

RBPlat and NUM sign five-year wage deal

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Royal Bafokeng Platinum and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) on Thursday broke new ground, announcing a five-year wage agreement that will bring the lowest paid up to R12,500 by the end of the period.

The agreement will also see all employees allocated a house to the value of R500,000 whose purchase the company will subsidise. This will lead to the phasing out of living-out allowances, which led to the proliferation of shanty towns around the mines.

The figure of R12,500 was the rallying call during the five-month strike by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, which ended last month.

The settlement with the NUM is effective from July 1 and will give all unskilled and semiskilled workers, such as machine operators, a 10% increase for three of the five years and 9% for two. Rock-drill operators receive slightly higher increases, an extra 0.5% a year.

Employees in the Supervisory Bargaining Unit will receive annual increases of 8% for three of the years and 7% for two years.

The Royal Bafokeng deal includes a hefty increase to the base rate of the lowest-paid underground worker of R2,000. The NUM said that the agreement would take the lowest paid, on the basic wage, to “over R12,000 a month” within the first three years of the agreement.

Company spokesman Mpueleng Pooe could only confirm that the total cash package, which includes a living-out allowance, would exceed R12,500. He would not disclose the basic wage.

The apparent difference over when the cash wage would reach R12,500 and what it included could not be resolved at the time of going to press yesterday.

The resolution of the housing problem is a notable achievement. As workers take occupation of their houses, the living-out allowance will be replaced with a more substantial housing allowance to subsidise bond repayments.

The NUM branch chairman at Rustenburg Platinum, Papi Motete, said bond repayments of R3,000 would be subsidised at R2,617. “People coming from the Eastern Cape and other places must bring their wives and stay with them there. It will be possible for mine workers to have a normal family life like everybody else.”

The housing solution is part of a “total value proposition” that will incorporate the negotiation of an efficiency model.