This report has become an essential resource for improving transparency for legal workers since it was first published for 2019. We are grateful for your survey responses, and we recommend you encourage all your colleagues to respond next year so we can ensure that we have sufficient responses to include your legal workplace in our report.

In case you missed it, here is some of the media our 2021 report received:

- [Radio New Zealand](#)
- [NZ Herald](#)
- [Radio Waatea](#)
- [NewstalkZB](#)
- [BusinessDesk](#) (paywall)



There has never been a better time to join the collective

Many ALWU supporters weren't around in the 1970s, but recently there have been some predictions that with the current high inflation and the cost of living and oil prices spiralling up - we are back in the 70's - but without the flares and I would argue - the unions!

Trade unions are not as powerful as they were in the 1970s, that's for sure, when the call for higher wages to offset increased living costs was blamed by Robert Muldoon on the unions.

It is not unions that drive the power of inflation, it's inflation that drives the power of the unions. Inflation is 6, 7, 8%, you can feel it and you know that **something has to change**.

That change is YOU. We need to encourage union membership at this time. We have educated and engaged members who we can organise and thus increase our numbers. Things won't get better for the profession if we don't unite.

The cost of living crisis is something we don't need to compensate people for who can afford it — despite what some politicians are proposing with tax cuts. But a new lawyer with a hefty loan, working over 50 hours a week for less than minimum wage and no overtime is in the category of someone who genuinely can't make ends meet — but is not eligible for any welfare support.

Low wage, anti collective, free market neoliberalism cuts off investment at the very time it is needed.

ALWU believes in investing in the next generation of lawyers, not exploiting them.

Josie McNaught, Executive Member



MEME CORNER

Some comic solidarity to provide relief from the strain of collective action.



WHAT ARE THE STUDENTS UP TO?

The ALWU National Student Committee (ALWUNSC) has been hard at work pushing Union representation at every law school across Aotearoa.

They are currently organising for Nation-wide May-Day celebration to provide helpful resources to leavers and boost ALWU's membership so we can keep putting pressure on those pesky employers!

One of ALWUNSC's current goals is to ensure ALWU speaks at the legal ethics course provided by each law school so that while students are learning how to be lawyers, they can also learn how to avoid exploitation.

If you are a current student and wish to get involved just flick students@alwu.org.nz an email and you can be a part of the change!

COOL THINGS TO CHECK OUT

Legal academics in Aotearoa have established the Aotearoa chapter of the Mindfulness in Law Society.

Although mindfulness techniques are by no means a "silver bullet" for the many stresses practitioners face, they can be a really useful tool to have in the toolkit.

If you are interested, you can check out their website [here](#).

WE ALWAYS LOVE HEARING FROM OUR MEMBERS

IF YOU HAVE FEEDBACK FOR US OR YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN A CAMPAIGN OR AS A DELEGATE, GET IN TOUCH AT CONTACT@ALWU.ORG.NZ.

YOU CAN ALSO REACH OUT TO US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Get in touch!



ALWU ▼
AOTEAROA LEGAL WORKERS' UNION



PHONE A FRIEND

Long-time judicial conference listener, first time caller? Got a burning question about workplace dynamics or collective bargaining?

Dear ALWU

I have recently moved across the ditch and wow! My salary has increased substantially! Anyway, I was wondering why my old firm doesn't feature in your recent Report. I know that some staff provided responses. Also, how come there's not much of an in-house presence in the report?

From,

Found those greener pastures

Dear Greener pastures,

First, we are stoked for you that you are ~~rich~~ fairly paid now. We look forward to seeing your successes grow and we hope you have good work-balance!

But, to answer your question, it comes down to response numbers. We take the privacy of respondents seriously so we can't publish some employers when the response numbers might reveal identities.

Yours, in solidarity,

ALWU

Dear ALWU

I started in a new role last year and I suspect I am paid significantly more than my colleague even though we do work at the same level and they have more PQE than me. What should I do?

Genuinely asking

Dear Genuinely asking,

It's really cool that you have identified this issue and considered what you might do. This is what collective action is all about! You have an opportunity to bring your colleague up on that ladder with you!

Have a cup of tea and see what you can achieve if you both put your minds together. Perhaps your efforts could help everyone at your workplace... Maybe ALWU could help...

Yours, in compliance with strict page breaks,
ALWU