

Media Release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union  
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## **Greater use of grade separation on rail crossings needed**

The union for rail workers says that greater use of grade separation such as over bridges or underpasses are needed to properly protect pedestrians from rail accidents.

This morning KiwiRail [released its findings](#) on an accident at the Morningside pedestrian level crossing in Auckland, in which a woman using a wheelchair was seriously injured after she was hit by a train.

“Most importantly we want to express our ongoing sympathy for the woman who suffered such a horrific incident, and commend the two others who ran to her assistance on that morning,” said Wayne Butson, General Secretary of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union.

“Level crossings of all types are high stress points for rail staff operating rail locomotives and vehicles. Nobody comes to work wanting to kill or seriously injure another human being. We need to learn from this incident and make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

“In our view, the best decision that could be made is for full grade separation, such as over bridges or underpasses, to remove the risk inherent in crossing designs that force pedestrian interaction with trains which have no ability to stop at short notice.”

“Morningside has no grade separation and remains a poor design.”

Staff cuts at KiwiRail’s Infrastructure and Engineering division last year were terribly short-sighted, with the Wellington and Auckland metro areas suffering severe job cuts, Wayne Butson said.

“We were deeply concerned then, and still are, about the impact on safety and performance from the budget and staffing cuts to Infrastructure and Engineering. KiwiRail’s own [internal business plan](#) stated it would lead to a decline in track standard.”

Wayne Butson said that level crossing design should not be left to rail operators.

“Level crossings should be prescribed by the regulator. That they aren’t is symptomatic of the light handed co-regulatory model which governs the rail industry in New Zealand.”

The systemic failings of KiwiRail’s systems to the track asset database exposed in the released KiwiRail report are illustrative of the legacy of privatisation, Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

For further comment: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson, on (027) 496-2461.