

**PRESS RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**

Three non-metro area clothing employer associations have abandoned their final attempt to prevent the Minister of Labour from extending this year's clothing industry wage agreement to the whole industry, when they withdrew their urgent interdict application which was due to be heard in the Durban Labour Court earlier today.

The Northern Decentralised Clothing Manufacturers' Association, the Northern KwaZulu-Natal Clothing Manufacturers' Association and the Lower South Coast Clothing Manufacturers' Association brought their urgent interdict application against the Minister and the National Bargaining Council for the Clothing Manufacturing Industry (NBC) late on Friday 2nd December 2005 and the matter was set down for final determination in the Durban Labour Court today.

The Southern African Clothing & Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) was not originally cited as a respondent but launched an urgent application to the Court to be joined as a respondent in the matter, since the union has a substantial interest in the issue. The 'union's joinder' application was uncontested and accepted by the 3 applicants.

The 3 applicant employer associations realised that they had a very poor case and, prior to the actual commencement of Court proceedings, opted to rather withdraw their case and agreed to pay at least 50% of the legal costs of the Minister, the NBC and the union. This settlement was made an order of the Court.

This means that the Labour Minister will now publish the new clothing wage agreement in the government gazette tomorrow (15 December 2005) and it will come into effect on Monday 19 December 2005. It will be binding on all clothing employers and workers in all parts of South

Africa . It is the first time in the history of the clothing industry that there will be one single wage agreement covering the whole country and it will give legislated wage coverage to just under 100 000 clothing workers.

The agreement requires this year's wage increase to be backdated to 1 July 2005 .

SACTWU welcomes this development as a major step forward in our struggle for better wages in the non-metro areas of the industry. The minimum wages in these non-metro areas (such as Ladysmith, Newcastle , Botshabelo, QwaQwa, Dimbaza, and Isithebe, Mogwasi and Babelegi) are already very low. For example, before the new wage increase comes into effect, the minimum weekly wage for a general worker is R220.42 and for a machinist it is R222.92. The new wage rate, once gazetted, will mean an increase of only R20.80. We find it therefore disappointing that these non-metro employers have even tried to block this increase on an already very low minimum wage for workers in the poorest parts of the country.

Issued by

ANDRE KRIEL

SACTWU

DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

If further comment is required, please try to contact the following people:

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They are SACTWU's 2 National Organising Secretaries
  
  2. For the NBC: William Roberts (0834404107). He is the General Secretary of the bargaining council
  
  3. For the 3 employer associations: John Lingenfelder (0828833487) He is the Organiser of the three employer associations
  
  4. For the Minister: Johan Crouse (012) 3094132 - He is the Registrar of Labour Relations
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