



Media Release

Rail & Maritime Transport Union

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## Partial Sale of Hillside Cold Comfort as 90 Jobs Face the Axe

Today's announcement that KiwiRail has sold off part of Dunedin's Hillside Railway workshops will be cold comfort to nearly ninety workers who face redundancy says the Rail and Maritime Transport Union.

'KiwiRail was been trying to sell Hillside since April because ever since last year when the company decided to buy rolling stock overseas the viability of the workshops was thrown into question,' said RMTU Acting General Secretary Todd Valster.

'The fact the foundry will remain open under the new owner is of some solace, and KiwiRail's decision to retain eight jobs to do heavy lift maintenance on the site makes sense, but the fact is that the closure of the manufacturing facility is a body blow,' he said.

'Hillside has a long and proud history of manufacturing railway rolling stock going back to the early years of last century,' said RMTU Acting General Secretary Todd Valster, 'it is ironic that even during the worst years of privatisation it managed to survive and keep building trains and yet now it's in the hands of a National Government it faces closure, he said.

'Ever since then Transport Minister Steven Joyce went back on his May 2010 promise that Hillside would be building "hundreds of wagons", the clock has been ticking for Hillside and its workforce.'

'Hillside is more than just a factory, it is a symbol of what New Zealanders once were – a practical, self-reliant and confident people who built a nation that once had the world's highest standard of living. This Government has chosen to destroy that heritage' said Valster.

'At a time when we have the highest unemployment since the last time they were in power, it is clear that National has no plan for job growth, no strategy for manufacturing and doesn't care that our most successful export is skilled workers,' he said.

'KiwiRail management and the workforce have exhausted every option to try and keep the workshops going but their hands have been tied by a Board that is packed with ideologically driven political appointees who slavishly follow National's line that people's livelihoods must be left to the whim of the market,' he said.

'John Key, Stephen Joyce, current Transport minister Gerry Brownlee and KiwiRail Board Chairman John Spencer are the guilty men. The politicians will bleat they can have no part in an operational decision by a state owned enterprise - those of us who live in the real world know that's not true the decision to stop building rolling stock in New Zealand ultimately rests with the Minister,' he said.

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