

Press Release
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Firing at Will Just an Excuse?

The Methodist Mission today challenged large employers to follow their lead and declare that they will not adopt the 90-day worker's trial period when it is extended to bigger employers, removing employee's right to grievance during that period.

"The Government's rationale is that there are employers who are needing to figure out if they can afford an additional worker, and they need to be able to trial that free of consequence." says Mission Chief Executive Laura Black. "Large employers, particularly state sector employers like the Council, the Hospital Board, and the University, as well as large NGOs such as ourselves, should be well managed enough, aren't engaged in that kind of entrepreneurial activity, and are certainly well resourced enough, to not face this risk."

"The Mission also believes that large employers should be able to shoulder the employer's responsibility of making sure jobs are designed right before they are filled, and of undertaking professional and skilled staff recruitment. For a large employer to give themselves this kind of "out" is basically them saying they don't have what it takes to hire the right people." said Ms Black.

The Mission's Board resolved at its May meeting to reject any extension of the law to its own hiring practices because the removal of basic protections for new employees against unfair, unreasonable, or discriminatory management practices is intolerable to the Mission's ethos.

"Let's be clear, most of the people who are fired this way are low-skilled, low-paid folk just trying to make ends meet. Poor employment standards are unfortunately not unusual; you only have to read the employment relations authority or employment court judgements to see just how poorly some people are treated by their boss. So we know there are a number of bosses out there who don't know enough about how to be a "good employer", and unfortunately it is precisely this group of employees who won't fully understand their rights and employer's responsibilities, and who are often deeply fearful of taking on a bad boss." says Ms Black. "The extension is not going to improve the quality of management in New Zealand businesses; it is going to disadvantage a group of people who are already struggling, and in a large employer can be nothing other than an excuse for poor management. We call on large, tax-funded, and ratepayer funded organisations, many of whom work with the disadvantaged, to demonstrate the quality of their management by refusing to take up this retrenchment of basic employment rights."

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