



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Rail & Maritime Transport Union**

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## **Hillside lives again: “We never gave up”, say rail workers**

Workers in Dunedin and around New Zealand are celebrating news of the government’s almost \$20 million investment into Hillside engineering workshop, rescuing the site from years of unnecessary and artificially imposed decline.

KiwiRail’s decision in 2011 to import rail wagons from China rather than build them in South Dunedin dealt a devastating blow to the working class neighbourhood, with 90 jobs lost as the workshop fell comparatively quiet for years on end.

“Not only was it morally repugnant to treat loyal and skilled staff that way, it was economically absurd to a point verging on criminal sabotage,” says Wayne Butson, National Secretary of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union.

“Rail is the future of transport, both economically efficient and environmentally friendly, and our railways are the backbone of this country. What kind of government allows KiwiRail’s taxpayer money to be spent on economic self-harm?”

RMTU members and supporters protested the decision across the country, with pickets, street marches and a petition signed by thousands of New Zealanders.

Persistent lobbying by the union, transport advocates and community groups kept the campaign for green transport and Kiwi jobs alive and politically relevant as the years went by.

The RMTU says support from the Labour-led government for rail transport and domestic industry is bringing hope to regional New Zealand and putting the country's economy back on track.

"We fought tooth and nail to defend Hillside jobs, and we promised to never give up the fight. There are no words that could adequately describe how happy I am to know the jobs are finally coming back and those workshops will thrive once again," says Mr Butson.

"Hillside is a place where fathers worked alongside their sons for over a hundred years, building the best rolling stock in the world right here in New Zealand. We never gave up hope it would be that again. Sanity is restored."

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