



6 October 2009

Peter Hallett
Vice President
NZ Professional Firefighters Union
PO Box 38215
PETONE

Dear Peter

Collective Employment Agreement

I originally addressed this letter to Steve Warner but understand that he is unwell and has been advised by his doctors to rest. Accordingly I am writing to you in your capacity as acting NZPFU President.

I am informed that following bargaining between the Fire Service and the Union on Thursday (1 October 2009) the Union negotiating team met with its wider executive on the Friday and resolved to put the Fire Service's offer to the membership for ratification. I understand, however, that the executive also resolved to recommend against ratification. This resolution concerns me and I am taking the unusual step of writing to you so that my concerns are understood.

You are aware that the offer represented a significant departure from the wage restraint parameters Government expects of the public sector generally and was based on the performance of firefighters over recent years. The offer provides firefighters with an increase in total weekly remuneration (excluding allowances and overtime) of between \$22.24 for a trainee and \$38.00 for senior station officer. I am clear that the Government did not make this concession lightly and it is the final offer. There is no prospect of my being able to go back to Government to have the negotiating parameters increased.

As Janine will have told you, Government's policy is that no claims are to be backdated so there is no chance of the firefighters' settlement being backdated. If your members accept the Union's advice not to ratify the offer they are losing money that will not be able to be made up to them if and when there is a settlement.

I am also informed that the Union decided to terminate the agreement to suspend industrial action with effect from Monday 5 October before the offer was even been put to the firefighters. You need to be aware that this decision presents the Commission with considerable difficulty. There is now a large amount of work not being carried out by firefighters which has significant impact on the provision of services to the public and the preparedness of the workforce both paid and volunteer. A number of staff have totally withdrawn their labour. Under these circumstances it will be difficult for the Commission to justify the expenditure of public money by continuing to pay these people given that an offer that is as generous as is possible has been made.

As I am precluded from communicating directly with the firefighters I should be grateful if you would ensure that they understand my concerns and particularly my concern that they gain the level of remuneration we are authorised to offer immediately. I do not wish them to lose any more money because of our inability to consider back dating settlements.

Yours sincerely


Dame Margaret Bazley, DNZM, Hon DLit.
Chairperson