

23 November 2011

Media Statement

Mediation unsuccessful; Port planning for disruption

Ports of Auckland has advised that yesterday's mediation with the Maritime Union of New Zealand – Local 13 (MUNZ) was unsuccessful in reaching agreement between the parties on the terms of a new Collective Agreement.

Ports of Auckland Chief Executive Tony Gibson confirmed the Bledisloe and Fergusson container terminals, and associated road and rail services, would be closed from 10.30 pm on Thursday 1 December 2011 until 10.30 pm on Monday 5 December 2011.

"We are now working with our customers, the freight forwarding industry and road carriers to minimise the downstream consequences of industrial action on them and the overall supply chain," said Mr Gibson.

"This stoppage is especially concerning given that we are now in the lead up to Christmas, one of the busiest times in the shipping schedule."

Mr Gibson said that while discussions with customers were continuing, at this stage four ships appeared likely to divert to the Port of Tauranga and two could miss Auckland from their shipping schedule entirely. The total number of containers affected is likely to be between 6,000 and 7,000.

Ports of Auckland's multi-cargo wharves, cruise business, vehicle import trade, marine services, Onehunga seaport, Wiri Inland Port and Seafuels barge Awanuia are not affected by the proposed strike. The on-dock empty container depot will also remain open.

Mr Gibson also said the company would be vigorously defending proceedings issued by the union in the Employment Relations Authority alleging breach of good faith.

"Ports of Auckland has been communicating openly and factually with employees and we will be defending this action vigorously. This is a tactic we have seen from the union before. We have the right to communicate directly with our employees and we will continue to do so."

The proposed action involves 327 employees out of a total of 580.

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