



Media Release

Rail & Maritime Transport Union 5th November 2017

Auckland Transport Misleading the Public Over Rail Safety

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) says the deployment of “Transport Officers” on Auckland’s trains, buses and ferries from tomorrow will not be a boost to safety and Auckland Transport (AT) is misleading the public over their role and potential effectiveness.

“The RMTU represents drivers and on-board crews that staff Auckland passenger trains and we are in no doubt that the deployment of Transport Officers are the first step in removing on-board train crew off those trains,” said RMTU Organiser John Kerr.

“AT are spinning the introduction of Transport Officers as a boost to passenger safety when in fact they are nothing of the sort,” he said.

“Transport Officers will not have sufficient legal powers to enforce order on trains, buses or ferries; they have no powers of arrest or detention; their ability to issue infringement notices is essentially similar to parking wardens and will not stop the sort of bad behaviour we sometimes see on public transport,” he said.

“More uniformed staff on the network can be an effective deterrent to anti-social elements but AT are not denying that the Transport Officers are the first step in a plan to remove permanent on-board crew off each and every train. They know that even with over 200 of these Transport Officers on their payroll there will not be enough to guarantee that any given train, bus or ferry will have a Transport Officer on board, “ he said.

“AT have said there are no immediate plans to take permanent on-board staff off passenger trains but they are being very tight lipped about their intentions thereafter” he said.

“The rail regulator, the New Zealand Transport Authority (NZTA) is currently considering an application by Auckland commuter train operator, the foreign owned multi-national Transdev, to allow driver door operation. If that is granted we know that AT and Transdev intend to remove other train crew off the trains. AT are deploying Transport Officers as a sop to the public when the net effect will be fewer, not more, uniformed staff on the network with all the attendant risk to public safety,” he said.

“Our union believes that Transport Officers will only boost safety if they are deployed as well as safety critical permanent on-board train staff. What would be even better would be if Transport Officers were to be given the kind of powers that transport police exercise in other countries, and there is no likelihood of that under current law,” he said.

“We believe AT is making policy up in a piecemeal fashion and that’s not good enough. Our members are asking where the responsibility of the Transport Officers starts and stops in relation to train crew in the event of a safety critical incident. The fact that AT has been announcing increases in the numbers of Transport Officers in an ad hoc fashion, most recently via social media, does not increase our confidence in their planning,” he said.

“The RMTU is campaigning to keep rail passengers safe: we have had overwhelming support from passengers, local politicians, and advocacy groups for students, women and the disabled communities as well as the Public Transport Users’ Association. It’s about time the bureaucrats at AT started listening to the will of the people. he said.

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