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Final Decision on Hillside Jobs a Huge Blow for Dunedin and New Zealand Manufacturing

KiwiRail today confirmed that 90 jobs at Hillside Railway Workshops will be slashed by the end of January, something the Rail and Maritime Transport Union says is a direct result of government policy.

Hillside workers been in limbo since April when the state owned rail operator announced it was seeking a buyer for the 130 year old workshops.

The foundry has been sold to Australian company Bradkin, meaning 18 jobs will stay, but no buyer could be found for the other manufacturing facilities. KiwiRail will keep half a dozen or so workers to run its heavy lift maintenance operation but the rest of Hillside will close.

'The consultation period with KiwiRail closed today and it's no surprise to hear that their proposal to lay off 90 workers hasn't substantially changed,' said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

'This is simply the final chapter in a sad tale of ideologically driven decisions by the Minister of Transport and his political puppets on KiwiRail's Board. Ever since it was decided to buy cheap and shoddy rolling stock from overseas we've all been picking up the tab, and now we're going to pay even more as most of these skilled workers head off overseas,' he said.

'This is an industrial bloodbath – it's not just the ninety jobs at Hillside, every manufacturing job supports another 2 to 5 jobs in the wider economy. It's plain to anyone with eyes in their head that we need a strategy for manufacturing to stop the haemorrhage but this Government just doesn't care,' he said.

'We hope that the opposition's call for the Auditor General to investigate KiwiRail's tendering and contracting processes is heeded, it would be good to have some light shed on what is happening here,' he said.

'Today is a black day for the people of Dunedin and for New Zealand manufacturing as Hillside becomes the latest casualty of National's blind faith in market forces,' Wayne Butson said.

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