

Rail union says new locomotives a great investment in future of KiwiRail

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Monday 11 October 2021

The Union representing rail workers is backing KiwiRail's new purchase of KR locomotives from Swiss-based company Stadler, and the involvement of workers in the procurement process.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says the initial order of 57 Stadler locomotives will be manufactured in Spain and will be used in the South Island.

An indicative timeline shows the first locomotives will start arriving in the country in mid to late 2023.

Mr Butson says the RMTU and workers had previously been critical of the purchase of CRRC Dalian locos from China which were regarded as unreliable by many workers who operated them.

"KiwiRail has changed its procurement process and involved workers in the process, and this has led to a more positive outcome for everyone."

This meant rail workers being involved in the spec setting and bid evaluations for the preferred supplier, says Mr Butson.

The choice of Stadler as supplier had been welcomed by workers and their Union as an investment in high quality locomotive stock for the future.

RMTU National Vice-President Howard Phillips is one of the worker locomotive engineer reps on the project.

He says the procurement process for the new locomotives has resulted in the selection of the best bidder and best machine to support rail operations in the South Island for the next 20–30 years.

“RMTU worker reps have been deeply involved in the process. This is the first time workers who maintain and operate our locomotives have had a say in the purchase of new rail vehicles.”

He says the resulting selection of a modern, state-of-the-art locomotive from a reputable manufacturer speaks for itself.

“The key to delivering the best possible locomotive will rely on continued worker involvement and wider member consultation in the design process. One of the great benefits of KiwiRail’s unionised workforce is the ability for the worker reps, rail engineers, and even managers to work cooperatively on these crucial and expensive decisions.”

RMTU member Luke James is a mechanical engineer rep on the project.

He says he was impressed with the maturity which KiwiRail has shown in this procurement process through engagement with the RMTU.

“There has been a willingness to take into account full life running costs, training and ongoing support requirements for the new locomotives, instead of just looking at the off the shelf price tag.”

Mr James says this decision will provide New Zealand with a fit for purpose locomotive that should give us many years of trouble free use.

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