

## The Church

In 2013, the Catholic Diocese of Auckland Justice and Peace Commission supported the Living Wage:

“Working people need wages which allow them to live with dignity and participate in society. When used in a particular employee/employer context the Living Wage calculation makes a valuable contribution toward determining whether wages are just.”

The Justice and Peace Commission is a member of the Living Wage Movement and members are active in the Living Wage Movement.

They join with Bishop Pat in encouraging all Catholics to take action to implement our Catholic social teaching requiring that every worker be paid a just wage.



*“I would like to endorse the Living Wage Movement. It tries to give us a figure that provides an opportunity for a family to live life with a modicum of respectability and not just be on the bread line.”*

BISHOP PATRICK DUNN, 20 JULY 2016

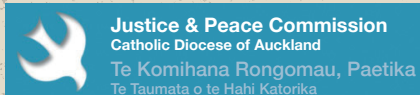
## What can be done?

- Employers can commit to paying a Living Wage.
- Workers can join trade unions to organise for a Living Wage.
- Parishes and other Church organisations can commit to paying their staff a Living Wage.
- Individuals can support good employers by buying from accredited Living Wage companies.
- Individuals can join and get active in the Living Wage Movement and/or the Justice and Peace Commission.

### For more information:

[www.livingwage.org.nz](http://www.livingwage.org.nz); [www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/justice-peace](http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/justice-peace)

[www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/youth-young-adult-ministry/young-adults/pf1/](http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/youth-young-adult-ministry/young-adults/pf1/).



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# Catholics and the Living Wage



*“Not paying a just wage, not providing work, focusing exclusively on the balance books, on financial statements, only looking at making personal profit. That goes against God!”*

POPE FRANCIS, 1 MAY 2013

The gospel calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Reflecting on social issues in the light of faith, our Popes have given us Catholic social teachings based on:

- The dignity and rights of the human person.
- The preferential option for the poor.
- Solidarity and the common good.
- The universal destination of goods.

God created the world and all the good things in it for everyone, rich and poor alike. We each have a responsibility to make sure wealth is shared fairly.



Since Pope Leo XIII in 1891, our Popes and Bishops have emphasised the importance of just wages. Wages need to be high enough to adequately provide for families and children. Jesus' parable of the vineyard described a landowner who paid all his workers a denarius, the equivalent of a Living Wage (Mt 20:1-16)

## How do we determine what a Just Wage is?

Since 1918, the United States Catholic Bishops have insisted that every worker ought to be paid a living wage. Beginning in the United States, then the United Kingdom, and more recently in New Zealand, the Living Wage Movement studied the cost of living and determined how much workers would need to be paid to make a Living Wage.

In 2012 the Catholic Bishops of the United Kingdom and Wales officially supported the Living Wage and committed to work towards it:

“The Bishops’ Conference recognises that fair wages are essential to the common good of our society. In accordance with Catholic social teaching, and as part of its mission to support the poor and vulnerable, the Bishops’ Conference fully endorses the principle of the Living Wage and encourages Catholic organisations and charities in England and Wales to work towards its implementation.”

## Why we need a Living Wage

Over the last 30 years, New Zealand has gone from one of the most equal countries in the developed world to one of the most unequal. Wages have stagnated while employees work harder and longer than ever before <sup>1</sup>:

- Many of our families struggle to provide for their children because wages are too low.
- Around 800,000 New Zealanders live below the poverty line.
- About 285,000 children live in poverty and of those, 40% come from families where at least one adult is in full time work or self-employed.
- From the mid-1980s to the mid-2000s, the gap between the rich and the poor grew faster in New Zealand than in any other developed country.

<sup>1</sup> Living Wage Movement NZ briefing paper “Inequality and the Economy”.

## How the Living Wage rate is calculated

The Anglican Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit in Lower Hutt was asked to investigate and define what a Living Wage should be in New Zealand. They determined a Living Wage on the basis of a typical household of two adults and two children with one adult working full time (40 hours per week) and the other adult working half time (20 hours per week).

The Living Wage rate is voluntary and for 2016 has been calculated to be \$19.80 per hour. It is adjusted every year in line with the average wage. The Living Wage Movement works by encouraging employers to pay all their workers, and regular contractors, at least the Living Wage.

## What about the Minimum Wage?

The Minimum Wage is the legal minimum an adult worker must be paid. It is illegal to pay below this. The problem is that the Minimum Wage, \$15.25 in 2016, is too low to meet family needs. It is set as the lowest possible compromise between employers, trade unions, and government. Recent governments have increased the Minimum Wage every year, but the experience of so many families in work but still in need shows that it is too low to be a just wage.



For many years Angela Toa has been a night cleaner at Wellington City Council where, like other cleaners in New Zealand, they are on poverty rates close to the minimum wage. Angela has been a leader in the campaign for WCC to become a Living Wage council. After more than three years of campaigning the cleaners' rates at Wellington City Council are being raised from \$15.25 to \$18.55. This is a huge step towards the Living Wage rate of \$19.80 and will change the lives of nearly 40 low paid cleaners.

*“Cleaners can’t have decent lives on very low wages,” says Angela. “The increase as a result of the Living Wage campaign will transform the lives of struggling workers and their families.”*