



13 November 2014

[Address]

Dear [name]

Wellington Office

PSA House
11 Aurora Terrace
PO Box 3817
Wellington 6011
Phone 04 495 7633
Email: enquiries@psa.org.nz

Postponement of Statistics NZ data

We are writing to you as one of the key stakeholder groups involved in collecting data for important economic indices like the Food Price Index and the Consumer Price Index.

The Public Service Association (PSA) represents more than 400 staff at Statistics New Zealand. Our members are passionate about their work. They are seeking a pay system that allows for cost of living increases to be included in their pay, and a clear pathway to progress to the market rate for the job. Statistics NZ have refused any across-the-board pay rise, leaving staff falling increasingly behind the cost of living.

Since 8th September, staff have been involved in various forms of industrial action. This has included working to rule and withholding all Consumer Price Index (CPI) data from 29 October to 25 December. Field interviewers who collect raw data for processing by Statistics staff are withholding this data until Statistics NZ demonstrates a willingness to negotiate meaningfully.

Statistics NZ has postponed indefinitely the release of the Food Price Index: November 2014. Other releases, including the Consumer Price Index, are also currently at risk of postponement. At the same time, Statistics NZ has put in place a contingency plan to continue collecting field data from retailers. In effect, it has set up a process of double data collection. We have had reports from some of our field interviewer members that retailers are being contacted multiple times.

The PSA believes that not only is this an inconvenience to retailers – it is a waste of public money. We are making inquiries about the cost of deploying staff to do our members' work and then further deploying temps to meet the workload of the transferred staff; and the cost of extra flights, accommodation, car travel and training of these additional staff. If the new money that is being spent on duplication of data collection was added to the pay budget we could probably settle these negotiations. The use of untrained redeployed staff also presents a significant risk to the integrity of the data that contributes to New Zealand's economic reporting.

As an important stakeholder we are raising these issues with you because we believe this prolonged situation cannot be allowed to continue. We would encourage you to make contact with the Government Statistician Liz MacPherson to express your concern, at liz.macpherson@stats.govt.nz. You can find more information about this dispute on <http://www.psa.org.nz/media/news/bargaining-at-statistics-new-zealand/>.

Yours sincerely,
Basil Prestidge
PSA assistant secretary