

Dunedin Railways workers propose positive solutions to prevent closure

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Thursday 30 April 2020

Workers at Dunedin Railways Limited (DRL) have put forward a proposal to reinvigorate the company, retaining the iconic Taieri Gorge Railway and saving up to 70 jobs.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Otago Branch Secretary Dave Kearns says the union, representing about fifty workers at Dunedin Railways, has today submitted the proposal ([attached](#)) as part of the consultation process with management.

Dunedin Railways is 100% owned by Dunedin City Holdings Limited, the business arm of the Dunedin City Council.

Mr Kearns says the DRL Board of Directors had a 'negative mindset' and had recommended closing the railway to the Dunedin City Council, blaming falling revenues due to the COVID19 pandemic.

Dunedin City Councillors had voted to mothball the railway instead, but Mr Kearns says he is concerned that they have not been given the correct information about how this would work.

'The DRL plan is meaningless as it is so lacking in detail. This raises questions regarding the competence and fitness of DRL's board and senior management.'

Mr Kearns says there are a number of opportunities for rail services that have been ignored.

Options included the reconfiguration of the business away from the cruise ship market to the domestic market.

There was potential for staff and rolling stock to provide commuter services to local destinations such as Mosgiel and Port Chalmers, as well as the establishment of long distance passenger services between Dunedin and other cities on the main south line.

Other possibilities included the sale or transfer of ownership of the Wingatui to Middlemarch line to KiwiRail, with DRL to operate like other heritage rail concerns and pay a fee for track access whilst refocusing their business.

The Union was calling for genuine engagement by DRL management with staff and their union to investigate alternative options for the future of DRL, he says.

Regarding the DCC's request for 'options for DRL's operating and governance structure in the interim', the RMTU is calling for the immediate dismissal of the current board and the appointment of a new board with staff representation.

Mr Kearns says a Facebook page Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling had gained over 1200 supporters this week.

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