

Auckland rail workers to strike over safety concerns

Auckland rail workers will go on strike this Friday after their employer, French owned multi-national Transdev, refused to back down on its proposal to introduce driver-only operation on the city's passenger trains.

The strike will take place from 2am on Friday 8 December until 1:59am on Saturday 9 December.

"Despite going into mediated negotiations, Transdev is refusing to budge," says John Kerr, RMTU advocate for the rail workers. "They're determined to reduce crew numbers and introduce driver-only trains.

"This plan put passengers and drivers at risk, and the only reason we can see for it is cutting costs and increasing profit."

Transdev's proposal would make train drivers have responsibility for monitoring door operation and passengers, dividing their attention and significantly increasing the risk of accident.

"Our members don't want to inconvenience the public, especially this close to Christmas, but they will not compromise on the safety of passengers or the rail network," says John Kerr.

Rail workers in Wellington took strike action in November over Transdev's attempts to slash their working conditions and penalty rates for working weekends.

"We regret the disruption this action will cause, but we know commuters understand it's not good enough for our council to contract out important public services to multinationals who want to make a profit by slashing safety critical staff.

"Auckland Transport must bear some responsibility for what's happening: their plan to deploy so-called 'Transport Officers' on the network instead of guaranteeing there's a properly-qualified, uniformed crew member on every train is an attack on the safety culture of our railway.

"The next move is Transdev's: they can either come back to the table with an offer that keeps Aucklanders and rail workers safe, or they can bear the responsibility for continuing disruption to Auckland's rail services leading up to Christmas," says John Kerr.

ENDS

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