

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union
Monday 27 August 2012

Hillside must stay open, says rail union

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) strongly rejects any suggestion that Hillside Railway Workshops be closed if a buyer cannot be found for the South Dunedin factory.

‘In the Infrastructure and Engineering Business Plan that was leaked to the media last week KiwiRail talks about closing Hillside if they can’t find a buyer,’ said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

‘Hillside was put up for sale in May and our union is confident that we can work with any buyer to make a success of the place, we have demonstrated we can do that in the past,’ he said.

‘Notwithstanding that, in the event of a buyer not being found, it makes no sense to shut down the only facility that KiwiRail has on the South Island that has heavy lift and maintenance capacity,’ he said.

‘Since May when the Business Plan was written it is our understanding that KiwiRail has reassessed its options given the impact of the Christchurch earthquake. The heavy lift and maintenance facilities in Christchurch have been wiped out and it is not economic to build temporary facilities there, nor is it viable to ship locos across Cook Strait to the Hutt Workshops,’ said Wayne Butson.

‘It would be madness to shut down Hillside given the above. What would make sense would be to give Hillside more rail work, such as building rolling stock. Hillside has the capacity, the workers there are second to none and KiwiRail needs the gear,’ he said.

‘This would be a boost for all the businesses that serve Hillside and would provide much needed jobs in Dunedin – everyone would be a winner,’ said Wayne Butson.

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