

ALWU NEWSLETTER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AOTEAROA LEGAL WORKERS' UNION

DO YOU WANT TO RUN FOR ALWU'S EXECUTIVE?

Why you should apply - with Wendy Kemp



Set aside around 2.5 hours per week to undertake day-to-day work to keep ALWU operating and can give further time to work on special projects.

Executive members are elected for a one year term from 30 September 2021 - 31 August 2022.

Another amazing year has gone by for ALWU. Incredibly, we are gearing up once again for elections and I encourage you all to consider running for the ALWU Executive. When I ran last year, I wanted to give back. After several years of workplace challenges where I'd had incredible support from delegates and members of ALWU, I was settling into a positive and empowering work environment. I had the capacity to return some of the effort that had assisted me through difficult times.

What I hadn't expected was the extent of the incredibly strong, ethical and enthusiastic minds that were coming together on the 2021 Exec. Every monthly meeting refuels us and gives us the energy and inspiration to assist our members. The ALWU Exec is a family that has come together from many different backgrounds and with many differing strengths. There is room for each personality to shine. If your skills are around writing articles, there's a space for you. If you're more a people person and want to assist members of the legal community on a one on one basis, there are positions on the exec that focus directly on our members. If you're more of an organiser and your strengths sit with managing accounts or documents, then there's a real need for you too! It's a great place to find your niche and build upon it while helping your colleagues working in the legal profession.

The next year will build on what ALWU has begun, including work on the living wage campaign. The membership continues to grow at a strong and steady rate and with more members comes greater needs for strong leadership. Come join an incredible group of people who believe in the integrity of this profession and the need for ensuring that integrity is lifted to its highest heights.



Graeme Scobie - ALWU Student Representative

It is no secret, even to me as a third-year law student, that the legal profession in New Zealand is not up to standard. The way to positively impact the future of our profession is to start at the bottom, with the students. Therefore, the role of student representative is crucial to starting conversations and bridging the gap between practitioners and students.

As a member of the rainbow community, it felt good to be able to open up the conversation about bettering the legal profession to the rainbow community too. This year I introduced a pronoun policy to the executive which requires outgoing emails to include the sender's pronouns in their signature. This is a small initiative that positively impacts the lives of our transgender community and helps us work towards a society where we no longer assume individuals' genders. If you want to do your part in having a lasting, positive impact on the legal profession, but feel you cannot do much because you are just a student then you should consider running for student representative for the 2021/2022 term!

Salaries increase across Aotearoa's largest law firms



Recent moves by big firms to raise the salaries of junior lawyers is heartening progress. In the past, junior lawyers' salaries have increased only marginally - despite inflation and the significant increase in cost of living.

ALWU aims to increase transparency and access to information for our members and junior lawyers across Aotearoa. ALWU contacted other firms that have not raised salaries to ensure they are aware of the movement in the legal market. ALWU also circulated this information to its members so they are empowered to have their own conversations about pay at their workplace.

The following pay increases have occurred in the past month (in chronological order):

Chapman Tripp -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$57k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$68k.
- Kiwisaver exclusive, backdated to 1 January 2021.*

Bell Gully -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$57k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$68k.
- Kiwisaver inclusive, backdated to 1 July 2021.*

Russell McVeagh -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$59.75k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$69k.
- Kiwisaver inclusive, backdated to 4 January and 1 December, respectively.*

MinterEllisonRuddWatts -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$58k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$67k.
- Kiwisaver exclusive, backdated to 1 January 2021 or date of starting.*

Buddle Findlay -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$58k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$67k.
 - Second year solicitor (Y3) - \$75k.
 - Third year solicitor (Y4) - \$85k.
- Kiwisaver exclusive, backdated to 1 July 2021.*

Simpson Grierson -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$58k (*backdated to date of starting*).
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$67k.
 - Second year solicitor (Y3) - \$75k.
- Kiwisaver exclusive.*

Dentons Kensington Swan -

- Law clerk (Y1) - \$58k.
 - First year solicitor (Y2) - \$67k.
- Kiwisaver inclusive.*

This is an average of 15 percent - the largest increase we have seen in over a decade.

ALWU views this change as addressing a long-running, historical issue of junior lawyers being underpaid. Junior lawyers' salaries over the last 20 years have remained largely flat compared to inflation, despite substantially increased profits and productivity over that time.

The largest law firms in Aotearoa set standards and carry influence in the industry. ALWU hopes to see these increases reflected in other law firms across the country.

This is very heartening - but ALWU still has work to do. The issues of mental health, bullying and the major sentiment that we see in the legal profession of junior lawyers not rocking the boat or speaking out still exist whether or not our junior lawyers are getting \$8000 a year more than what they were originally before this uplift.

There is now only a small gap between first year solicitors (Y2) and second years (Y3). ALWU understands the next round of pay discussions for Y3 - Y5s is still to come and we can expect more shifts later this year.

Finally, throughout these discussions ALWU is eager to note the privilege of the legal profession. It is, for the most part, a high paying profession and to even enter Law School requires a certain degree of privilege and education that is not afforded to all. What ALWU wants is a more equitable spread of resources that the profession had.

JAINI PATEL



Monthly meeting via Zoom to catch up and coordinate for the month ahead.

All members are welcome to run - including lawyers, support staff and students (for the Student Representative role).

Why do you recommend running for the Exec for the 2021/22 term?

I recommend running for the Exec for the 2021/22 term because having a voice on the Exec presents an opportunity to help make long-lasting positive change within legal workplaces and the legal profession at large.

Why did you want to join the Exec?

I started in the law as a very naïve (and unbeknown to me, quite depressed and anxious!) 23 -year-old who didn't really know anything about the legal community or what it was like to work in the law. I didn't appreciate just how important it is to look after your health and not be subject to silly hours, unrealistic time frames, and poor behaviour. To be honest, I didn't know any better - I'm not sure if any of us did. I thought that was just the way things were.

But then February 2018 happened. I watched from the side lines as the Russell McVeagh story broke and the fury that ensued, marvelled at the creation of ALWU in 2019 (and the mind-blowing revelation that you can have a union for legal workers?!) and, by the time August 2020 rolled around, felt like I was in a place where I could use my experience to help create some positive change through ALWU's awesome work. I'm so happy to be part of an amazing team working to make the legal community a better place.

What do you think the next year will look like for ALWU?

ALWU has been game-changing since its inception - from holding key players accountable, campaigning and shedding light on the important issues (including our appalling mental health stats in legal workplaces), and providing on-the-ground advocacy. Along with continuing that work, I think a real focus for ALWU will be seeing how the new rules governing lawyers' behaviour play out in practice for our members and the tangible changes we'll see within legal workplaces as a result.

MEME CORNER

Some comic solidarity to provide relief from the strain of collective action.

WHEN THE LUNCH ISN'T CATERED



PARTNER: How is your research going?

ME: I'm on track

THE TRACK:



IF YOU WANT TO GET IN TOUCH AND MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR ALWU'S NEXT TERM, OR YOU WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN A CAMPAIGN OR AS A DELEGATE, GET IN TOUCH AT CONTACT@ALWU.ORG.NZ.

