



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Rail & Maritime Transport Union**

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# **Transdev's fake news is no solution to Metlink driver shortage**

Wellington train drivers say they are quitting their jobs due to low morale and company mismanagement.

Their union says employer Transdev is spreading fake news about drivers leaving for higher wages at KiwiRail, where pay is the same or very similar for most workers and service progression scales are the same.

Since management of the Metlink rail network was handed over to French multinational Transdev in July 2016, staff say things have gone from bad to worse.

“At times we’ve been almost overwhelmed with complaints,” says Wayne Butson, General Secretary of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union.

“Our members repeatedly tried to warn Transdev about this looming crisis, but they refused to hear it.”

In 2017 and 2018, the company cancelled multiple driver schools, directly contributing to the current crisis.

When new Metlink timetables were introduced in July 2018, frontline staff complained they were not being rostered on in sufficient numbers to ensure safe and efficient operations.

This advice from the coalface was ignored when it reached Transdev Wellington's offices, in favour of a cost-cutting strategy that prioritised short term profits and bonuses for the company's overseas shareholders.

"Unfortunately for Wellington commuters, the chickens of mismanagement are coming home to roost," says Mr Butson.

"There are more who wish to leave Transdev Wellington than KiwiRail has vacancies, and if Australia starts recruiting again the exodus will go from bad to worse."

Despite the similarity in pay scales, Transdev and KiwiRail have sharply divergent management cultures.

KiwiRail's commitment to cooperation and engagement with staff allowed a new 2018 collective agreement to be negotiated in hours, with a progressive flat rate increase across all grades.

By contrast, Transdev's tone deaf approach led to Wellington's first railway strikes in 20 years.

The RMTU warns that unless Transdev significantly increases training of new drivers and improves its attitude toward the workforce, train drivers and other grades of staff will continue to leave.

"We fear that services will continue to be cancelled, and at worst there may need to be timetable changes to reduce services," says Mr Butson.

"Wellingtonians pay for and deserve a world class train service. If every dollar of funding went into the operation instead of creating profits for foreign multinationals, they would have it."

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**For further information, please contact:**

**Wayne Butson**

General Secretary  
Rail & Maritime Transport Union  
Mobile: 027 496 2461  
Office: 04 473 6693