



# Fair Pay

in

**Security**

**Security** officers are the people who keep New Zealand people and property safe. Around 6,500 static and mobile guards, cash van drivers, offender-monitoring operators, and comms people are responsible for your safety when you're in a hospital, keeping banks safe from armed robbery and protecting the clients and staff at WINZ offices.

While official figures are not available, reports strongly suggest they suffer dozens of assaults every week up and down the country.

And yet, your average security officer is lucky to earn more than minimum wage. They work an average of sixty hours a week, and often more. In part it is because they desperately need the money, but in part it is also because employers badger them into doing more, because they cannot recruit adequate officers into the industry. Low wages and low morale create a vicious circle.

Where collective bargaining does exist, it is difficult for unions and employers to agree any kind of margin of pay above minimum wage, and to get agreement around training, lone worker support and uniform and equipment provision. If an employer agrees to a deal better than the average, they have to go back to their

clients and ask for more money. While that might seem like "business as usual," the problem is that there is always a company that can bid lower on the basis of paying only the minimum wage, and cutting costs in other ways, such as back office support for guards, equipment and other things.

What a Fair Pay Agreement would do is enable the union and responsible security companies, like those in the NZ Security Association to negotiate a set of industry standards. This could cover pay, training, qualifications, and equipment provision that could actually start to lift the overall capability of the industry. Morale, staff retention, and skills would be improved. Ultimately this could create a pathway to developing security work as a career.



**Lavinia  
Kafoa**

**Security Guard**  
*Auckland*

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**Ask** Auckland security guard Lavinia Kafoa how she feels about her job, and she says, “My job is my income.” She says it’s nowhere near enough to support her and her five dependent children. Lavinia works 36 hours a week for the minimum wage. She also receives Family Support but still struggles to pay the bills.

“It’s not enough. There’s enough for the rent, and for bread for the week. I earn \$17.70 an hour, but it should be more – it’s a dangerous job.

“You have to manage people and sometimes they don’t like being told what to do. Some people give you a hard time. Some people want to bash me. If they are drunk or on marijuana, it’s scary.

Lavinia says “I work alone at night. Sometimes I have to beg the company to bring me a radio that works, or to send me someone to relieve me for a toilet break.”

“We need a Fair Pay Agreement with a higher wage rate. Qualifications are important. If something happens, how do people handle it if they don’t know what to do, like first aid? I had experience from other jobs I’ve done, but others might not have that.”