

TranzAlpine restarts while Dunedin Rail Limited is put out of business

Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 22 June 2020

Dunedin Rail workers are demanding to know why their business, including the iconic Taieri Gorge Railway, is being closed down at the same time KiwiRail has restarted one of its key scenic train journeys.

KiwiRail have announced the reopening of the Christchurch–Greymouth TranzAlpine service from 4 July after several months of cancelled services due to Covid19.

Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling spokesperson Dave Kearns says the decision is an glaring reminder of the failure of leadership at Dunedin Railways Limited (DRL).

Mr Kearns says the view of the DRL workforce is that DRL Board Chair Kevin Winders should be stood down so he can concentrate on his job as Port Otago CEO, given the recent loss of business at that port.

“We have seen KiwiRail management looking at new opportunities with TranzAlpine while the Board and senior management of DRL have condemned this Dunedin asset to a slow death. This is absolutely gutting for the workforce and the many local people who want to keep Dunedin Rail rolling.”

He says the failure to get a trial commuter service up and running, or secure tourism recovery funding, could be laid directly at the feet of the DRL Board and senior management.

“Everyone has been doing their jobs for them. The workers, the Council, the public, even local MPs have been working to save this asset with fresh new ideas – but the people paid to keep this business going have done nothing except undermine the future of DRL.”

DRL is being ‘mothballed’ on 30 June with the loss of over fifty jobs.

There is no detailed plan for maintenance of DRL track and assets, says Mr Kearns.

The campaign has recently called for KiwiRail to take over the track owned by DRL to ensure it was not left to rot, he says.

“As the current DRL leadership can’t or won’t do the work, they should go, and we can find new people who are prepared to meet challenges and have a go forward outlook.”

ENDS

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