Strengthening Our Collective Future:

Proposed Membership Fee Increase from December 2026

2 April 2026

Dear Colleagues

We all face ongoing challenges. Cost-of-living pressures in New Zealand remain high, with inflation still exceeding target levels and essentials like energy and food still climbing. Just as each of us feels the pinch of rising costs, our union also feels it – the expenses of campaigning, travel for negotiations and meetings, legal support, and day-to-day operations have all increased. We have entered a more difficult political climate as well, meaning our advocacy and vigilance must continue at full strength. In short, the need for a strong, well-resourced union is greater than ever, to consolidate our past and more recent gains and to tackle the battles ahead on your behalf.

Why an Increase in Membership Fees is Proposed

Despite inflation and rising costs, NZRDA's membership fee has remained at $480 per year for over 25 years (the last increase was April 2001). In recent times, we made a deliberate choice to hold our fee steady to ease financial pressure on members. However, this approach is no longer sustainable with the increases to general prices and operating costs, effectively eroding the real value of your fees. By contrast, most other unions regularly adjust their fees to keep up with inflation – for example, the nurses' union NZNO typically increases fees annually in line with CPI (about 2–4% per year). These regular small adjustments help unions meet rising costs and avoid large jumps. NZRDA has instead absorbed cost increases for a long time without passing them on to members, but we can't continue to do so indefinitely without weakening our financial base.

In the last financial year (2025/2026), NZRDA made a small operating profit; that is the difference between the subscriptions paid and the cost of running the core services of the union. We did not negotiate the Te Whatu Ora collective agreement in this financial year, making it a "cheaper" year to operate than 2026 will be. As a result, we expect to make an operating deficit in 2026/2027. We do have contingency funds available to us but usually keep this for major events such as big legal cases or difficult bargaining demanding full-on media campaigns and the like.

After careful consideration of all these factors the National Executive is proposing a membership fee adjustment effective December 2026. The annual subscription would increase from $480 to $540 per year (from $40 to $45 if paid monthly). This $60 annual adjustment equates to $5 per month more for each member.

Supporting Our Collective Strength: Where Your Fees Go

It's important to remember what your membership fee funds and why this investment matters for every RMO. NZRDA is a non-profit organisation entirely focused on serving its members. Your fees go directly toward the union's work of advocating for you and your colleagues. In practical terms, membership fees cover the costs of running the union, including day-to-day administration, professional advocacy, legal

09 526 0280
ask@nzrda.org.nz
nzrda.org.nz

PO Box 11 369
Ellerslie
Auckland 1542

representation, accounting and compliance requirements, and supporting the National Executive (your elected RMO leaders) and delegates. Below are some of the key benefits and services that your membership makes possible:

- **Collective Bargaining Power:** Negotiation of Collective Agreements that deliver fair pay and conditions for RMOs. For example, settlement of the current Te Whatu Ora CA secured salary increases and preserved crucial rights like paid study leave, sick leave, and safe hour limits. These victories are a direct result of our collective strength, funded by members.

- **Individual Support & Representation:** Expert advice and legal support for the employment issues you face. Whether it's an incorrect pay, a roster dispute, or a personal grievance, NZRDA provides experienced advocates and lawyers to assist and, if needed, represent you. This one-on-one support is available to every financial member and can be a lifesaver.

- **Advocacy for Safe Work Environments:** Ongoing campaigns for safer working conditions and wellbeing. Your fees help us push for safer rosters, limits on excessive hours, adequate staffing, and healthier workplaces. We enforce the safer hours provisions (e.g. 10 days on, 4 nights max) we've won, and we continue to advocate on issues like bullying, fatigue, and parking safety for night shifts.

- **Protective Clauses & Benefits:** The union ensures enforcement of all the protective clauses we've fought for. This includes reimbursement of training costs and exam fees, guaranteed minimum staffing levels and relief cover, robust overtime and penalty rates, and other contractual protections that improve your day-to-day working life.

- **A Voice in Healthcare & Future Planning:** We don't just react to problems – we proactively work with health system leaders to shape the future for RMOs. Membership funds enable NZRDA to participate in high-level discussions about workforce planning, training pathways, and healthcare reforms. We are campaigning to address the RMO shortage and to ensure a smoother transition from registrar to consultant (including the job security provisions for new SMOs that we achieved in the latest contract). Your union gives you a seat at the table in these critical conversations.

Every one of these activities – from negotiating a pay rise to answering a 2:00 AM call from a member in distress – is funded by members' subscriptions. It is your collective contributions that give NZRDA the resources to "have your back" whenever and wherever needed. Or as one union puts it succinctly, "your fees enable all of us together to win big and win often".

Looking Ahead: Investing in Ourselves for 2026 and Beyond

We understand that no one likes a fee increase, especially in times of economic strain. This decision was not taken lightly. It comes after many years of no changes to the fee, during which we worked hard to optimize our operations and explore alternative funding (and we will continue to do so). Ultimately, however, the Executive supported by the Annual General Meeting believes this adjustment is necessary to maintain the strength of our union – your union – so that we can continue to protect and advance your interests.

All that being said, the decision is yours – the members of NZRDA. This letter is to introduce the proposition to you, to enable you to think about it and ask what questions you may have (please email secretary@nzrda.org.nz). Later in the year, we will put the question to a ballot of the members to make the decision.

Conclusion: Together, We Move Forward

In summary, the NZRDA Executive is proposing to adjust the annual membership fee from $480 to $540 effective December 2026. We wanted to communicate the reasons for this proposal openly and clearly. Fundamentally, this is about investing in ourselves; it is thanks to your membership and engagement that NZRDA has been able to win safer hours, better pay, and improved working conditions over the last 40 years. This fee change will ensure we can keep that momentum going.

We acknowledge that any increase in expenses – no matter how small weekly – can be concerning; this is why the decision is ultimately yours. Regardless of the outcome, we remain committed to maximizing the value of your membership and will continue to deliver strong advocacy, protect your rights, and push for progress on all fronts.

Thank you for your solidarity and for being part of the NZRDA. With your continued support, we look forward to tackling the challenges of 2026 and beyond.

Ngā mihi nui

Dr Bill Lu
NZRDA Executive Secretary/ Treasurer (on behalf of the NZRDA National Executive)

References:

- NZRDA, 2024 Bargaining Campaign Highlights – summary of outcomes from the 2024 collective agreement negotiations (including pay rise, exam step retention, and rostering improvements) nzrda.org.nz
- NZRDA, Join Us – Membership Fees – explanation of how membership fees fund the union's administration, advocacy, legal support, and other member services nzrda.org.nz
- NZNO (Nurses' Union), Kaitiaki Nursing NZ letter (Mar 2025) – discussing routine CPI-linked fee increases and rising union costs in line with cost of living kaitiaki.org.nz
- PSA, Membership Fee Increase Notice (Jan 2025) – noting the need to raise fees to keep up with inflation and maintain effective advocacy during a challenging environment psa.org.nz
- E tū, Union Fee Update 2025 – emphasising that annual small fee increases (2.2% in 2025) ensure the union can meet rising costs and continue supporting members' campaigns etu.nz
- NZCTU Media Release (July 2025) – detailing recent inflation impacts on household costs (e.g. 3% annual rise overall, with higher increases in essentials) which affect both members and union operations union.org.nz
- RNZ News (Apr 2024), Resident doctors to strike… – reporting on the Resident Doctors' strike and initial pay offer (15–25% increases for some, but potential freezes for others) that led to NZRDA industrial action rnz.co.nz