

# WE ARE THE UNION



Welcome to the  
Maritime Union of  
New Zealand.

This guide tells you  
the story of our  
Union and the basics  
of how it works.

Congratulations on  
taking a great step  
in your maritime  
career!



## A proud history and a great future

When you join the Maritime Union of New Zealand, you become part of a history going back over a hundred years.

A Union is a democratic organization of workers, formed for the purpose of promoting our members employment and social rights.

By joining the Maritime Union you join a tradition that began with the maritime unionists who have gone before us, and you are leaving a legacy for the next generation.

By being part of a collective of your fellow workers, you're protecting and advancing your career, your wages and your work conditions.



## Inside this guide



### Milestones in our history

Our Union has a long, proud history of standing up for ourselves and leading from the front.

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### How our Union works

Our Union belongs to all our members, and you have a say over decisions.

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### Benefits for members

Our Union offers a number of benefits to members including industry superannuation.

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Seamen's Union members and supporters march in Wellington during the 1913 Strike

# Where it all began

The Waterfront Workers' Union and New Zealand Seafarers' Union joined together in the Maritime Union of New Zealand in 2002. This was a logical move for two groups of workers. Seafarers and wharfies have a history of looking out for each other.

**Both the Waterfront Union and Seafarers' Unions started in the late nineteenth century – around 150 years ago – when maritime workers carried out hard, manual labour in dangerous conditions.**

The first Seamen's Union was formed in 1879, in the last years of the sailing ship era – and it was a trans Tasman Union with members in Australia and New Zealand.

The first Waterfront Union was formed in 1885 – it was called a “lumpers” union – because in those days most cargo was handled manually, carried on board on the backs of workers.

In the old days, there was a high rate of injury and death on the job, and a lack of job security. Workers had few or no rights on the job.

Over the years, due to the hard work of union members, wages and conditions were improved.

However, these gains must be defended. In recent years, we have seen the return of casual jobs and there are still too many injuries to workers in our industry.

Maritime workers had to fight for and defend their right to job security, a decent wage, and safe conditions of work. We still do today.

Don't forget that every wage increase, safety improvement, and better working condition was won by workers organising – it was not handed out as a gift from employers.

In 1890 the great Maritime Strike was New Zealand's first major industrial dispute

involving thousands of seamen fighting to improve wages and conditions.

In 1913, waterfront workers and seamen were involved in another massive strike about wages and conditions. Mounted police attacked the workers with batons.

Shortly after the 1913 strike ended, the First World War broke out, and millions of workers were killed.

In 1951, the Waterfront Lockout saw thousands of waterfront workers locked out of their jobs for 151 days for trying to get a better wage increase.

The National Government made it illegal for the workers to have free speech and state their case in public.

# Milestones

Throughout New Zealand history, maritime workers have been a force for positive, progressive change for all working people.



## SOLIDARITY

MUNZ members at the Ports of Auckland

In the 1951 lockout it was even made illegal to supply food to children of watersiders. Shortly after the end of the lockout, the overseas owned shipping companies pushed up their freight charges, but nothing was done by the Government.

Despite the setbacks maritime workers took in these disputes, we continued to organize through our unions and achieve improved wages and conditions.

Maritime workers were part of many political debates over the years and our stance has been vindicated by history.

Maritime unionists were part of the opposition to the Vietnam War, and in the 1970s and 1980s, were at the forefront of the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

In 1976, maritime workers refused to work when a nuclear warship visited Wellington, providing a great boost to the anti-nuclear policy New Zealand later adopted.

Maritime unions set up some of the first industry superannuation schemes for workers.

Maritime workers fought hard against the anti-worker Employment Contracts Act in 1991 and the National Government's "open coast" policy in 1994 which harmed New Zealand shipping.

More recently our Union has led resistance to casualization on the waterfront in disputes in Port of Napier in 2007 and in Ports of Auckland in 2011 and 2012.

Our Union is also involved in the political process campaigning for pro-worker policies as an affiliate of the New Zealand Labour Party.

The Maritime Union of New Zealand is affiliated to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi (NZCTU).

This 'union of unions' brings together over 320,000 New Zealand union members in 27 affiliated unions.

The Maritime Union is also a member of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

The ITF has 681 affiliated unions representing 4.5 million workers in 148 nations.

We support international campaigns by the ITF to help other workers and the ITF has backed MUNZ in our disputes in New Zealand.



## What have Unions achieved?

Over a long time, Unions have made lots of changes to our lives. These are some of the achievements that working people in Unions have won.

Equal pay

3 weeks annual leave (1974)

4 weeks annual leave (2007)

Parental leave (12 weeks paid from 2002)

Additional leave (long service, sick leave)

10 days sick leave (2021)

Negotiated pay increases

Collective Employments Agreements

Penal rates

Paid public holidays (1955)

PPE provided by employer

Health and safety laws

ACC for injury at work (1972)

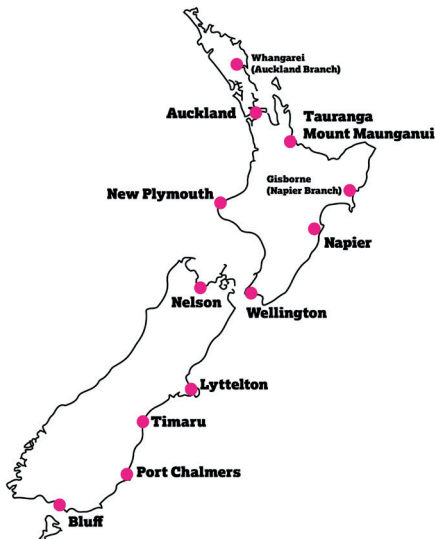
Right to form a union that elects its own independent representatives

Right to be given notice and consulted

Minimum standards of employment



# About our Union



MUNZ is a national Union with ten branches/locals.

Our national office is Waterside House at 220 Willis Street in central Wellington.

This headquarters was built by and is owned by our Union. It has offices, meeting spaces and training facilities.

All Union branches (or locals) are governed by an executive elected by our members.

Major decisions at the branch/local level are voted on by our members.

The Union is governed by official rules.

All branches (and locals) are represented on the governing bodies of the Union: the four-yearly National Conference, and the National Council, which meets several times a year.

The Conference and the National Council set our objectives and oversee the operation of the Union.

There are four directly elected national officials – National Secretary (full time), Assistant National Secretary, National President and National Vice President.



## YOUTH VOICE

Youth delegates at the Maritime Union National Council May 2021

## The Union Delegate

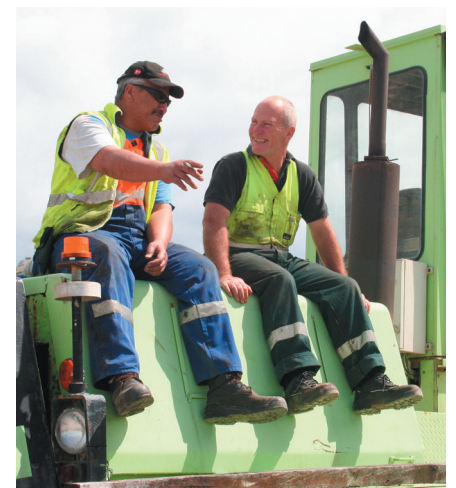
The Union Delegate is an elected representative of MUNZ members.

Delegates are just normal workers on the job, but have the authority to represent our Union.

You should approach your delegate if you have any issues on the job, whether about pay, unfair treatment or health and safety.

The delegate is a voice for member's views and concerns with the employer.

All members need to support their delegate to do their job. It's their job to help members sort out the problem themselves if possible.



## Strength in diversity

The Maritime Union is an inclusive Union.

On our National Council, we have two youth representatives, a womens' representative and a Māori representative for the Runanga (Council of Trade Unions.)

Branches are working to ensure they have youth and women's representatives at the local level.

It's important that all members of our Union have their voices heard.

The Maritime Union encourages youth and women members to attend Union events such as conferences and training.

If you would like to find out more about these opportunities, contact us on our email [communications@munz.org.nz](mailto:communications@munz.org.nz)

# Your employment agreement

When you start work, you will sign an employment agreement. This sets out what your job responsibilities are, the hours and place of work, and your wages and conditions.

As a MUNZ member you will probably be part of a "Collective Employment Agreement."

This means it covers all of the MUNZ members on your worksite. This could be anywhere from several up to hundreds of people.

The law that covers your Employment Agreement is called the Employment Relations Act 2000.

It contains certain minimum conditions that all workers must have, this includes the minimum wage, holiday and sick leave entitlement, and the right to join a Union.

However in many Collective Employment Agreements we negotiate wages and conditions that are better than this minimum.

Every Collective Employment Agreement expires after a specific time, this could be one or two years. Then members will meet to discuss the claims they wish to negotiate with the employer for the new agreement.

## Stopwork meetings

Every Union branch will have paid stopwork meetings. Some branches have meetings more often than others, often due to their size.

As a MUNZ member you are entitled to and encouraged to attend these meetings, where everyone is welcome to have their say.

Every year the branch members will elect an Executive which usually includes a Branch President, a Branch Secretary and general executive members.

There are usually Branch youth and women's reps as well.

Their job is to run the business of the branch and deal with local union issues including employment agreements and any problems on the job for members.



### KEEPING IT SAFE

Seafarers taking part in onboard first aid training

## Health and Safety on the job

The maritime industry has many hazards on the job but we can have a safe workplace if we are aware of the risks and follow the best health and safety practices.

If you are in any doubt about the safety of the work you are doing then it is your right under law (the Health and Safety at Work Act) to stop the work until the problem has been fixed.

It is important to talk to your delegate or union official as soon as possible about the problem as they can then help.

If you have any concerns you should write them down or even text them on your phone so you have a record of the situation.

Some areas where there are often health and safety breaches can be:

- Lack of breaks or long shifts (fatigue)
- Lack of safety gear or safety hazards onboard vessels or with equipment
- Working in poor conditions i.e. bad weather or darkness or with dangerous cargo
- Lack of training or experience
- Failure to have enough workers on the job to observe and communicate hazards, i.e. a hatchman

The problem can often be when employers are focussed on getting the job done quickly rather than safely.

That is why it is important to have the ability to raise health and safety issues through the Union as this stops pressure being put on individual workers.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act, the PCBU (person conducting a business or undertaking – employer) has a duty to provide a healthy and safe workplace for all workers.

Workers must be given a reasonable opportunity to express our views and to contribute to the health and safety decision making process.

Larger workplaces may have workers who are Health and Safety Reps (often the delegate as well) and sometimes Health and Safety Committees.

The Maritime Union is working to ensure that our members get the full protection of current laws and we are also campaigning for stronger health and safety laws.

At the current time, we are paying special attention to ensuring our members are kept safe from COVID-19.





*Securing your future*

## Maritime Super

The Maritime Retirement Scheme (MRS) is an industry-based scheme providing retirement and other benefits to workers in the maritime industry.

MRS provides benefits to members in the event of retirement, death, total and permanent disablement, sickness or injury, redundancy and resignation.

If you join the MRS, and work for a participating employer, the MRS collects contributions from you and your employer.

These are a percentage of your wages and are usually deducted direct from your pay.

These contributions are invested into the fund to earn a return (interest).

Over time, the combined payments from you and your employer, plus your returns (interest), will grow.

The MRS is an investment fund, not a bank account. This means the returns you get from the MRS will vary over time and your account can go up and down.

These investments will generally increase in value over time despite short term fluctuations.

Many maritime workers have benefited from the MRS and enjoyed a more comfortable retirement as a result.

Online

[maritimeretirementscheme.nz](http://maritimeretirementscheme.nz)

# Leadership

Maritime workers play a leading role in unions and their community.

Maritime workers have played a leading role in the whole trade union movement.

Our Union has training opportunities where members can come along and learn more about the Union and employment issues.

Members can also become involved and attend national meetings and events.

We have an annual national sports tournament called the Interport that has been held for many years. Each year it is held in a different port.

The Maritime Union and many of its individual members are often active in their community in all sorts of ways – voluntary organizations, sports, community boards, fire brigade and first aid, cultural activities, charity fundraising, radio shows ... the list goes on.

We have a Veterans Branch for members who are 'retired from the workforce but not from the struggle.'

Some branches offer supplementary benefits including Sick Benefit Society, holiday accommodation and social clubs.



Maritime Union women delegates at the 2021 Council of Trade Union's Women's Conference

## The Maritime Industry today

The maritime industry has changed a lot over the history of our Union.

We now have high tech workplaces, with a smaller number of skilled workers doing the work.

The maritime industry has traditionally been a male-dominated industry, but growing numbers of women are coming into the industry, and becoming active in the Union.

We still face issues like casual jobs and bad work patterns with little security and anti-social hours.

Health and safety is a big issue for workers and the Union works hard to make sure we have the laws and on the job practices to keep workers safe.

In the 21st century, maritime workers have a central role in New Zealand's economy and its international trade links.

Shipping and ports import essential goods and export our products to the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted global supply chains but it has also made people more aware of the essential role played by maritime and transport workers.

Maritime workers are part of the "working class" – it is our hard work and productivity that produces the wealth of society.



# Coastal Shipping

The Maritime Union is campaigning for New Zealand coastal shipping.

Since the 1990s, bad laws and policies have meant that our shipping industry has been put up against unfair competition from overseas shipping.

As a result, our coastal shipping fleet has dwindled away. This is a dangerous situation for a maritime nation like New Zealand which is now dependent on unreliable global shipping schedules.

The Maritime Union is working with industry and Government to rebuild our coastal fleet.

This will have many potential benefits for New Zealand.

Dedicated New Zealand shipping capability will provide secure links between domestic ports, helping with congestion, and ensuring we can provide disaster relief.

Coastal shipping is as a low emission transport mode. It reduces pollution, helping in the fight against climate change, and makes roads and communities safer.

Coastal shipping can provide employment for a new generation of seafarers, enhanced skills, and build our economic capacity, including the right of Māori to participate in the 'blue highway' economy in their traditional waters.

## Secure jobs

Our Union is working hard to get better conditions of work.

Long shifts and irregular shifts are problems for many of our members.

Our Union has recently taken a court case on 'availability'. Many casual workers are expected to be on call at any time of the day or night with shipping schedules constantly changing.

Our Union says that if this is the case, our members should receive a payment for that time when they are waiting to start a shift (their 'availability' to work).

Our Union is also working to stop casualization of the industry, by supporting secure jobs with guaranteed hours which provides a career path into the industry.

'Casualization' is when employers try to reduce permanent secure jobs and replace them with casual jobs, to make more profit.

'Outsourcing' or 'contracting out' is another issue when employers bring in another employer to sub-contract parts of work. This is a method often used by port companies to undermine good agreements and secure jobs.

The Maritime Union is constantly working for secure jobs and your rights at work.



## Keep up to date

The Maritime Union publishes a quarterly magazine The Maritimes that is posted free to all members.

We are on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and You Tube. Our website is [www.munz.org.nz](http://www.munz.org.nz)

The website has all our news and information and is regularly updated. You can sign up to get news emailed to you.

Some branches have their own newsletters and websites as well.

The best way to keep up to date is to attend your branch stopwork meeting.

## CONTACT DIRECTORY

### National Office:

Telephone: 04 3850 792  
Mail Address: PO Box 27004, Wellington  
Physical address: Level One, Waterside House,  
220 Willis Street, Wellington

**National Secretary:** Craig Harrison  
Mobile: 021 482362  
Email: craig.harrison@munz.org.nz

**National President:** Carl Findlay  
Mobile: 021 760887  
Email: carl.findlay@munz.org.nz

**National Vice President:** Josh Greer  
Mobile: 027 348 2692  
Email: local10munz@xtra.co.nz

**Assistant National Secretary:** Ray Fife  
Mobile: 0274 475317  
Email: ray.fife@munz.org.nz

**Office Manager:** Ramesh Pathmanathan  
Mobile: 021 260 4895  
Email: ramesh@munz.org.nz

**Senior Admin Support:** Tai Malolo  
Mobile: 021 973561  
Email: tai.malolo@munz.org.nz

**Membership Admin:** Mariah Habib  
Mobile: 021 972589  
Email: mariah.habib@munz.org.nz

**ITF Inspector:** Grahame MacLaren  
Mobile: 021 2921782  
Email: mclaren\_grahame@itf.org.uk

**Communications and media:** Victor Billot  
Mobile: 022 4791786  
Email: victor.billot@munz.org.nz

**National Youth Reps**  
Shanaya Hunter 027 929 2399  
Matt Hayward 022 303 5979

**Auckland Local 13**  
(includes Whangarei)  
Address: PO Box 2645, Auckland  
**Secretary:** Russell Mayn  
Mobile: 021 760 886  
Email: russell.mayn@munz.org.nz  
**Assistant Secretary/Runanga:** Grant Williams  
Mobile: 021 457 170  
Email: grant.williams@munz.org.nz

**Mount Maunganui**  
Address: PO Box 5121, Mt. Maunganui  
**Secretary:** Selwyn Russell  
Mobile: 0274 782308  
Email: selwyn.russell@munz.org.nz  
**Organizer:** Leanne Jackson  
Mobile: 021 652 885  
Email: leanne.jackson@munz.org.nz

**Gisborne** Contact National Office

**Napier**  
Address: PO Box 70, Napier  
**Secretary:** Greg Primrose  
Mobile: 021 028 23167  
Email: Greg.Primrose@munz.org.nz

**New Plymouth**  
**Secretary:** Josef Zaloum  
Mobile: 022 0629049

### Wellington

Address: PO Box 286, Wellington 6140  
**Secretary:** Jim King  
Email: jim.king@munz.org.nz  
Mobile: 020 483 6262  
**Assistant Secretary/National Womens' Rep:**  
Fiona Mansell  
Mobile: 021573244  
Email: fiona.mansell@munz.org.nz

### Nelson

**President:** Deane Hogg  
Mobile: 0210 236 0854  
Email: nelson@munz.org.nz

### Lyttelton Local 43

Address: PO Box 29, Lyttelton  
**Secretary:** Gary Horan  
Mobile: 027 432 9620  
Email: gary.horan@munz.org.nz

### Timaru

**President:** Shona Low  
Mobile: 027 327 1156  
Email: shona.low@munz.org.nz

### Port Chalmers Dunedin Local 10

Address: PO Box 44, Port Chalmers  
**Secretary:** Josh Greer  
Mobile: 027 348 2692  
Email: local10munz@xtra.co.nz

### Bluff

Address: PO Box 5, Bluff  
**Secretary:** Ray Fife  
Mobile: 027 4475317  
Email: ray.fife@munz.org.nz



# Welcome to the Maritime Union of New Zealand

Being a member of the Maritime Union of New Zealand helps you in a lot of ways.

Our Union provides you with 'on the job' help in all employment matters.

We have experienced delegates and officials who work with you to achieve the best possible employment agreement, as well as supporting you with any issues at your work.

As a member, you have the strength that comes with being part of a team who back you up. You play an important role by having a say when we negotiate your Collective Employment Agreement.

All members are involved in job health and safety issues, and by attending Union meetings that make the decisions.

We invite you to get involved and active in our Union, and help make a better future.

**Craig Harrison**  
**National Secretary**  
**Maritime Union of New Zealand**

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Authorized by Craig Harrison, National Secretary,  
Maritime Union of New Zealand, 220 Willis Street,  
Wellington, New Zealand

