

PWUA MEMBERS' UPDATE!

Issue No 14
17 January 2022

Postal Workers Union of Aotearoa

Trades Hall, 126 Vivian Street, Wellington, 6011

pwu@tradeshall.org.nz

Safety first – union advises posties to self select for delivery only that amount of mail that they can safely deliver in their rostered hours (and any voluntary overtime)

The Postal Workers Union has told NZ Post of the action required to protect posties from the pressure of intensified and unsafe work. The union is advising posties to each day select for themselves the amount of sorted mail that they can *safely* deliver in their rostered hours (and any voluntary overtime). Any further mail that the management may try to require posties to take out to attempt to deliver under time pressure would then be *unsafe* work.

Posties approached to take out more mail than they have selected themselves for delivery can advise the manager to talk to the union delegate who can refer the matter to their local organiser.

Failure by NZ Post to replace posties who have left the job has meant understaffing of many postal delivery branches, unsafe workloads and physical and mental stress for many posties working under time pressures, and mail service delays.

Serious safety concerns raised by union members has led the union to take the initiative and advise posties to limit their own workloads to be able to work more safely. Section 45(a) of the Health and Safety at Work Act requires that a worker must "take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety ...". The union and posties take very seriously their legal and moral responsibilities to place safety as the highest priority.

By telling posties to take out excessive amounts of mail for delivery the company has not been providing and maintaining "safe systems of work" as required, in the union's view, by Section 36(2) of the Health and Safety at Work Act. To get the mail delivered safely NZ Post will need to employ more posties.

Over at least two years the union has been raising with all levels of NZ Post management the company's delivery service failures and resultant falling public confidence in NZ Post. The Postal Workers Union has itself now initiated a programme to get NZ Post to improve its mail delivery responsibilities which includes:

- A meeting in Christchurch on Tuesday 18 January of a group of posties, union organisers and managers at the St Asaph Delivery Branch.
- An agenda to determine "how can NZ Post meet its legal and contractual obligations and get all mail delivered in a safe, just, reliable, sustainable and efficient manner" at the St Asaph branch, where large amounts of mail are being returned undelivered to the branch on a regular basis.
- An action programme to be taken by the union to other delivery branches where the company is regularly failing its delivery obligations.

The union is confident that having had to take the initiative as a union to push NZ Post to better meet its safety and wellbeing obligations to its employees, and delivery obligations to the people of New Zealand, the nation's publicly owned postal delivery network and the working lives of the posties themselves will see significant improvement.