



## Best wishes for the season

December 2016

**This is the time** when MWU members spend time with whanau and friends to reflect on the year and look ahead.

2016 has been an up and down year for Meat Workers. For some, it's been life as usual. For others, it's meant shorter seasons, less income and challenges to their rights at work. Some have lost their jobs, and others are awaiting announcements of possible closures in 2017.

Workers, like those who work for AFFCO and SPM Talley's still have no collective agreement, despite a year of successful Employment Court decisions and on-going mediation. For them, every day is a struggle.

**On the up side**, the Meat Workers Union has positive dialogue taking place about how we meet existing and future challenges. We've had some big wins in court and we are organising together across branches.

Earlier in the year, the MWU National Conference considered how we tackle the challenges ahead for our union. This continued with a group of officials and site leaders, who met under the guidance of former CTU President, Ross Wilson in early December to help set a work plan in place.

**You will hear more about this in 2017.**

**The end of year is a time to say thank you. Thank you for being UNION. Thank you for standing up, sometimes in the most difficult of circumstances. Thank you to our shed officials and delegates. Thank you to those members up against it every day. It is you who makes the difference.**



In 2016, we lost many loved ones. We mourn them all. But more devastating than all was the loss of Helen Kelly. Meat Workers know how she stood up for us. She helped settle the awful AFFCO lockout of 2012, she attended our picket lines and conferences and was always on the end of the line for Meat Workers. We counted her as a friend. We knew she was in our corner. This extraordinary woman is a huge loss for meat workers, but she left behind a legacy and a challenge for Meat Workers Union members to follow her lead. And keep on fighting.



**Helen Kelly**  
1964 - 2016

**NZMWU** wishes you and your family all the best for Xmas and New Year. The National office is unattended from the 22nd December and reopens on the 4th January. If you have an emergency, please check [www.nzmwu.org.nz](http://www.nzmwu.org.nz) for contact



## Have a happy and safe holiday season. Thanks for being union!

### Silver Fern Farms - a big year ahead

Senior management at Silver Fern Farms recently presented a draft Collective Employment Agreement (CEA) to a large South Island works. They said it wasn't just for that plant, it was expected to roll out to every facility in the group. Its a pretty thin document.

**What's gone** is seniority and fair seasonal re-employment, agreed manning, union rights, redundancy or make up payments, and the MISS superannuation.

**What's new** is dramatically lowered earnings (up to \$80 a day less!), more work classed as C and B grade, and a longer working day. Manning levels might initially be similar, but they will be paying for A grade work at B Grade rates and B Grade at C Grade rates. **The effect is to downgrade the work MWU members do and trim their pay packets.**

In addition, SFF want the right to force workers on to night shift, work the shifts over any day of the week for no extra payment, require workers to delay breaks and make up lost time (such as missed hooks) without further payment.

**Our union will resist unreasonable changes. That's where you come in.**

Currently, a many SFF plants are covered by multi-site Collective Agreements. This gives us real strength in bargaining and protection during seasons. Silver Fern Farms want to replace those agreements with single site deals or even individual employment agreements. MWU officials are currently in the middle of a round of shed meetings at all Silver Fern Farms sites. We have a plan to stop these wage cuts and to prevent the break up of our agreements.

**Meat Workers are already hard hit by short seasons. If we're going to stop our industry becoming low paid as well, our job is to stick together in 2017 like never before.**

### Alliance plants

MWU Members are currently voting on a new collective agreement covering both North Island and South Island plants. This agreement is one of MWU's biggest, covering thousands of members.

### AFFCO Talleys Fine increased :

The fine and reparation imposed on AFFCO after union member Jason Matahiki was impaled by a meat spreader hook at its Rangiuru plant has been increased to **\$89,000.**

WorkSafe argued that the original \$30,000 fine and \$25,000 reparation sentence was "manifestly inadequate". The Judge agreed saying "Given the nature of the emotional harm that has been suffered by Mr Matahiki, I have no doubt that the reparation ordered was inadequate ... I take the view that the reparation order should be no less than \$40,000, together with a fine of \$49,000."

### SPM Malvern – an unusual case.

An MWU member involved in a shouting match with another worker was physically removed from the chain, with other workers grabbing his arms and legs and dragging him away. He was then suspended on the basis of breaching company rules. The worker thought he was going to be fired but our union got involved.

MWU argued 'disparity of treatment'. The workers who physically manhandled this worker were were treated differently, with the union member being asked to shoulder the blame for an incident that involved 6 or 7 people.

Eventually, the decision was made that our MWU member had not contributed to the extent where dismissal could be justified. He was issued a warning and the company are working to tighten up processes about de-escalating verbal and physical incidents.

**The lesson here is not to let one worker be scapegoated for the actions of others. All people involved have to be treated equally in an investigation and a disciplinary process.**



"Christmas just isn't the same since the union stepped in!"