

# Living Wage

## Aotearoa New Zealand



## The Living Wage Movement

All over the world communities are uniting to address poverty and inequality through living wage campaigns. The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa New Zealand (the Movement) was formed in 2012 to generate a conversation about working poverty in Aotearoa and it has been extraordinarily successful in its short history.

The campaign for living wages began with Auckland and Wellington launches in May 2012. From the first announcement of 10 living wage employers in 2014, there are now over 300 businesses licensed to be an accredited Living Wage Employer. There are more than 80 Member Groups comprising faith, union and community organisations united in their aspiration to achieve a Living Wage for New Zealanders as one step in reducing inequality and poverty in Aotearoa. The Movement has successfully ensured the words “living wage” have entered the lexicon of New Zealand culture as the new standard for decent wages and as a political demand in elections for public office. The Living Wage has in a very real way impacted on the debate about the Minimum Wage and, arguably, the level at which it is now set.

We operate on four key principles:

1. Non-party political
2. Built locally through local relationships and local issues
3. Independent of government in policy, funding and association
4. Comprised of three streams in our structures and decision-making: faith-based; community-based secular groups, and unions.

Many of those involved in the Movement are paid less than a Living Wage and are articulate and dedicated campaigners. Low paid workers are involved through their churches, unions, and community organisations because it is these organisations that join as Member Groups of the Movement. The strength of the Movement is its broad base of diverse group joined together to achieve thriving communities where kiwis can survive and participate as active members of society.

The Movement’s strategy of organising civil society groups in collective action that calls on decision-makers to pay workers and contracted staff a Living Wage, and then holding elected politicians to account, is proving effective. Already five councils have become accredited Living Wage Employers, and more are on the way.

**Malia Lagi, 2016**

