

## Proposal for the Merger of the Southern Local Government Officers' Union with the PSA

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### Proposal

It is proposed that the Southern Local Government Officers' Union (SLGOU) merge with the New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (the PSA) following a vote of SLGOU members and the decision of the executive board of the PSA. This paper sets out the current arrangements for SLGOU members and what the proposal would mean in different areas of the union's operations and governance.

### Objective

The objective of this merger proposal is to build a strong union organisation able to influence the political, industrial, economic and social environment for the benefit of the combined membership of our two unions and in particular to be an effective and influential union for those who work in local government.

### Background

The executive board of the New Zealand Public Service Association Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi (PSA) and the Management Committee of the Southern Local Government Officers Union (SLGOU) have agreed to work towards a merger of SLGOU with the PSA. Both unions have a proud history of effective organising in local government. Both feel that the time is right to explore coming together to provide a single union for local government staff.

The merger would mean we represent more than 8,000 members in the sector. This would give us a stronger national voice. As local government comes under pressure from central government it becomes increasingly important that we speak with one voice on matters that affect us all.

Following negotiations the unions have agreed this proposal to go to the management committee and members of SLGOU and the local government sector committee and executive board of the PSA. Each union will engage with its members and arrive at a final decision through its own democratic processes and in accordance with its rules.

## Governance

| Current arrangements   | Proposal  |
|--|---|
| <p>SLGOU members are represented at workplace by delegates and, in larger organisations, liaison committees. Liaison committees give members a reasonable opportunity to participate in the affairs of the union, to deal with industrial matters relating to their employer and participate in bargaining for the renewal of their collective bargaining.</p> | <p>Local government members in Canterbury and Otago will be represented at workplace level by delegates and, in larger organisations (also known as 'enterprises') enterprise delegate committees. Enterprise delegate committees are responsible for co-ordinating union activities (including industrial matters and participation in bargaining) in the enterprise and liaising with the other relevant parts of the PSA's governance structures.</p>  |
| <p>There is a management committee consisting of 10 members elected every two years from across the membership, plus the chairperson of each liaison committee and the union secretary. The management committee controls the affairs of the union, directs the policy of the union and decides on all financial matters.</p>                                  | <p>There is a dedicated local government sector committee of the PSA representing members from different regions around the country. The sector committee representatives are elected by delegates in each region. The committee is responsible for representing the interests of members in local government within the PSA. It is proposed that there will be an additional 2 representatives on the sector committee representing the South Island (3 in total). The 2 new representatives will be based in Otago and Canterbury and the committee will agree the boundaries of their constituencies.</p> <p>The convener of the local government sector sits on the executive board, which is the managing committee of the PSA, with responsibility for overseeing the effective operation of the union. She/he has one vote – the same as all other sectors, including the largest.</p> |
| <p>There is a joint council of SLGOU, consisting of the management committee, plus each of the liaison committees, plus an ad hoc committee of not less than 5 and not more than 12 delegates. The joint council acts as the annual general meeting of SLGOU and conducts its business by postal vote of its members.</p>                                      | <p>The local government sector is entitled to representatives to the biennial delegates' congress and the annual general meeting in proportion to the number of members in the sector.</p>  |
|  | <p>In addition the PSA operates a number of networks that provide alternative mechanisms for members to engage with the union: Women, Deaf and Disabled, PSA Pasifika, PSA Youth and Out@PSA, Health and Safety, Ethics and Eco Reps</p>  |

## Member support

| Current arrangements   | Proposal  |
|--|---|
| <p>Currently SLGOU members are well supported by their organisers who they can access easily when needed. They have a high ratio of organisers to members but those organisers also carry responsibility for non-organising duties such as IT, finance, procurement, communications and the membership system. The union has a strong focus on local issues and history of being effective in negotiations, and members are concerned to maintain current levels of service following the merger with the PSA.</p> | <p>It is proposed that local government workers in Canterbury and Otago will be supported by a team dedicated to organising, with no additional responsibilities. While the ratio of organisers to staff will reduce over time they will be supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An in house legal team, with access to external legal expertise</li> <li>• Other teams looking after finance, IT, property, membership, policy and communications to free up organiser time</li> <li>• Other organisers in the Christchurch and Dunedin offices who can help out in campaigns and can cover when local government organisers are absent</li> <li>• A national local government organising team who understand the local government sector and the challenges of organising there</li> <li>• Delegates who will have an enhanced role and resources, and receive comprehensive training in how to work in different ways</li> </ul> |

## Staffing levels

| Current arrangements  | Proposal   |
|---|--|
| <p>SLGOU currently employs one accounts and support officer, 3 organisers and one assistant and one union secretary for around 2,000 members.</p> | <p>It is proposed that local government workers in Canterbury and Otago will be supported initially by 5 staff dedicated to organising. Over a transition period of two years the organising staffing focused directly on local government in Canterbury and Otago will be reduced to 2.5 (2 on Christchurch and 0.5 in Dunedin), but this will be accompanied by a shift to an enhanced role for delegates supported by in depth delegate training and resources (see the section on member support).</p> |

## Subscription fees

| Current arrangements   |                        | Proposal   |                        |
|--|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Normal Weekly Hours</b>   | <b>Fortnightly Fee</b> | <b>Gross annual salary</b>   | <b>Fortnightly fee</b> |
| Over 20 hours  | \$13.40                | Over \$39,104  | \$16.70                |
| More than 10.5 hours and up to 20 hours  | \$8.90                 | Between \$18,380 and \$39,104  | \$8.30                 |
| More than 7 hours and up to 10.5 hours   | \$4.50                 | Under \$18,380   | \$4.10                 |
| More than 3.5 hours and up to 7 hours  | \$3.00                 |  |                        |
| Up to 3.5 hours  | \$1.50                 |  |                        |
| SLGOU currently reviews its fees annually and increases are applied from 1 July each year.                         |                        | These fees take effect from 1 March 2015 and are reviewed every two years.   |                        |
| The fees of the Southern Local Government Officers' Union are based on whether a member is full-time or part time. |                        | The PSA fees are based on gross annual salary. It is estimated that around 500 - 600 SLGOU members would receive a reduction in subscription fees as a result of the merger and about 1400 - 1500 would pay an increased fee.  |                        |
|  |                        | It is proposed that the move to the new subscription fees would consist of 3 transitional annual steps occurring on 1 July 2015, 1 July 2016 and on 1 July 2017. This means that SLGOU members' subscription fees would remain unchanged until 1 July next year and the increases would coincide with pay increases for most local government workers in Canterbury and Otago. The increases would be spread out as evenly as possible over the 3 transitional steps taking into account the next PSA fee review effective 1 March 2017. |                        |

## Membership Benefits

| Current arrangements  | Proposal  |
|---|---|
| <p>SLGOU members are provided with the full range of industrial benefits and services such as negotiation of collective agreements and representation in personal grievances. In addition they can get information about joining the Co-operative Bank and Unimed health insurance.</p> | <p>Local government members in Canterbury and Otago will be provided with the full range of industrial benefits and services such as negotiation of collective agreements and representation in personal grievances. In addition as members of the PSA they will have access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSA holiday homes in a number of different locations around the country (including a reciprocal arrangement with the holiday home of the South Australian PSA),</li> <li>• Great savings on car hire, travel, hotels, adventure, magazines and books</li> <li>• Savings on health, risk, home, content and car insurance.</li> <li>• An expanded range of travel and lifestyle benefits through our partnership with Member Advantage, a union-owned Australian company.</li> </ul> |
| <p>SLGOU is active in advocacy on policy matters affecting members at a local level.</p>  | <p>The PSA advocates on policy matters at both a national and local level. The union has relationships with national stakeholder groups such as Local Government NZ, professional associations and community groups with an interest in local government, and has contact with government officials and the Minister of Local Government. There is a policy advisor working on local government issues.</p>   |