

Strike notices announced for national rail stoppage

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Media Release

Tuesday 23rd November, 2021

Strike action by rail workers is set to paralyse KiwiRail operations next month, affecting both rail and ferry transport.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says the Union has served KiwiRail two separate strike notices at the same time this morning.

A one day strike will be held by South Island union members on Thursday 16 December from 0001 hours to 2359 hours.

A one day strike will be held by North Island union members on Friday 17 December from 0001 hours to 2359 hours.

As train control functions are located in the North Island, this will halt operations in both islands on Friday 17 December.

The strike action will affect all rail operations in New Zealand including the rail ferries and Auckland and Wellington Metro systems.

A recent nationwide postal ballot of KiwiRail workers saw an overwhelming majority vote for strike action to pursue a general wage increase of 8%, after a zero increase in 2020.

This will be the first full national stoppage of the rail system in New Zealand since 1994, says Mr Butson.

He says rail workers are essential workers who played their part in keeping New Zealand rolling through the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The strike notices were an indication of the depth of feeling amongst the workforce, he says.

Mr Butson says KiwiRail senior management received huge bonuses in the 2020/2021 financial year.

He says workers should share the rewards for the huge tonnages moved during lockdown.

“Rail workers are very aware of the importance of their work to New Zealand’s transport needs, and have taken this action because there has not been an acceptable offer forthcoming from management.”

He says the workers claim for a pay rise is a “catch up” and would cover rapidly rising living costs over the last two years.

Mr Butson says the claim for an 8% increase would provide a flat rate universal increase for all members, with an 8% increase being applied to the gross payroll of all members then distributed equally amongst all members.

He says this would provide a fair and equal universal increase to members pay.

The results of the nationwide postal ballot were 1504 returned ballots with Yes to strike action 1420 (94.41%), No to strike action 81 (5.39%) and Invalid 3 (0.2%).

ENDS

For more information contact Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson on 0274 962461