

Item 2: CTU definition of good work



Good Work Policy

This definition and policy of good work draws on international definitions from the ILO¹ alongside other work done in this space². The ILO is founded on the principle that ‘Labour is not a commodity’, and the ILO encourages us all to develop a ‘Human Centred’ approach to the Future of Work. While the ILO is an international body, in time this definition needs to be further adapted to a New Zealand and Te Tiriti O Waitangi framework and include the views and needs of kaimahi Māori and Te Ao Māori.³

This definition can be used to develop a Good Work Framework and measurement indicators equivalent to Treasury’s Living Standards Framework/Dashboard.⁴ It serves as a description of good work that can be used to help assess how New Zealand is progressing and then consider how we can foster more good work.

What is Good Work:

Good work is work (mahi) that has a lasting positive impact on the worker, the employer, and the wider community. It is work that enhances the mana of workers, affords good pay and conditions, and where both employers and employees are treated with respect and dignity.

Good work must be the sum of the aspirations of tangata whenua and tauwiwi in their working lives.

Good work done well will make New Zealand an attractive place to be a worker and business owner alike.

We have developed eight elements of Good Work/Mahi:

1. Lifelong learning and mana āheinga
2. Fair wages and economic security
3. Free from worker exploitation
4. Worker voice
5. Health and Safety and Wellbeing
6. Meaningful and fulfilling
7. Productive
8. Environment

¹ [Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators: Working Paper No.2](#)

² Employment New Zealand’s ‘Good work’ – definition commonality table, Business Leader’s Health and Safety Forum and [The Royal Society for Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce \(RSA\)](#)

³ This work is being done by the Māori Future of Work

⁴ <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

1. **Lifelong learning and Mana Āheinga:**

- Provides and enables access to ongoing training for staff and management.
- Supports and enables personal growth and development of capabilities.
- Provides workers with the skills to adapt to change such as technological advancement.
- Enables people to reach their full potential within their workplaces and roles and provides career progression.
- Provides equity and equality of opportunity and outcomes for all regardless of gender or ethnicity.

2. **Fair wages and economic security:**

- Provides material security that allows workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society.⁵
- Delivers a fair income including pay rates that are reflective of skills, experience, and responsibility.
- Provides employment that is secure and legitimate.
- Provides stable and predictable pay, hours and conditions.
- Safeguards health, incomes, pensions and livelihoods, and to provide adequate financial and other protection in the event of health and other contingencies.⁶
- Provides leave provisions, for holidays, sickness, bereavement, and parental leave recognised in employment agreements.
- Recognises workers' need to limit insecurity associated with the possible loss of work and livelihood.⁷

3. **Free from worker exploitation:**

- Enables all to claim their rights and have them enforced
- Provides freedom of choice of employment⁸
- Ensures proper classification of employment as employee, with associated rights and protections, instead of contractor
- Demands the absence of child or forced labour
- Provides hours of work that are stable and predictable
- Recognises and prevents the power imbalance that leads to exploitative practices such as excessive hours and an expectation of being available after hours and on leave
- Allows shift workers the ability to turn down working additional hours or shifts without retribution
- Provides for equity of pay and condition regardless of gender or ethnicity
- Recognises freedom of association and the right to organise and be represented by a union
- Protects privacy and protects against improper use of surveillance
- Dignity at work requires that workers be treated with respect and work in a just culture⁹.

⁵ A 2019 study showed that in NZ, 7% of working households sit below the poverty line [Plum, A., Pacheco, G., & Hick, R. \(2019\). In-Work Poverty in New Zealand. Auckland.](#)

⁶ The ILO in their [Working Paper No. 2](#), Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators describes security at work as being “mindful of the need to help safeguard health, pensions and livelihoods, and to provide adequate financial and other protection in the event of health and other contingencies. It also recognises workers’ need to limit insecurity associated with the possible loss of work and livelihood.

⁷ Same as above

⁸ In the NZ Context, this applies largely to migrant workers who rely on their employment status for their visa.

⁹ A just culture is one in which workers are not punished for actions, omissions and decisions taken by them that are in line with their experience and training, but where recklessness and destructive acts are not tolerated. It builds a learning organisation which focusses on “what went wrong” rather than “who is to blame”, encourages reporting

4. **Worker voice:**

- Provides for industrial democracy in a culture of work where workers, individually and in their unions collectively, have a say and participate in the decisions about the management and operation of the workplace, how work is arranged and in the decisions that affect their lives
- Ensures worker engagement, participation and representation in the design and operation of health and safety systems
- Ensures that communication is built on an understanding of good faith¹⁰.

5. **Health and safety and wellbeing:**

- Protects against harm to both physical health and psychological health.¹¹
- Safeguards workers from injury and fatality caused by work.
- Protects against stress, fatigue and health risks resulting from the impacts of work and excessive hours of work and unsafe staffing.
- Provides workers with autonomy or control of task or pace of work.
- Provides all staff with what they need to do their jobs safely, including tools, knowledge, skills and staffing levels.
- Provides the elements of dignity and Manaakitanga that impact on wellbeing/Ira Tangata at work, including an inclusive workplace where there is acceptance of identity (without prejudice, bias or discrimination for characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability are at the core of their identities), recognition and acknowledgement of contribution and within a high trust workplace culture.

6. **Meaningful and fulfilling¹²:**

- Recognises that finding meaning in work reflects an alignment between the work and the worker's interests, values and culture.
- Where the design of work affords workers a sense of achievement.
- Ties into lifelong learning, growth and training that offer workers the opportunity to gain the skills required to find and succeed in the type of work they find meaningful.
- Includes task identity (doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome), task significance, autonomy and feedback.
- Is influenced by elements of environmental consciousness, Tiakitanga, corporate social responsibility and inclusive leadership.
- Acknowledges the role that creativity, arts, culture and innovation play as contributions to worker satisfaction and societal wellbeing.
- Recognises mana tuku iho— that identity and belonging are fundamental to a sense of wellbeing, both individually and collectively.

of issues (such as hazards and near misses), and takes action to rectify the underlying causes. See for example <https://etu.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Building-a-just-culture.pdf>.

¹⁰ New Zealand employment law is grounded on the mutual good faith obligation between employers and employees.

¹¹ WorkSafe New Zealand report that every year in our country an estimated 700-900 people die prematurely as a result of work-related ill-health and 50-60 people are killed in work incidents.

¹² According to a [2019 survey](#) of more than 3,500 workers in the United States, Canada, Ireland and Britain, meaningful work outranks compensation, perks and other factors in career importance across all age groups.

7. **Productive**¹³:

- Employs worker's skills and knowledge effectively in a productive and cooperative endeavour that is recognised as making a valuable contribution.
- Enhances organisational and firm performance as well as the overall national economy.
- Enhances innovation, values and utilises research and development.
- Enables sustainable development and competitiveness of enterprises and countries.¹⁴

8. **Environment**¹⁵:

- Acknowledges *tangata whenua* are kaitiaki of the environment within their rohe.¹⁶
- Recognises tiakitanga and that enterprises and government are accountable for their environmental impacts.
- Takes a proactive approach to achieving environmentally sustainable, equitable and inclusive growth¹⁷.
- Work supports positive environmental outcomes, fostering biodiversity, native flora and fauna.

¹³ The [ILO definition of Decent Work states](#) that “[...] It involves opportunities for work that is **productive**’; **Productive** employment and decent work are key elements to achieving a fair globalization and poverty reduction.’; and that “Productive work is essential for workers to have acceptable livelihoods for themselves and their families, as well as to ensure sustainable development and competitiveness of enterprises and countries”.

- [The ILO also acknowledges](#) that measurement is a complex task “The Decent Work Agenda that combines access to full and productive employment with rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue means that measurement is a complex task”.
- Further ILO information which lists ‘Adequate earnings and productive work’ as one of 11 indicators for decent work can be found here [Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators: Working Paper No.2](#).

¹⁴ Refer to [ILOs Measuring Decent Work with Statistical Indicators](#) for work done in this area on measuring productivity and their other 10 indicators.

¹⁵ The ILO have set out the concept of **Environment and Good/Decent Work** in a number of documents including [‘How Decent Work and climate resilience grow together’](#) and [‘Just Transition, Decent Work, and Climate Resilience’](#). The ILO, themselves have stated that ‘you can’t do one without the other’.

- The environment is also relevant to the Just transition parts of FoW and job security because a job that’s in a fossil fuel industry for example runs the risk of becoming obsolete or a divestment risk and therefore carries a financial risk for both the business and sector and therefore a job security risk. It’s also hard to argue that a job that contributes to environmental degradation or climate change is ‘good’. And so it also ties into what we want the future of good work to look like, which is those 3 things.

¹⁶ See Ministry for the environment [here](#).

¹⁷ [ILO](#): “The globally endorsed UN Agenda for Sustainable Development stipulates that countries need to “improve global resource efficiency in consumption and production to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation by 2030”. Leveraging decent work would accelerate that process by coupling productive activities and environmental promotion”.