

Labour issues under the microscope

LABOUR issues, initiatives, and outcomes were discussed during the labour and mobility session at the Development Partners Meeting on Wednesday.

Chaired by Director of Labour and Employment Relations, Patricia Tuara Demmke, the session featured a panel discussion with Bredina Drollet (Secretary of Internal Affairs), Vasie Poila

(Acting Principal Immigration Officer), John Webb (vice-chairman of the Chamber of Commerce), Owen Lewis (Director of the Cook Islands Technical Training Institute), Anthony Turua (President of the Cook Islands Workers' Association), and David Lamotte (Director of the International Labour Office).

The panel looked at labour

relations and their links to labour mobility and sustainable development.

Points raised included the need to know and understand the Cook Islands' labour market by identifying skills needs, providing in-country technical training, increasing and measuring productivity, and improving the working conditions of

both Cook Islands and migrant workers.

New initiatives proposed included the collection of timely and accurate data on the labour market and industry-led, locally-accredited technical training, as well as the training of mediators to handle labour disputes.

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Wage rate submissions close today

FEEDBACK submission for the minimum wage rate closes today and all workers in the Cook Islands are urged to have their say.

Changing work demands in the Cook Islands were discussed during the recent Development Partners Meetings, with inroads being made from the discussions.

It will be a milestone for the Cook Islands to become part of the UN family which is the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Cook Islands Workers

Association members are excited at the prospect, says president Anthony Turua.

Although this country is not yet a member, Turua says the Employment Relations Bill 2012 complies with the eight core fundamental and governance labour conventions that protect our employers and employees.

Minister Nandi Glassie believes the time is right to become an ILO member.

"The Cook Islands is ready to become a member of the Inter-

national Labour Organisation. Technical assistance from ILO and support from other development partners will help us address the changing demands of our work force."

During the Development Partners Meeting, ILO director David Lamotte said there were advantages to being a small country like the Cook Islands.

"Everyone knows the issues; you simply need all the parties at the table to work together."

From the labour panel discussion, new initiatives were proposed including the collection of data on the labour market, industry-led locally accredited technical training, the training of mediators to handle labour disputes, occupational safety and health inspectors, revision

of employment regulations, exploring of new initiatives in immigration, and the sourcing of workers from around the region.

Part of the changing work demand is the current review of the Minimum Wage Rate for 2015.

"We want to encourage all workers in our country whether you are a contractor, employer, private/public sector worker, foreign worker to submit your feedback as to what should be the minimum wage entry for 2015."

Submissions will close today and the Minimum Wage Committee will finalise its report to Minister Glassie by March 1, 2015.

Submit your feedback to Ministry of Internal Affairs. ■ MW

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What will YOU be talking about today?



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