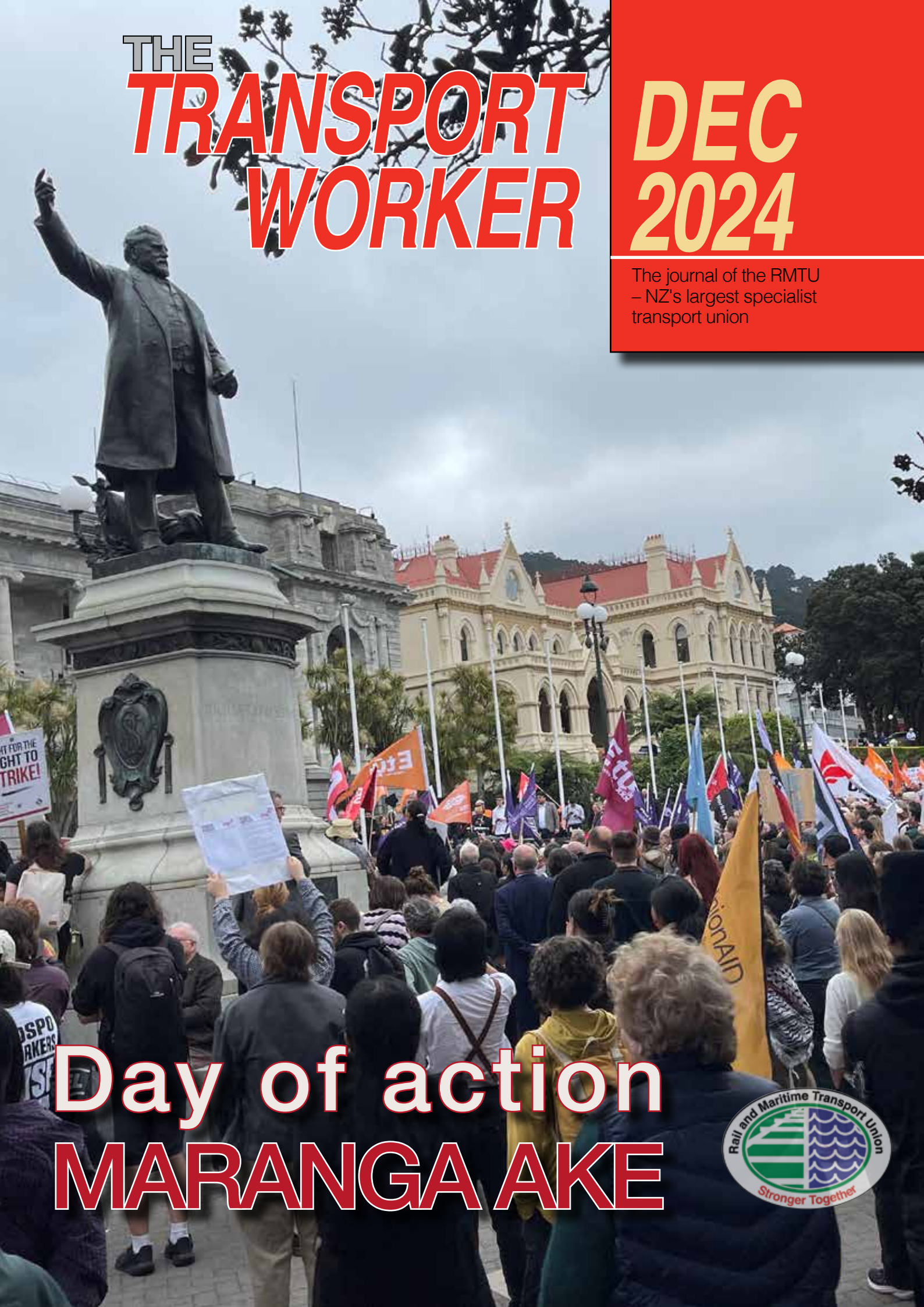


THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

DEC 2024

The journal of the RMTU
– NZ's largest specialist
transport union

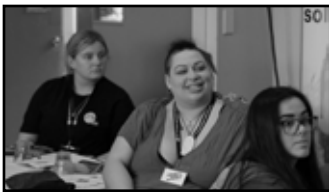


Day of action MARANGA AKE



6-8 ANNIVERSARY**Just say NO!**

Ten years since we brought in this revolutionary wee red card and it is still working brilliantly.

16 CONFERENCE

After a very successful conference we illustrate the action over a number of pages.

26 REFURBISHED BRIDGE

The Ormandsville Bridge nears completion after a massive storm nearly destroyed it.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: On 23 October RMTU members joined hui across the country to fight back against the Government's ongoing attacks on workers' rights under the banner "Fight back together – MARANGA AKE". See pages 12/13.

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Todd Valster
General secretary
RMTU

Anger-Hope-Action

THE RMTU Biennial Delegates Conference was held in October 2024 and was appropriately themed – Anger-Hope-Action. For our rail and port members, there is plenty to be angry and concerned about.

Why **ANGRY**:

- Bargaining and negotiations with the Auckland metro operator and maintenance provider which were excessively drawn out and frustrating for delegates and members. The negotiations with the Wellington metro operator were not as drawn out but equally frustrating. Both companies attempted to attack core rail conditions. Members held out with industrial action taking place in both Auckland and Wellington, and eventually, settlement was reached and ratified.

- Meanwhile, port privatisation is a constant threat and '*adverse conduct*' was taken against port H&S reps for raising genuine safety issues.

- The Government's flawed rail ferry and port infrastructure decisions were exposed with no "plan B". Eleven months after cancelling a new Interislander ferry the cost to cancel amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars and possibly up to \$1 billion – all wasted with nothing to show.

- The uncertainty of future below rail funding with current Government.

- The outcomes from the consultant's review of KiwiRail poses more job losses and potential depot closures.

All showing the Government's preference for roads versus rail.

What does **HOPE** look like?

- A government that supports rail, road and coastal shipping like the last Labour Government and the previous Labour coalition Government – both of which supported rail to the tune of \$12 billion. Tangible results can now be seen for this investment with the rebuild of Hillside Railway workshop which has assembled hundreds of flat deck wagons so far. Also the new Waltham depot is completed, and the new quality DM locomotives are arriving.

- Rail and port companies which are pro worker and pro-union.

- Rail-enabled, NZ-owned and operated ferries and new port side infrastructure.

- Rail actually growing and more freight on rail.

- A government and regulator which support a tripartite approach to working together. A great example is the development of the Ports Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) where unions, employers and MNZ work together to promote safer working environments on the NZ Ports.

ACTIONS that can be taken:

Following the proposal to downsize the Napier and Palmerston North freight op-

erations terminal roles, delegates became heavily involved in the consultation with KiwiRail. They provided excellent feedback which shaped the outcomes. This has resulted in no forced redundancies in Palmerston North – great actions taken by the delegates. Napier delegates also provided excellent feedback which lessened the impact but sadly there is a significant downsizing of roles and people in the Hawkes Bay.

More examples of collective action would be to organise and/or attend public meetings promoting for ports to remain in

public ownership or meeting supporting rail services like Te Huia.

Connect with our allies like the Climate Commission, Future of Rail Forum and the Living Wage movement.

March and protest like our national Day of Action – Fight Back held in many locations throughout NZ. This day in October was the start of the campaign to protest against changes to worker rights and conditions.

MUNZ/ITF held a rally to parliament in November in support of rail ferries and

coastal shipping. This will be an ongoing campaign.

Get involved locally by supporting local union forums, NZCTU activities, and by getting to know your local Labour electorate committee.

I wish you a safe and relaxing Christmas and New Year. Hopefully most of you get a break but we know that many of our hard working network members will be working over the festive period.

Kia kaha 🌐

Report: The environmental benefit of rail

Since 2020, the amount of freight carried by road on a per tonne-kilometre basis has increased while the freight carried by rail has declined to a level not seen since 2017.

In 2022 freight emissions in 2022 for heavy vehicles – medium and

heavy trucks and buses – made up 95% of emissions. In contrast rail freight accounted for 3% of emissions and coastal shipping 1%.

Coastal shipping and rail offer lower emission modes of transport, and using them will be key to re-

ducing freight emission.

Source: He Pou a Rangī Climate Change Commission 2024 report monitoring progress towards meeting emissions budgets and the 2050 target.

Top Unionists



(I) Sadly, shortly after being presented with an RMTU Certificate of Appreciation by Allan Addison-Saipe, Murray Sidaway died. See page 11 for his obituary and spectacular send-off.

Also receiving their certificates are:

(below left) Murray Cadogan presented by Naylor Young. (below right) Marlene Tooke also from Allan Addison-Saipe.



A preposterous proposal

KiwiRail's consulting with business advisors renowned for creating massive worker redundancies worldwide and enormous salaries for bloated executives. Sound familiar? Read this!



These memories of bygone workshops are a warning of what will happen to the few remaining plants today.

ONLY three years after changing rosters and the way mechanical depots work, KiwiRail are now proposing a swathe of changes in the wake of business management consultancy McKinsey and Company's 'Full Potential' revue.

Never being shy to make a knee jerk reaction, KiwiRail are proposing the closure of mechanical depots in Wellington, Te Rapa, Kawarau and Mount Manganui, along with

the closure of servicing depots in these locations. The proposal would see operational staff "provisioning" locomotives in these locations, making our locomotive engineers the highest paid forecourt attendants in the country.

Such lunacy

We have not seen this lunacy since the early nineties – a mistake we are doomed to repeat.

Also in the proposal is a move to field-based maintenance which will see

mechanical engineers on the road in vehicles covering vast distances to maintain our assets stranded in the countryside.

The premise for this proposal is based on the idea that KiwiRail over-maintains its assets and that by maintaining them less they will become more reliable.

While this theory may apply to new – or even those few remotely reliable assets, it doesn't describe the reality on the ground. For one, the procurement of the DL locomotive fleet was a complete disaster – a

"But in the final wash up McKinsey do what they always do when they come to town – cut back on safety critical maintenance and slash jobs."

number of which are already being retired after little more than ten years.

On the other side of the ledger we have shown we can keep locomotives from the 1970s operational.

There is a real safety concern if we decide to maintain our assets less like taking out checks on wagons and reducing maintenance on locos.

Forgotten lessons

Have we forgotten the lessons of the past and why these strict safety measures were brought in? Have we forgotten the damage caused to the network – and the lives lost?

This proposal is not a new idea. It comes straight out of the McKinsey play book and even uses some of the McKinsey propaganda to sell the concept.

We only need to look at such McKinsey disasters as Disneyland and American Steel to know these approaches don't work. The idea at Disneyland was the same. The argument was they over maintained the Park's rides and money could be saved if they simply slowed down and maintained less. The result was that rides failed and people were killed. People who were only looking for a day of fun and thrills at an amusement park.

We are well aware workers do not go to work to do a bad job or to get hurt, but this is a real prospect given the proposed changes. If a wagon derailed at the end of a long and heavy train it can take time for a locomotive engineer to notice and the ensuing damage can be catastrophic. At about \$1 million dollars per kilometre to repair

damaged track there is a real fear cutbacks can end up costing more than the savings.

KiwiRail spent eight million dollars on a report which told them what should have been obvious, the DL locomotives are the most expensive, the least reliable and the hardest to deal with.

But in the final wash up McKinsey do what they always do when they come to town, cut back on safety critical maintenance and slash jobs.

Workers paying the price

The people who are now paying for years of waste and mismanagement are the frontline workers who have gone to work every day with the idea they are making our rail network safer and better.

We need to realise that a safe, reliable rail and ferry network is essential to the economy of this country. It is a vital measure for a first world country to provide an integrated transport infrastructure which can move goods and people around the country safely and on time.

KiwiRail is only just starting to look for customers to fill the massive, short fall they have in paying customers. What have they been doing all these years as cargo volumes declined?

Customers are sometimes waiting eight weeks to move their freight – and are then not able to track it.

What they, and we, need is a company able to work with modern tools and modern equipment.

We need a company which provides good, well-paid jobs, keeps its workers safe and sends them home well at the end of the day.

We don't need the advice of a management consultancy whose main claim to fame was to elevate corporate chief executives pay from 20 times higher than their employees to over 360 times greater.

It is no wonder KiwiRail's CE would bring them in to practice their brand of

slash and burn. We cannot believe a company with the ability to waste billions of tax payer dollars with so little to show for it can come up with a plan to cut jobs across the organisation while its top executives bank massive pay checks.

Please remember this Union does not support mass redundancies. We don't support cutbacks on health and safety and we don't support bloated executives making obscene salaries while dole queues grow.

It is time to say no to redundancies and cutbacks. We need trains, ferries and good, well paid, reliable jobs. 🇳🇿



Background information

Essential reading:
When McKinsey comes to Town by Walt Bogdanich and Michael Forsythe.

If you are not the reading type and would like a little light-hearted but seriously focussed exposé head to *YouTube* and search under the heading: McKinsey John Oliver.

McKinsey and Company is a management consultancy for many of the biggest corporations and governments around the world including KiwiRail. Their advice has seen millions of workers with reduced pay, poorer health, and/or, often, redundant – while executives' pay packets increase enormously.

Seeing **RED** and saying **NO**

10 years of the RMTU's **Red Card**

RMТУ members have been seeing red and 'saying no' to unsafe work for 10 years with the help of the its unique red card.

The Union's 'Just say NO' red card was created in December 2014 following the tragic deaths of three workers at Lyttelton Port in a 12 month period. The then CEO of LPC, Peter Davie, disagreed with the Union that the port was unsafe, he said workers could simply 'red card' dangerous work. Like calling a foul in a soccer game.

Davie's 'red card' theory was at odds with the reality of working on the port at that time. RMTU members had low confidence in the port's management and were working with unsafe plant and very poor safety systems. The RMTU decided to turn Davie's theoretical red card into a real one and issued it to all RMTU members. The card is a prompt and reminder for workers to know and use their legislative rights – and responsibilities – to stop work that can cause serious harm.

The steps are:

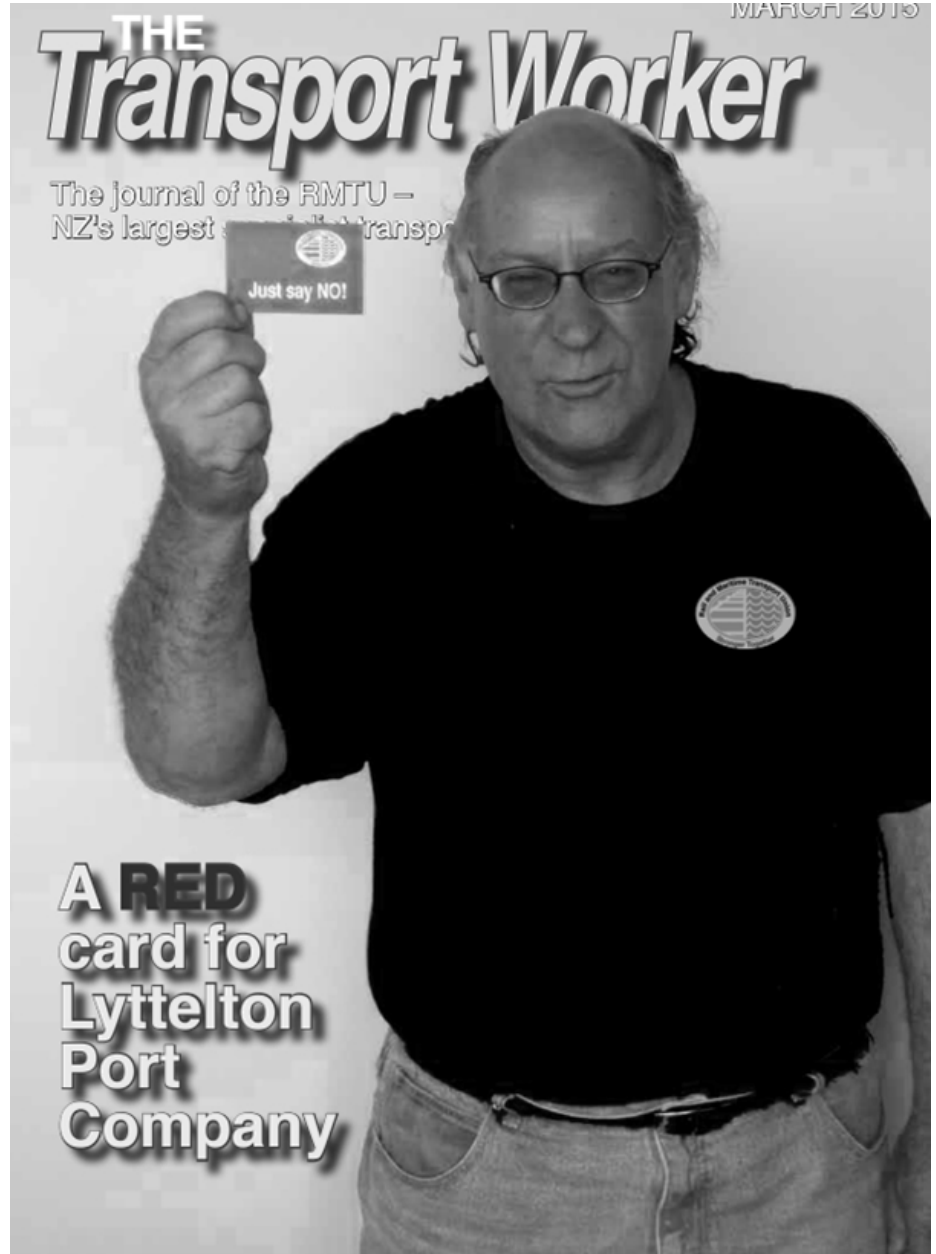
- If it doesn't feel right, stop.
- Ask if the hazard or risk could hurt you or someone else.
- If you continue, could you or someone else be injured?
- If the answer is yes, stop.
- Tell your manager and let your Union delegate/organiser know.

Finally, the task should only resume once the health and safety issue is resolved to an acceptable and agreed level. Workers can be asked to do a safe alternative job while the issue is resolved but are not obliged to resume a task they still consider unsafe.

No emergency backup electrician

In 2014, Lyttelton Port delegate and H&S representative Laurie Collins was the first to use the red card to stop unsafe work.

Laurie raised the red card during an industrial dispute at the Port. There was an overtime ban in place, which meant there were no electricians on shift to help



(1) When Laurie Collins raised the Red Card he also found himself featured on the front cover of The Transport Worker.

the straddle crane operators if there was an emergency. The straddle operators told Laurie they weren't prepared to take the risk of working without emergency backup. As their representative, Laurie told the company that work would have to cease until the electricians were back on shift.

The port company pushed back and filed for an urgent legal injunction to stop the action. They asked the judge to declare

the action unlawful so the workers would be forced to return to normal work in the container terminal. Judge Corkill was not persuaded and dismissed the LPC's application for an injunction. The port workers' win made it clear the law supported workers who use their right to stop unsafe work.

Working at heights

without fall protection

Whangarei Union branch secretary/delegate, health and safety rep and KiwiRail signals technician Mat Bennie wears a few hats. He can now add winner of the prestigious Safeguard Representative Award to the list awarded to him at the NZ Safeguard Awards in June this year. The awards were presented at a gala dinner at the Viaduct Events Centre in Auckland attended by more than 700 people.

Mat was nominated for the award jointly by the RMTU and KiwiRail for issuing a red card on behalf of a night shift upgrade crew.

In August 2023 KiwiRail began upgrading the North Auckland Line between Whangarei and Otiria. The work on this section involved rail and sleeper replacement, replacement of ballast, and formation work. The area of track the staff were working on was a high embankment in Whangarei township. The embankment was steep and approximately 5 metres high, with a concrete footpath at the bottom. The risk of falling from height while working on top of the embankment was identified in the risk assessment done before the work began. Fall restraint

harnesses and training in their use were supposed to be provided.

However, when work began on the embankment, harnesses and training were not provided. Staff on the night shift raised their concern with Mat, who called a stop (red

card) and informed the project manager.

Initially, the project manager didn't agree, saying it wasn't a fall from heights issue saying this was "a slope rather than a vertical fall". They asked Matt to withdraw the red card. Instead, Mat called a meeting of KiwiRail, the project team and the Union. It was agreed the red card was warranted because the risk of falling from height was not being managed in accordance with the risk assessment.

Work resumed when staff working on the embankment had harnesses and were trained in their use.

On winning the Award, Matt says it was pretty crazy hearing his name called as the winner of the Representative category, which is the only category open to frontline workers not acting as health and safety professionals in Aotearoa.

He said, "Ever since I started in signals when I was 16, all I've wanted to do is be the best signal tech I can be. So, this nomination wasn't something I've ever strived or asked for, it was just another day at work where I was thinking of my

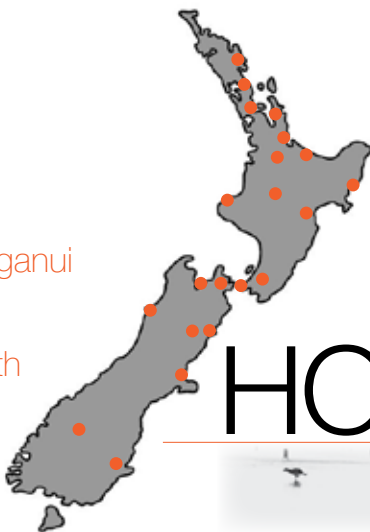


Just say NO!

- If it doesn't feel right, step back.
- What is the hazard or risk?
- If you continue, could you or someone else, be seriously harmed?
- If the answer is YES, then STOP, inform your manager, H&S rep and/or your RMTU delegate.
- And call your RMTU Organiser

Both sides of the ubiquitous RED CARD

Auckland
Christchurch
Dunedin
Gisborne
Greytown
Hanmer
Kaikoura
Mount Maunganui
Napier
Nelson
New Plymouth
Ohope
Orewa
Paihia
Picton
Queenstown
Rotorua
Taupo
Wellington
Westport
Whitianga



HOLIDAYS



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Your Welfare Trust has a fantastic range of reasonably-priced holiday homes throughout New Zealand exclusively for members. Take a look at our locations.





Mat Bennie flanked by Aubrey Wilkinson (l) and Todd Valster at Mat's award presentation.



Mat Bennie receiving his award.

mates and their whanau.

"You don't have to be a health and safety rep or union delegate to look out for your mates, but it is important for people in those roles to keep leadership teams honest in regards to KiwiRail's values.

"We have a lot of good safety systems in KiwiRail, and some systems and procedures that still need work to ensure all staff are safe in their workplace. But safety systems – and safety awards like this one – hold no meaning unless we all share a mature approach to safety and feel comfortable to

challenge, or be challenged, about unsafe acts."

Shunting across an unprotected crossing

In April this year, Wairarapa and Wellington LEs and Transdev onboard staff agreed to red card (ban) shunting across a busy level crossing on Akura Road in Masterton.

The issue arose when a set of mainline points, used for transferring passenger services to and from the yard, were decommissioned due to wear and tear and derailment risk. Decommissioning the rail points required staff to shunt across an unprotected level crossing instead. The movement had limited visibility for the train manager to see vehicles when piloting. The crossing has no barrier arm, only lights and bells, which do little to deter many motorists. Staff recorded five near misses with cars in a week.

A assessment identified the risk as very high and recommended the best course of action was to replace the set of points so the Akura Rd level crossing could be avoided.

Unfortunately, the rail providers, includ-

ing the Greater Regional Council, couldn't agree on where the cost lay so the issue remained unresolved.

Frustrated by the high risk and lack of progress to resolve the issue, the Union branch members held a two-hour stopwork meeting with the Wairarapa passenger service staff to discuss the issue. Members felt that sooner or later, someone was going to be killed and agreed safety was the priority. They opted to ban shunting Akura Road and are instead using a work-around solution whilst they wait for the original points to be replaced. 🌐



Demonstrating the poor view while shunting at Akura Road.



Bargaining with Qube

RMTU Qube bargaining team: (l-r) Clinton Gotty, Kim Sutherland, Dennis Rhodes, Dasba Van Silfbout, Todd Valster, Maria Kabui, Mauria Briggs and Thomasina Brown.

THE collective agreement previously negotiated between ISO and the ASU (now rebranded under the name Qube) expired as at 30 September 2024.

We initiated for a renewal of the collective on Monday August 5, 2024 which was acknowledged by Qube the same day.

There has been a bit of confusion leading up to this year's negotiations due to the timeline of the old collective.

ASU and ISO came to an agreement that was ratified in May 2023. It was a two-year deal and the first year's increases were given

from May 2023 to October 2023 of varying amounts.

This was because the pay model drastically changed from 80/2 which most members were on to the new 1,820 annualised hours model.

Three percent was then given to all members covered by the collective from October 2023 to September 2024.

We are now in negotiations for a new rate (and any other terms and conditions) that you want changed.

We met with the Company on Tuesday October 29 and Wednesday October 30 in

Mount Maunganui.

Most of the members' remits we received via delegates or via the online survey were tabled and given to the Company when we exchanged claims in the morning of Day 1.

We are exploring a different salary model as opposed to the 1,820 annualised hours model which came through as the biggest issue from the membership.

Thank you to our bargaining team of Clinton Gotty, Dennis Rhodes, Maria Kahui, Mauria Briggs and Thomasina Brown. 🌐

PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

The plan has an external administrator and contributions are invested with four fund managers.



**Ports
Retirement
Plan**

Download a copy of the Product Disclosure Statement from our website:
www.portsretirement.org.nz

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited

'Dog whistle' attacks on Health and Safety laws



NINE years since the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) the Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety Brook Van Veldon (inset above) has initiated a review of the legislation and called for submissions.

The Minister said the government was seeking feedback on whether health and safety requirements were too strict, or too ambiguous, to comply with.

She said: "Our health and safety culture can be summed up by the sea of orange road cones. From Santa parades to property development, you can't get a lot done without having to set up a barricade of cones. Lawyers and company directors should not have to be kept up late at night anguishing over what is reasonably practicable."

The Minister's reference to road cones and Santa parades is a dog whistle for generating anger against perceived unnecessary regulations. NZ is under-regulated as far as health and safety is concerned. Lawyers and company directors should take their responsibilities seriously, any anguish they experience palls in comparison to the devastation of families affected by workplace tragedy.

In its submission, the RMTU took aim at the idea that the health and safety law was too strict stating the Act is 'performance

based' which means it's not prescriptive. The RMTU submitted that targeted regulation and industry-specific guidance would bring clarity and certainty to industry regarding the minimum standards for managing risk.

NZ businesses tend to mitigate risk at the lowest possible level using PPE and administrative controls. There is a reluctance to use more expensive, higher order, controls to engineer out the risk. This is partly because the regulators are tolerant of lower order controls such as form filling and tick boxing.

The RMTU believes health and safety should not be about red tape or bureaucracy. A workplace health and safety system which relies on paper-based controls and tick boxing is not likely to be managing risk well. Good health and safety are focussed on engineering out the risk of harm and making sure work is planned well with all the necessary resources in place. It's also about making sure that the people who do the job (the workers), who face the risk, are involved in making decisions about how risk is managed to an acceptable level. Worker participation through their Health and Safety Reps and Delegates is essential for assessing risk and finding ways to manage risk.

Our health and safety Regulators - Waka Kotahi, Worksafe and Maritime NZ - need to be well resourced. WorkSafe has let go more than 100 staff in the past year due to funding cuts. In NZ we have insufficient numbers of WorkSafe inspectors for the high number and spread of businesses throughout NZ. We believe prosecutions are an important part of the regulator's toolbox and the reduced resourcing of WorkSafe will impede their ability to hold businesses to account for poor health and safety practices.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) replaced the previous health and safety law following the Pike River mine tragedy in 2010 where 29 workers were killed in the mine explosion. The subsequent inquiry identified severe shortcomings of the NZ health and safety system including a weak, under resourced regulator and weak legislation. NZ workers were killed at work at twice the rate of Australian workers and four times that of UK workers. The 2015 Act, strengthened the accountability and responsibility of the people in charge of companies (such as Board or Directors and CEOs), and boosted the rights of workers to participate in health and safety decision making.

The law is good and it protects workers. It must not be watered down. 🇳🇿



Reach stackers honour 'Muzza'

Murray [Muzza] Sidaway

27 June 1963 to 27 October 2024

WE recently said goodbye to a great stalwart of our Union who died peacefully at home: 'Muzza' [Murray] Sidaway – a 42-year veteran of Centreport who had been there since the Harbour Board days of the early 1980s.

Starting life on the wharf as a general hand he worked his way through most areas of the port, even the telephone exchange, and drove most of the plant. He ended up as an awesome crane driver and ultimately a planner.

Muzza earned the respect of all at Centreport – workers and managers alike. He tirelessly worked as a delegate supporting countless individuals through the trials and

tribulations of being a port worker. Muzza was involved in many years of wage rounds and his knowledge of the history of the collective was priceless.

Muzza worked effectively with other unions on the port and was instrumental in making one of the most effective MUCAs we see on the ports to this day. He spent many hours on Union duty; we thank his family for sharing him with us and those many hours he spent working on and helping his fellow workers.

Muzza's last trip to the port was Friday 1 November when Centreport closed the port to allow all his fellow workmates to attend his funeral in Kilbirnie. They then

all rushed back to the port to give him a rousing final welcome to the port. His funeral procession then did a last tour of the port complete with driving through a reach stacker guard of honour and a final trip to his happy place the cranes. Before he left the port one last time his work mates saw him off with a haka and on to a private internment with his family.

It was an honour and a privilege to have Muzza in our Union for so many years helping his workmates. We miss his smile and his quiet endeavour and the way he went about his job as a delegate and a port worker. He leaves a massive hole at Centreport and we will always remember him. 🌐



Stu holding the megaphone at an RMTU rally protesting against the closure of Hillside's mechanical workshop in 2012.

Stuart (Stu) Johnston

STU JOHNSTON sadly lost his battle with cancer in June this year, only a few years following the death of his wife Claudine from breast cancer.

Stu worked as a mechanical engineer and was a Union delegate and health and safety rep at Dunedin's Hillside Workshop. Stu, along with RMTU members and the Dunedin community fought hard to prevent the shut down of Hillside in 2012.

He was one of those who lost his job when the closure went ahead. He went on to be the Auckland-based organiser for the RMTU but following the diagnosis of Claudine's cancer the family was forced to move to Australia where they could access life-extending drug treatment.

Both Stu and Claudine were active campaigners for access to better cancer treatment in NZ.

They are survived by their five children. 🌐



Northland RMTU members join with other unions on the Day of Action in Whangarei.



ON 23 October RMTU members joined hui across the country to fight back against the Government's ongoing attacks on workers' rights.

Thousands of people showed up to send a strong message of disapproval to those in power.

In just one year in power, the coalition has already:

- Cancelled the Interislander ferry contract
- abolished fair pay agreements,
- brought back 90-day trials,
- ordered mass public sector layoffs,
- cut back increases to the minimum wage,
- undermined Te Tiriti and Maori rights,
- scaled back work on pay equity claims,
- cut back funding on health services,

education, public transport,

- scrapped essential infrastructure projects,
- made life harder for migrant workers,
- given huge tax breaks to landlords while cutting public services,
- caused a dramatic increase in unemployment while stopping income insurance.

There are also proposals to:

- block workers from taking employment cases to court,
- weaken health and safety protections, and
- reduce sick leave and holiday entitlements.

This is on top of their relentless and ongoing attacks on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Maori rights.

The coalition are trying to divide us and are sowing the seeds of division.

Five motions were tabled and supported by all. These were:

Motion One - We demand better paid, safer and more secure work, more mana at work and more say in how things are done at work.

Motion Two - We demand better public and social infrastructure, public services, better health, and education.

Motion Three - We demand the Government end their flagrant attacks on Maori and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi so that Maori rights and interests are protected and recognised across Aotearoa, and Maori workers are afforded dignity.

Motion Four - We demand immediate action on reducing inequality, by making the living wage the minimum wage, by bringing in real pay equity, and by taxing everyone fairly.

Motion Five - We demand action to tackle AI and climate change, leaving no worker behind.





The Bay of Plenty RMTU team at Hopukioire, Mt Drury in Mount Maunganui

DAY OF ACTION

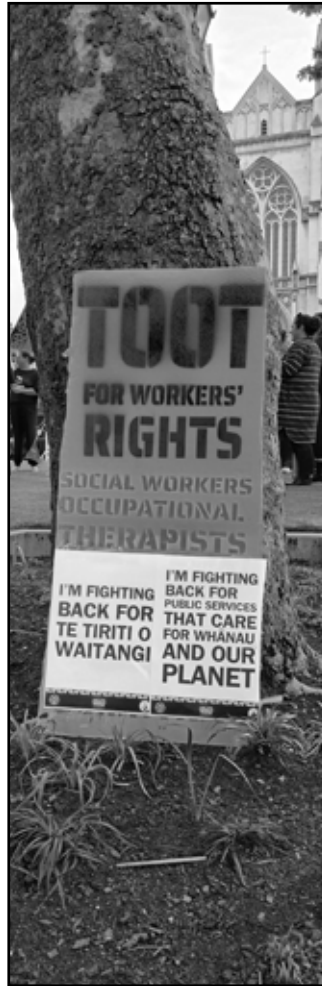
FIGHT BACK TOGETHER: MARANGA AKE



The large gathering at parliament for the Day of Action



Day of action continued



Numerous unions, plus our Otago rail and port members, turn up to the National Day of Action at the Octagon in Otepoti, Dunedin.

Blessing the new Hillside sculpture

WE arrived at the Hillside facility at 0630 to bless the new taurapa (stern post) sculpture in front of the Hillside Workshops.

The weather was appalling. Torrential rain had been falling all night resulting in the closure of SH1 for a day. Dunedin was cut off.

The official opening of the revamped workshop was postponed due to this weather event.

However we assembled outside for the blessing given by Tini Winiata. Despite the rain Tini delivered a stirring performance and those assembled joined in with great gusto.

The sculpture will be given its official name by the time this magazine is delivered.

The plaque accompanying the scul-

ture states:

KiwiRail's taurapa

The taurapa, a component of a waka (a traditional Maori canoe) shares several similarities with trains, particularly in their roles of travel, transportation and mobility.

Both modes of transport create a sense of unity, or kotahitaka, as passengers come together, travelling in a single direction.

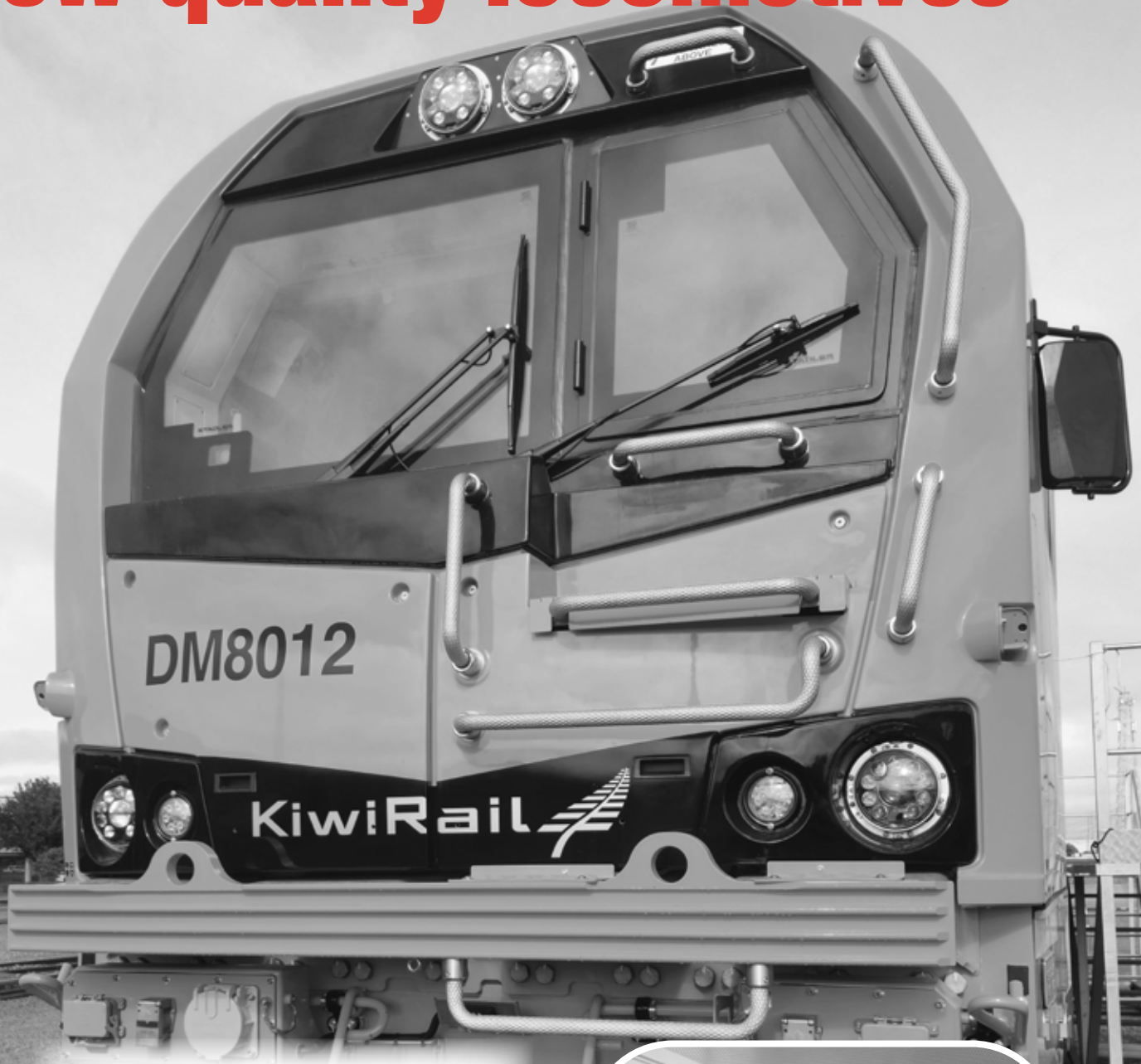
The taurapa is situated at the stern of the waka, symbolising our past and recognising the long-standing history of manawhenua and the era before KiwiRail.

In line with honouring the past, the taurapa also serves as a tohu (monument) to commemorate those who were part of the KiwiRail whanau and wider community who have passed away.

During Matariki, a puhi (adornment) of feathers is attached to the taurapa marking a special time for remembrance. 🇳🇿



New quality locomotives



The first two of 66 new DM locomotives have arrived in Christchurch to replace the 50 year old DX locos in the South Island. Forty-seven of the DMs will go into service in the South Island with 19 in the North. It is forecasted the South Island DMs will arrive over the next two years.

Praise goes to the loco engineers and RMTU reps who made sure the cab design was right.

In our view they are the first quality locos KiwiRail has purchased since the 1980s.

These DMs have enhanced safety features including strengthened cab, forward facing cameras and railings on the running board to prevent falls.

The DX locos lasted 50 years, let's hope the DMs will last just as long.



GS Todd Valster testing out the new cab.

CONFERENCE 20

THE RMTU Biennial Conference 2024 was held at Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington on 8-10 October. In attendance from 23 branches were:

The National Management Committee: Aubrey Wilkinson (resident), Howard Phillips (Vice president), Rebecca Hauck, Ratahi Ellis, Shane McNae, Ian Walker, Sam Kahui, and Jas Giri.

General secretary: Todd Valster.

Organisers: Karen Fletcher, Allan Addison-Saipe, Shirley Horne, Sean Robertson and Andy Woolhouse.

Administration staff: Lara Topping, Matt Tait, Talia Addison-Saipe.

24 voting delegates, 19 women's delegates, 19 observers and three representatives of MUNZ.

Women's forum

The theme of the Conference was: Anger-Hope-Action and it began with the RMTU women's forum.

Rebecca Hauck, Rita Hill and Hannah Vincent-Martin reported back on the WIM-DOI (see story page 22/23) and the women's ITF conferences they had attended. Gemma Thomas gave the CTU women's representative report.

Guest speaker Margot Embargot from Fired-Up Stilettos gave an enlightening and inspiring presentation on justice for NZ strippers fighting to improve industry standards for independent contractors across Aotearoa.

We finished the women's forum with a discussion on health and wellbeing and looking after ourselves which is important



*Aubrey Wilkinson
RMTU president*

now more than ever. Setting appropriate boundaries for yourself between your work and home life is important when trying to keep a good work/life balance, which will help with your mental wellbeing.

Rail forum

A delegation from KiwiRail attended and Peter Reidy CEO gave a presentation about KiwiRail's plans going forward. However, he appeared to be more interested in profit and on-time performance than what is currently going on within the company staffing, employee welfare etc. (Of interest see story pages 4 - 6.)

Barry Fryer (Greater Wellington Regional Council) presented about strategies and challenges for enabling the continuation of regional rail for the lower North Island and decarbonisation..

Tim Kerwin (Glenbrook Vintage Rail-

way) presented about the project describing who they are, what they do, what they have achieved this year and where to next. The railway carried over 75,000 passengers between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024 with 40,000 during one event. They travelled over 13,000 kms on their own track and almost 8,000 kms on KiwiRail tracks. They are self-funding and deliver bespoke and specialist rail operation and engineering support to various business customers. The Railway are members of the RMTU and joined the heritage Meca in 2020. They plan to grow their heritage rail activities, especially using regional rail lines and supporting communities. They also plan to continue to campaign for the retention of rail assets, to push expansion of rail assets and advocate for skilled rail workers.

Ports forum

Mark Wilson (Lyttelton Port Company), Paul Simmonds (Port Napier), Dave McDougal (Port Otago), Murray Deadman (Port Nelson) spoke on behalf of their branches.

They identified challenges such as workers leaving or made redundant and being replaced by contractors, managers implementing policy or change without engagement, reduced worker participation in company decision making, managers re-interpreting agreements in ways unfavourable to workers, job losses and the huge negative effect on workers and communities with the closure of the Tangiwai sawmill.

They identified positive changes such as successfully negotiating pay increases and improvements in conditions, supporting



ANGER HOPE ACTION



workers to reduce the number of jobs lost, over time rates connected to skill rates and resolving various individual claims.

Allan Addison-Saipie discussed health and safety and the limitations of current port medical standards.

Karen Fletcher discussed the RMTU's role in drawing attention to the issue of worker fatigue and the significant work done over the last two years to improve fatigue risk management at NZ ports.

Maritime NZ discussed the Health and Safety at Work Act, under which they have developed three work safety plans, and what this means for regular inspections and threats to workers involving unsafe conditions.

Conference plenary

Aubrey Wilkinson addressed the conference reminding delegates about the Conference 2022 theme of Kotahitanga (solidarity/togetherness) and expressed his gratitude



CK Rabi from Advanced Diagnostics

for the solidarity of the RMTU.

Todd Valster spoke to the Conference theme of Anger-Hope-Action, chosen in part because it has historic significance to the Union movement.

Guest speakers included Nathaniel Herz-Jardine (Living Wage Aotearoa), Geoff Davenport (Geoff Davenport Law), Grant Blackwell (Climate Change Commission chief scientist), Camilla Belich (Labour Party spokesperson for workplace relations and safety), Tangi Utikere (Labour Party spokesperson for transport), Hazel Armstrong (Armstrong Thompson Law), Simon Craddick (Port Taranaki CEO), Tim Sutton (Union AID), C K Rahi (Advanced Diagnostics), Craig Renney (NZCTU economist and director of policy), Richard Wagstaff (NZCTU president)



Tim Sutton
UnionAID

International speakers were Dave Calfe (ASLEF UK), Kevin Pryor (RTBU NSW), Keith McMahon (RTBU NSW), Satoru Yamada (ICLS Japan)

The international speakers all spoke on issues they are having with their respective companies and governments to improve workers' rights and worker safety to which they all seemed to be moving in the right direction. The RTBU were successful in removing driver-only commuter trains in some areas which not only retained current staff but also improved passenger and driver safety. Satoru spoke highly of the red (stop work) card initiative brought out by the

RMTU (see story pages 6 - 8). The Japanese unions are looking at implementing something similar.

RMTU member benefit speakers were Paul Drummond (Ports Retirement Plan chairperson), Chris Ball (Locomotive Engineers' Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund chairperson), Patrick Kay (NZ Railways Staff Welfare Trust manager)

Chris Ball explained how the SAD fund currently works and who is currently eligible and then discussed the possibility of opening the eligibility so that it covers more people within KiwiRail's infrastructure teams.

The RMTU financial report, balance sheet and proposed budget was provided and accepted.

Branch remits

Branch delegates brought remits to the conference over which there was much discussion and debate. The remits covered issues with voting, online voting, online meeting access/recording, improving RMTU communication channels, updating the RMTU website and member portal.

Motions passed:

1) That the Union investigate a mobile web app to do Union activities and for it be completed by December 2024.

2) That Dave Marden be awarded life membership.

3) That the RMTU retain Crowe as audi-

- ◀ tors but give the NMC authority to change this before the next conference if necessary.
 - 4) That the RMTU roll over the current CTU representatives.
 - 5) That Michael Mason (Marlborough) be the RMTU CTU youth representative.
 - 6) That the creation of a Gisborne Branch is authorised
- Todd Valster confirmed his commitment as General Secretary to invest in technology

and improve the RMTU's digital capabilities, with the aim of enhancing member engagement, streamlining communication and modernising operations. There are funds in the budget for this purpose and online voting is a priority.

Thanks were made to everyone who attended and who made the event such a success. 🌐

Grateful thanks

To those who completed the Conference feedback survey thank you.

Your positive comments and constructive criticisms have been collated and will help guide planning for future conferences and events.

New to Conference

The 23 people who attended the RMTU conference for the very first time.



Sosaia Pule - Southland Rail
"Meeting other delegates that have the same passion."



Michelle Bent - Auckland Rail Branch
"It was amazing to network and interact with people from various sectors in the rail industry and to get an insight to how everyone else is struggling with a lot of issues."



Te Haina Kupa - Port Nelson
"It's been amazing. I encourage ports to bring more observers."



Terri Scott - Southland Rail
"I've enjoyed meeting people, there's a lot of support if we need it."



Zoe Smith - Port Otago
"Learned a lot meeting new people. Really good experience."



Justin Johnson - Bay of Plenty Rail
"The information over the past three days has had a high impact, absolutely amazing."



Logan Burling – LE Auckland Rail
"It was a very enlightening experience."



Lucas Gunn - Palmerston North Rail
"Really enjoyed it. Good to put faces to names and learn who does what."



Mat Bennie - Northland Rail
"Seeing the solidarity and meeting the other conference delegates."



Matthew Balmforth is an LE from Auckland One Rail.



Michael Mason - Marlborough Rail
"Networking and learning from others."



Moise Butler - Bay of Plenty Rail
"Been wonderful meeting and connecting with other branches. We're all facing our challenges."



Morgan Wibrow - Christchurch Rail
"It's been good meeting everyone."



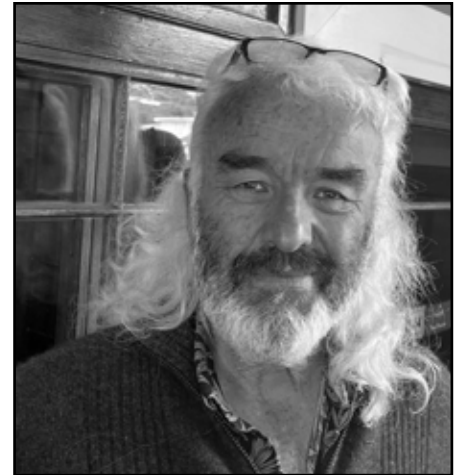
Shannon Porter - Northland Rail
"It's cool to get involved and represent where we come from and meet new people."



Anna Kennedy - Wellington Rail
"Very inspiring, looking forward to the changes."



Antony Radley - Wellington Rail
"It's been awesome to talk with the other delegates."



Dave Barclay - Otago Rail
"Informative."



Dave McDougall - Otago Port
"As a port delegate, meeting the rail delegates has been good."



Emilia Cabral - Hutt Mechanical Workshops
"Very interesting hearing from the different speakers"



Graham Versfeld - Otago Rail
"Interesting. I've learned a lot about the issues."



Hemi Potaka - Port Nelson
"Awesome opportunity to network with likeminded comrades."



Tarsh Hutley - West Coast
"Amazing eye opener. I've learned so much."



Lionel Gavin - Otago Port
"Highly motivating! Energising speakers and great networking."

Women's forum



(above) Margo Embargot from 'Fired Up Stiletto's' delivered an eye opening presentation – and a flamboyant exit!

(right top) (l-r) Brooke Loper, Otago Rail branch; Destine Hull, Taranaki Port branch; Hana Vincent, Lyttelton Port branch.

(right bottom) (l-r) Emilia Cabral, Hutt branch; Nona Ngatuere, Hutt Workshops; Brooke Loper, Otago Rail branch, and Destine Hull, Taranaki Port branch.



Sickness, accident and death



The New Zealand Locomotive Engineers' Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund

In the last 10 years 230 locomotive engineers had to retire due to medical reasons. They received a total payout of \$4,737,097 from the above Fund. LEs who didn't belong to the Fund and who were forced to retire did not receive anything.

You could be next to miss out!

For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.

Contact:

ADMIN

Telephone:

Fax:

admin@rmtunion.org.nz

PO Box 813,
Wellington

(04) 499-2066

(04) 471-0896

**Attention LEs
Join this Fund now for
your own peace of mind**

Union women in solidarity



WIMDOI wabine

Windygarn Art:
A women gathering which tells the story of a family of women gathering to yarn (talk) about family, womens' business, and to pass on knowledge to the next generation. (logo right)

THIS is WIMDOI (Women In Male Dominated Occupations and Industries) through and through.

I was lucky enough to attend WIMDOI along with my sisters Ann Wells (Port of Nelson), Gemma Thomas (Port of Tauranga), Dasha Van Silfhout (Upper North Island RMTU union organiser), Rita Hill (Auckland One Rail) and Christie Yule (KiwiRail remote control operator/ops manager Mount Maunganui), plus five of our sisters from MUNZ (Maritime Union New Zealand). We were part of a gathering of 250 like-minded women from 30 unions from across Australia and New Zealand.

WIMDOI 2024 was set in tropical Cairns, Australia for four days of heartfelt stories, maanakitanga, tautoko, aroha and kotahitanga – and 100% UNION POWER!

Monday May 6 was MAYDAY in Australia



and WIMDOI women were asked to lead a march in Cairns. A sea of flags carried by men, women and children marched through the streets. It was also International Workers' Day known as Labour Day in some countries. It's a celebration of labourers and the working classes promoted by the international labour movement and occurs annually around May 1.

Nita Green, the senator for Queensland's Australia Labour Party addressed WIMDOI with the shocking statistic that one woman is killed every four days through domestic violence. This has got to stop. Nita spoke of how we need to be "inside the tent,

and not outside of it" to make a difference to stop the domestic violence happening. This is one of the reasons she became involved in politics. She spoke of getting involved in campaigning for change telling us: "Don't be afraid to speak up"; "Women can work in tough environments too"; "Empower other women"; and "Be a role model for our younger generations". People can and will change the world she said. This is what she sees in WIMDOI. That WIMDOI energy as she called it.

Elida Faith, a union organiser and Labour candidate for Leichardt in 2019-2022, was convinced to run for parliament. She gave a list of reasons why she wasn't the person for the job. However, if it wasn't for her union and other unions supporting her she would have never run for the position.

"I joined the union and found my people", She said.

TIKTOK queen Wil Stacke, also the assistant secretary at Victoria Trades Hall Council, a trade unionist and feminist ran an outstanding session on the power of social media, especially TIKTOK, saying it is an important tool to reach your audience. She recommended we find those people in



Wabine from RMTU, AFULE and RTBU at WIMDOI 2024 in Cairns.

the places and spaces where the younger generation hang out and spread the word of unionism.

It was amazing to see how many people view TIKTOK and the age variation as well. If you want to get the attention of young people get your TIKTOK on.

Over the four days there were so many great speakers sharing their career and union journeys and a wealth of knowledge and tools shared at WIMDOI.

Our sisters from Victoria Australia and members of CFMEU (Construction, Forestry, Mining, Electrical Union) talked about NDAs (non disclosure agreements) around sexual harassment in the workplace. Women all over Australia are fighting to ban

the signing of NDAs in the workplace.

NDAs are legally enforceable contracts which create a confidential relationship between a person who has sensitive information and a person who will gain access to that information. They are confidential relationships which means one or both parties has a duty not to share that information. Basically they protect the perpetrators.

I, along with my Aotearoa New Zealand sisters, didn't even know this kind of thing existed.

If you want to support our brothers and sisters across the ditch on this here is some information:

megaphone.org.au/petitions/2022-ndas
And help end the misuse of NDAs.

Overall WIMDOI 2024 was amazing once again and one of the best conferences I have attended. All the after functions, including the feminist trivia night and the talent show at the local Rugby League club strengthened our bond of sisterhood.

There are uncertain times ahead with the NATs at the helm in New Zealand but we are going to have to stand up and fight back!

We are stronger together.

When I say UNION. . .

You say POWER . . .

UNION-POWER UNION-POWER

I kotahitanga/In unity 

MUNZ & RMTU wabine gather after the May Day Rally in Cairns.





Getting active

MATTHEW SCHOFIELD is a strong believer in organised labour and wanted to contribute to the union in some way when opportunity arose.

He first joined the local industrial committee (LIC) being set up at KiwiRail's Westfield after being told to "put my hand up. That's when the imposter syndrome kicked in. Six months signed off as an LE. Surely there are people with more knowledge to take that place." Fresh Eyes he was told.

"That's how I was sold it in the end and it was 100% the right call."

He said he could see things those already at the table had normalised because they were so familiar and "fresh eyes can spark important discussions".

Going in with uncertainty, the LIC also proved the perfect way to dip his toes in the waters of union involvement. "The first several meetings I was able to mainly listen, get an understanding of the issues, talk with colleagues and build my confidence to contribute effectively."

Since then he has raised his hand higher and higher and more frequently. He was elected to general delegate and roster delegate positions. He doubts those opportunities would have happened without the LIC involvement. LIC membership was, he said, a Goldilocks zone entry point to union matters – very little pressure while learning the lay of the land. "With these new opportunities I am able contribute more and more as my confidence and understanding grows."

"In my time as a member, the Westfield LIC has covered a wide range of issues which have taken me well outside the locomotive cab. This has dramatically increased my knowledge and understanding across KiwiRail and RMTU matters.

"At its best, I've found the LIC to be a preventative de-escalatory body. As a committee with both management and Union representation, it has served as an initial discussion forum for ideas in their embryonic stage. With both parties involved in discussions from the get-go it has enabled identification of challenges and problems with these ideas which hadn't considered, courtesy of that variety of perspectives I mentioned earlier."

Collaborative effort can then overcome these where an idea has merit, he says. "In effect, molehills have (mostly) stayed molehills, as opposed to a mountain forming unseen in the background, and then suddenly everyone being neck deep in shit."

He strongly encourages anyone looking for a way to become involved in or to expand their industry/Union knowledge to participate in their local LIC. 🇳🇿

New RMTU people around the motu



Streamlined head office

LARA TOPPING has joined the National Office team as our administration officer and has been with us since April this year. She is the wife of Allan, our central region organiser. She took over the role vacated by Debby Green some months ago and has brought a lot of energy and new ideas to the task. She has quickly become an important member of the team.

Lara has a history in horticulture and education and comes to us from a medical practice where she was an administrator. She brings excellent administration and managerial skills from her time as head of learner services at the Nelson-Marlborough Institute of Technology.

She felt her most recent role as a medical administrator was not challenging enough and wanted something to keep her a little busier. Well, mission accomplished, Lara has barely paused for breath since taking this job.

She has dealt with the financial audit, helped organise the RMTU conference and is catching up on a swag of administrative duties.

One job is to oversee the financial and administrative parts of the Union which is no small job. There are many challenges but Lara is enjoying that.

As a self-confessed lover of order, Lara has her task cut out launching the National Office into the twenty-first century. She has set out several goals to modernise the RMTU's systems.

We wish Lara all the best. 🇳🇿

A passion to keep workers safe

I started with the RMTU on 10 June this year as one of two new Northern organisers based in Auckland. Before that, I was a locomotive engineer for KiwiRail based at Westfield for 15 years.

I started on passenger and moved to freight. I was also the chair of the Auckland branch, and delegate for both LEs and the yard.



*Sean Robertson,
RMTU organiser*

I decided to apply for the RMTU organiser position because it would allow me to fulfil my passion for helping members get the best possible outcomes.

Helping members return to work following injury or illness is something I care deeply about.

With the current health system struggling to cope with the needs of our population, injured workers are experiencing lengthy delays to see specialists and receive treatment. The delay causes stress to members.

I have seen people do everything they can to navigate the health system to recover and return to work. The delay in treatment and uncertainty put jobs at risk because employers have limited patience for keeping jobs open while they recover.

Our role as a union is to fight to keep people's jobs safe while they recover. We can help employers identify safe, medically appropriate alternative duties for injured workers so they can stay in their jobs while rehabilitating to full health.

We need companies to understand and have compassion for injured workers, knowing that the situation is often out of their control.

I look forward to meeting more of you and continuing to support the members. 🌐

A CV revealing 100% union involvement

MY name is Shirley Horne, and I am privileged to have started with RMTU this year as the Northern organiser based in Auckland with Sean Roberston.

I've been a union organiser for coming up to eight years. I started as a delegate for SkyCity during a wonderful period in our history called



*Shirley Horne
northern lead organiser*

'Zero Hours', in other words, a job with no guaranteed hours! SkyCity was a little better – I was guaranteed eight hours a week! No one can survive on those hours. I worked over 60 hours a week, but 52 of those hours came from begging and asking nicely for additional shifts.

I was very fortunate Unite Union took me on as an organiser. I learnt and saw a lot, including good employers willing to help workers who are just difficult for no obvious reason. Like a member of the housekeeping staff who was called into a disciplinary meeting

for missing a few shifts. After talking to her I learned she had lost her home and her children and was sleeping in her car –and she was too afraid to speak to anyone about it.

Cases like this make me realise how vulnerable many people are. This made me realise I needed to help those who are too afraid to speak for themselves.

I went to my first CTU meeting when I was 21 years old – the youngest attendee in decades. Seeing young people becoming active has been amazing and rewarding for me.

After leaving Unite I worked for FIRST union as a finance organiser but soon realised I wanted to see more of the union world so I applied for the RMTU's Northern organiser position.

We are extremely lucky at the RMTU with the high Union density and active membership. It makes us stronger.

This has been a huge change and learning for myself and I am looking forward to learning more. 🌐

Youthful vigour enlivens office

IN a three for one deal Talia Addison-Saipe, daughter of Allan, joins the team as an administration assistant. Talia had been, for some time, working as a casual assisting with admin duties around the office on data entry, welcome packs, filing and reconciliations. She now is on the team as a permanent part-time admin assistant doing 20 hours a week and is the youngest member of the team (21) bringing the youth voice to the office.

Talia is pausing her university studies while enjoying her union work. As the Union has grown so have the administrative tasks so it is important to bolster this important resource to keep pace with the changes.

Talia enjoys having a job where you are paid to go and protest at Parliament but also learning vital office admin skills and even with her own office.

Talia is a great addition to our team and is growing her knowledge of the Union. The work we do vital as is bringing on a new generation of unionists.

Welcome Talia and thanks for the great job you do. 🌐



NORTHLAND RAIL

Feeling forgotten in the far north.....

NORTHLAND and the mighty NAL is still here – and still forgotten – maybe even more so now with the restructuring in infrastructure.

Our reporting lines have magically changed overnight without any meaningful consultation from KR.

We are used to being forgotten about by the Auckland metro, now we're able to be forgotten by management based in Hamilton and Tauranga now that Whangarei is part of the UNI region.

I've been assured we will have a 'visible leadership' – we'll see how that goes with monthly toolbox meetings and our local industrial committee.

We've also seen lots of shiny shod up-per management types patting each other on the back for the cyclone recovery works being done on the NAL, but we all know it was the frontline workers who made this happen.

They forget to mention they are also the reason why it has taken so long to get the

works completed.

Poor contract management has allowed contractors to run free and ignore engineering and safety standards thus forcing our BAU staff to pick up the mess plus the use of external engineers and consultants who have more to gain by letting things drag on.

Shoutout to all the Northland, Southland and Auckland track and structures teams for the mahi.

Stay safe and lookout for each other there. 🇳🇿

NAPIER RAIL

Ormandsville Bridge takes centre stage of branch's work

TRACK teams HM1 from the Palmerston North have installed 1,530 sleepers between Dannevirke and Waipukurau, and a further 1,963 will be installed before the end of financial year. Between Napier and Waipukurau 1,791 sleepers were installed by the local Napier gang with help of the Palmerston North heavy gang HM1.

Asset/track inspection between Napier and Wairoa are occurring once a month with the help of the Wairoa track gang for their local knowledge and their all around knowledge of all the make safe works plus the assistance of KiwiRail project managers.

The heat season has started and boards were erected on Mon October 7. De-stress works to minimise our heat restricted sites covering 2.7 km of works between Opapa and Otane again with help from the heavy gangs from Palmerston North HM1, HM2



and HM3.

The signals team in the Bay have been busy doing preventative maintenance throughout the section and have also been installing new standby generators between

Whakatu and Napier to replace the old worn out ones. The last kingfisher in Takapau is also about to be commissioned into service which completes the PNGL kingfisher upgrades on all stations.



◀ The structures teams from Napier have just recently completed two months work on Bridge 85 NAL in Helensville getting the line ready to open.

Extensive work on the Ormondsville Viaduct since November 23 saw eight blocks of line, removal of hardwood running beams, installing the new steel spans,

and lastly the new widened walkway over the entire length of the refurbished south end. (see photos)

Napier freight and yard staff have been left in limbo with a down turn in freight and the two mills closed at Winstone Product Industries (WPI).

A lot of staff were laid off with only mini-

mum manning levels in Napier and reductions in freight staff in Palmerston North.

Big thanks to ACROW Scaffolding from Palmerston North for their outstanding service keeping us safe

Have safe Christmas and New Year with family and friends. 🌐

HUTT SHOPS

Unhappy Union members complain of tardy negotiations

AS often happens, employment drama in the run-up to Christmas has occurred with KiwiRail inviting expressions of interest (EOI) in voluntary redundancy from the staff across the entire organisation. A 'wellbeing' survey is being run simultaneously, and for Hutt and Hillside Workshops, a 'future workload planning' project is well underway. These can be quite unsettling for all staff as there are no assured outcomes. By the time these notes are read, the preliminary outcomes of all three activities should have been communicated.

Another communication, which arrived at the end of October, was the CEO's update on the Aratere's grounding earlier this year and the TAIC's 'Final Interim Report' detailing their initial findings. Reading all three documents (including TAIC's website report plus the multipage report) make for interesting reading and poses more questions than answers.

Training appears to be the biggest question and we await the final report which will be out in the distant future. [I note the company that supplied the upgraded system is advertising for a large number of technical specialists across a number of disciplines within their operations – might be something, might be nothing].

The One Future planning took an unexpected turn a few months back when some industrial council members were brought together with frontline and middle managers to be briefed on the planning associated with the outputs and recommendations from the external contractors employed to carryout the full potential assessment. During the course of discussions, when we were talking about obstacles and barriers to progress, it was felt some of the often referred-to silos have proven to be impen-

etrable. As for financial control, reference was made to a new depot in Picton which may be pulled down. Since then, the building has apparently disappeared and the ground sealed over for a new temporary car park for outbound ferry travellers!

We have a standing expectation that consultation and HPHE would be used to address all significant problems within the company.

In a nutshell, the Union was not happy with these turns of events and felt we were brought to the party several months too late. As a result, the usual joint-statement that follows full, frank, professional, respectful and timely discussions was not to be.

Each party issued its own statement of the two days of talks.

For staff employed under the former RSAS umbrella (now the EAS & Rolling Stock Ops divisions), the 10 year plan formulated under the governance of the late Roy Sullivan some years ago was resurrected and made reference-to. This came as a bitter/sweet surprise as since Roy's untimely demise, this plan was never openly referred to, which is a shame as it was a good indication of how well the company could have been structured and run. If it had been in regular use, then that which we were subsequently briefed on need not have come as a surprise. In fact we may well have achieved some measure of down-sizing and/or productivity improving in a more timely manner.

Fast forward several weeks and we all got the news that a Company-wide notice went out offering all staff the opportunity to express their interest in being considered for voluntary redundancy. Soon after it was announced, a 'well-being' survey was forthcoming – the timing being most unfor-

tunate (and the subsequent scores amongst staff may show we need help!).

Here at Hutt our machinery upgrades continue with machine-shop equipment plus a bogie rotator being installed. Issues with the latter are being worked through and we hope to complete commissioning in the foreseeable future.

Walking around the site has seen some wagon work arrive whilst behind the scenes a small team is looking closely at the future workload and crunching the numbers to check what our resourcing requirements will be. This is against the background of a handful of staff who expressed their interest in taking voluntary redundancy – if it's available in the fullness of time.

We recently had our HSAT elections and our AGM. Both committees had a small number of changes that will inject new blood into them as well as ensuring cross-pollination of knowledge and skills which should bode well for the future.

Recent IT upgrades appear to have changed the printing colour defaults without warning. I imagine a great many people found this to be an un-notified nuisance especially for those who have a long tramp to their shared printers only to find black & white/monochrome printouts greeting them. So much for this tool making us more efficient and productive.

Final preparations for Christmas have yet to be confirmed however there are the expected restrictions due to the company's ever-tightening financial restraints. For those who will be having a break, take care until you return, and for those who got a wee financial departure present, thank you for your service – you may well be missed.

Until next time, take care and be safe. Christmas Greetings from the Hutt Workshops. 🌐

WELLINGTON RAIL

Biggest challenge of the year negotiating with Transdev

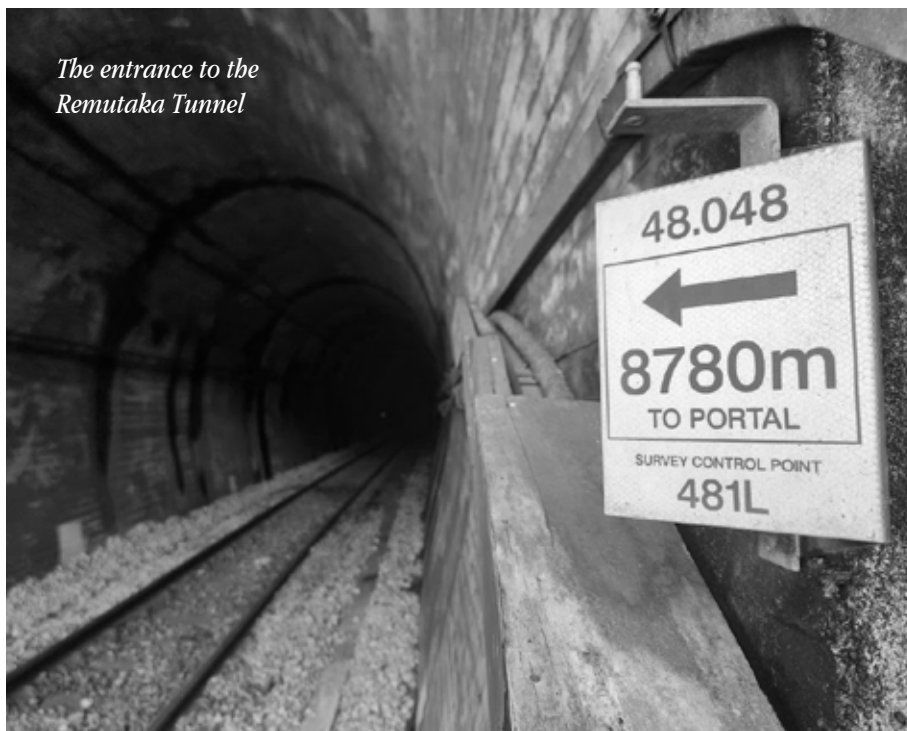
SO we close another year in the Wellington Rail branch. We've been tackling challenges, celebrating wins, and navigating complex changes in our industry. One of the biggest events this past year was the prolonged bargaining with Transdev and Hyundai Rotem for the multi-employer collective agreement (MECA). Members exercised their right to take rest breaks and refused shift alterations and overtime, which significantly disrupted passenger services. The industrial action was well organised by the delegates and with the help of Allan and Todd keep things well organised to keep members informed. The process left many questioning Transdev's motives as their aggressive stance threatened hard-won rights and undermined their relationship with the Union. The MECA's ratification by a strong majority underscores the power of union solidarity, yet we remain cautious as Transdev is still obligated to introduce a new master roster and address critical staff shortages.

Alongside these battles, the Wellington branch recently bade farewell to two valued members, Martin Taylor and Kathi Peni. Their loss has deeply affected our community, and our thoughts are with their families and friends during this difficult time.

On the operational front, significant changes are taking shape.

The arrival of the new DMs from Stadler offers hope for some, though a peculiar dichotomy remains. While new investments hint at progress, other parts of the rail network are being scaled down. The recent sale of eight DFT locomotives to South Africa, coupled with the retirement of first-generation DLs, raises concerns about the overall direction of New Zealand's rail industry. Is it as simple as 'out with the old, in with the new'? Even if that's the case, a more pressing question arises – what are these brand-new, flash engines going to pull behind them if KiwiRail continues to turn customers away?

It's impossible to ignore the growing frustration over leadership's direction at KiwiRail. Many feel that KiwiRail's focus on trimming rather than investing and growing is a troubling sign. Workers, customers, and communities alike are left questioning if



The entrance to the Remutaka Tunnel

KiwiRail's current leadership has a genuine vision for New Zealand's rail future. As our industry stands at a crossroads, members can't help but wonder if our leaders are truly prepared to steer us forward in a way that respects and upholds the value of rail to our country's economy and its people.

Further complicating matters is the 6A project at Wellington Railway Station, relocating the signal box (or "A-Box"). Preparation is well underway, with new signals visible throughout the station. Staff training is ongoing, but there are still notable gaps in information – like the uncertainty around the shunter's request panel and the use of TRTS (train ready to start) buttons on the platforms.

Communication channels for calling the Wellington signaller, as well as responsibilities for operating new equipment such as the M23 points, are yet to be finalised, leaving staff in a holding pattern as they await clarity from KiwiRail and TDW.

Amid all these change, we're heading into the holiday season, with the knowledge that critical work, including the re-sleepering and re-railing of the Remutaka Tunnel (1954), which will keep many of us busy. For those who can, we hope you get some well-deserved time with family and friends. And to those working through the season, thank you for your dedication and hard work. 🇳🇿



Locomotives lined up at the Wellington port due to be sent overseas. The first two were ex NZ locos Martinus purchased for I REX Projects' work trains.

MARLBOROUGH PORT

Celebrating the retirement of a stalwart

LAST August we had the honour and privilege to farewell the hard working locomotive engineer and team leader, Peter Lewer (pictured right) to his well deserved retirement.

Peter started working for KiwiRail in Tauranga at the age of 17 where he started as a locomotive engineer trainee and worked at the same depot for 50 years, finishing in the position of team leader.

We already miss his big smile, his support and kind heart at work, and we all wish Peter the best retirement ever, full of motorbike and scenic train rides, happiness and time well spent with his lovely wife Sue and all his family.

Thanks for your hard work Peter. 🌐



CANTERBURY RAIL

Grumbling arise as communications break down

THIS is hard to write when very late October we don't know who of our union comrades will be here in KiwiRail when the magazine is published.

There seems to be rounds of meetings where very little is found out about what the intention of our employer is, what outcomes they're looking for, and what will actually happen between now and Christmas.

The RSAS meetings were well attended and were told that consultation would commence at some point after the meetings.

But the speaker, while telling people that the South Island was not really affected, then mumbles that 11 roles would be lost

at Hillside.

That was what happened whenever there was important information to be discussed, that the mumbling started despite people quick to ask the speaker to repeat himself.

Then a week later came the claim that the meetings were actual consultation! This caused there to be a complete lack of faith in the RSAS management.

The Network services meetings were all about efficiencies that could be found within our group and how we could improve production but nothing mentioned about redundancies there.

It was pointed out by the Industrial

Council members that an eight percent drop in production was a reflection of all the new people on the job – some having to learn their trade within Rail, discovering how track gangs and signalling works and the large group of fresh faced engineers all coming to grips with these parts of KiwiRail.

Then the elephant in the room once KiwiRail had called for redundancies: Who will be here at Christmas and into the next year 2025? This will effect production especially if we lose our most experienced people.

One thing going into the new year is that the RMTU will be the one constant in KiwiRail. 🌐

WEST COAST RAIL

West Coast bucking the trend with plenty of work and more in the offing

THE West Coast AGM was held recently with a good turn out. The meeting saw the return of branch chair Don Hibbs while secretary Holly Stark was re elected with some new names coming forward as delegates. Organiser Andy Woolhouse was in attendance saying

delegate training is to be organised.

The West Coast has been bucking the national trend of lower freight volumes with plenty of work and more in the pipeline due solely to the re-emergence of the extractive industry. Even with the closure of the Tawhai Tunnel due to a rock fall some

months ago this has only resulted in the loss of one return coal service a day using the load out facility at the former Pike River site, now known as Grey Valley Siding.

The decision to shotcrete and bolt the length of the 380m Tawhai Tunnel, while the right thing to do has resulted in a

◀ pushed out reopening with no clear finish line established other than Q1 of 2025.

The TranzAlpine has returned to daily running with solid passenger numbers however, a cost cutting measure of reducing this service to a single locomotive has been called out as a poor operational decision by the branch on what is supposed to be a world class service. This could lead to massive delays if a locomotive fails either side of the Alps. Why risk it?

Infrastructure has been busy toiling away with work being carried out all over the Coast, including the Buller Gorge while trains are not running. The replacement bridges at Kotuku and Arnold River are progressing though the Kotuku bridge, which is complete, has had a slumping problem in

an area well known for underground water and oil deposits. After three long years of suspended signals between Jackson and Rotomanu – and thankfully only one operating incident (touch wood) – the end seems to be in sight with design work done and work scheduled to get under way shortly.

While the arrival of the two prototype DM locomotives is great to see the proving, line running and testing does mean it will be some time before the next batch are ready to be sent over. So we need to keep our old faithful work horses going for some time yet.

The elephant in the room has of course been the rumours about operational job cuts in the North Island and the out-of-nowhere call for voluntary redundancies that

came with no specific numbers attached or even a real explanation of how we ended up at this point. Those of us that can see past our own noses can see some of the crazy waste and the inflation of numbers upstairs. The recession we all saw coming and have been battling also seemed to be a mystery to the bean counters with little of the forecast budget being accurate.

In spite of this our members keep turning up and doing their work safely and professionally. Stay safe out there! 🌍

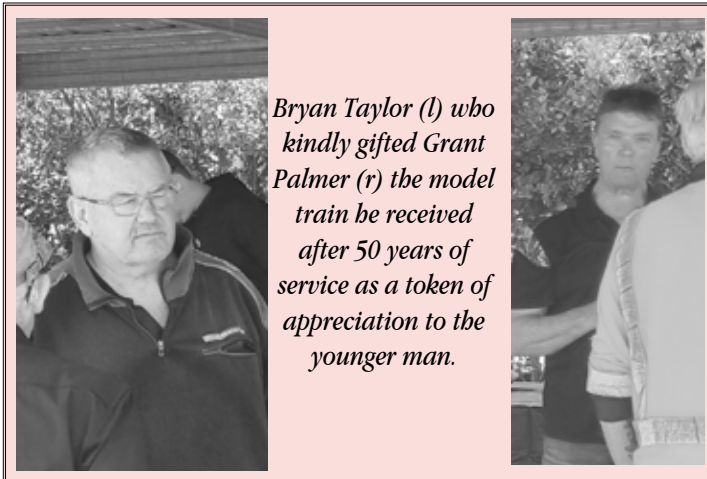


TIMARU RAIL

Government's lack of comment re new ferries is concerning

WELL it seems a very stressful and uncertain time for many of us in rail. Not helped by the lack of – and clunky – communications we have received from up above regarding the restructuring and slimming down of our workforce. By the time you read this the voluntary redundancy process should be completed, so for those who were accepted best of luck, you'll be missed. For those remaining hopefully a clearer picture of the future will be revealed.

On the future theme, the lack of noise from the government on new ferries is deafening. All parties, including trucking companies, can see the benefits environmentally and economically for purchasing rail-ready ferries. Let's hope common sense prevails and that route is taken. It may require Government to eat humble pie and revert to something similar to what was on the table before – and probably more expensive too. Why, as a nation, do we try to do things on the cheap, we only end up spending more in the long run. I guess that's the problem when many politicians are only concerned about winning the next election. Short term sugar hits are the order of the day.



Bryan Taylor (l) who kindly gifted Grant Palmer (r) the model train he received after 50 years of service as a token of appreciation to the younger man.

In Timaru you are no doubt aware of the local Smithfield Freezing Works closure – a huge blow to the community with flow on effects to rail as they were putting 30 – 40 boxes through the CT site a week. With the already low tonnage volumes overall this is less than ideal. We just hope Pukeuri Meat Works down the road in Oamaru will increase their tonnage output on rail to offset the loss.

On a brighter note we recently had a bbq for one of our long standing RCOs celebrating 50 years service. Bryan [Puddles] Taylor. A better operator you would not find with a cutting wit and some good stories from his solo off-the-beaten-track China trips. A well respected comrade who in my time here has mellowed somewhat

but I wouldn't say was going soft as he nears retirement. In a touching move Puddles gifted recently retired LE Grant Palmer his 50 year Service model train, which Grant had no idea he was receiving (Grant retired after 47 years thus not qualifying for a model). Turns out no one was on picture duty and I was on the bbq so apologies for no pics of the exchange.

At the same bbq LE Mike Knewstubb was also awarded his long awaited 10 years service certificate. He has actually done 12 years but that's another, long story. Promising new recruit Bryn Chambers was awarded his RO mastery certificate.

Finally a big thanks to our infrastructure and networks teams for all their hard work throughout the year. Without you we just ain't going anywhere.

Good luck to you all from Timaru. Stay strong in these uncertain times and look out for each other. A small check in with a colleague can make all the difference, more than you may realise. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, may you find some time for a bit of R&R and let's hope the new year will bring good news for all. Survive till 2025. 🌍

SOUTHLAND RAIL

Word of redundancies being thrown about major cause of tension

GREETINGS from sunny Southland. What an interesting time we are experiencing currently within KiwiRail. With talks of cutbacks, efficiencies and the "R" word being thrown around to all staff, it has certainly raised tensions around job security. We are fortunate in Southland to support large primary industries, but our heartfelt sympathies go out to our brothers and sisters who have been affected. The support of our colleagues, families and friends goes a long way during these times so reach out to each other and check in on your mates.

Major milestones

We've had some major milestones recently.

Congratulations to Chloe De Groot and Jordan Briggs, our newest ROs who were signed off a couple months ago. You are both real assets to the operations team.

Congratulations to Anna Skerrett and Josh McCleery on gaining the relief RCO positions, we know you'll both smash it.

Congratulations to Neville Black, RCO Edendale who ticked over the massive milestone of 40 years. Still a few more years of keeping the ROs on their toes we hope!

One we certainly cannot forget to mention is the retirement of the one and only Brian [Pipes] Peterson. A stalwart of rail in Southland for over 43 years Brian started in Invercargill in May 1981. Like most new to the job at the time he started working on the Southerner, moving later to become a wagon recorder and chalker and breaker. After being head hunted for multiple different roles, he transferred to Edendale/Mataura and worked up to RCO and since then has looked after our major customers in the area to the highest level of service you could imagine. The relationships Brian has created with those customers has set the cornerstone of what we do now, and the experience and knowledge he has passed on to future generations of rail workers will



Brian [Pipes] Peterson retiring after 43 years enjoying a Southland summer – and still wearing shorts.

continue to be applied for years to come. Enjoy your retirement Brian, we hope to see you stop in for a cup of tea every now and again.

Another retirement to mention is Sean Hopper, who has hung up the tools after 46 years within rail. Sean started in 1978 in Napier as an apprentice electrician, and moved over to signals fairly quickly. He worked on multiple major BOLs and upgrades in his time in the North Island before making his way to Invercargill in 2014. Sean enjoys being involved in rugby league and is an avid collector of radios and clocks; the signals office now seems quite empty with his collection retiring with him. Enjoy your retirement Sean, you'll have plenty of time to potter around the section and in the shed. Don't forget to bring in one of those legendary sponge cakes from time to time.

A mention also goes to the retirement of Neville Martin, track ganger from Balclutha. Our LEs will certainly miss your excellent work in keeping your section clear of TSRs and providing some of the best maintained

track in the country from what we hear.

We eagerly await the government's decision on our replacement "Toyota Corolla" ferries after wasting the better part of half a billion dollars cancelling the original versions. Rail-enabled ferries are a must, so keep making noise at all levels on this vital connection.

Speaking of decisions taking longer than they should, 12 months later we are still none the wiser on the future of the Ohai Line. Come on KiwiRail, just make a decision already!

On a positive note, the track and structures gangs have been busy delivering some great results, including reducing some long standing PSRs on the Bluff Line and a major bridge replacement at Silver Fern Farms, Finegand in Balclutha. Well done to Luke and his team for getting that job done on budget and ahead of time, proof that it's the people on the ground that make the difference.

Stay safe out there, and look after each other. 🇳🇿



Shjarn Kilkelly pictured with the large Indian motorcycle monument on the South Island's West Coast. This picture was taken when Shjarn first started at KiwiRail.

The harsh cost of injury - and how the RMTU can assist

FORMER West Coast KiwiRail worker Shjarn Kilkelly was young and fit when he suffered a bad shoulder injury at work in June 2022. The injury put him off work for a year, partly due to not receiving the right combination of treatments.

In September 2023, KiwiRail's injury management provider Work Aon cut off Shjarn's ACC cover saying his injury should have resolved in the time taken. By cutting his ACC cover, Shjarn couldn't access further injury treatment or receive weekly compensation. He was also unable to work and had to take medical retirement from KiwiRail.

A delegate suggested he contact the RMTU for legal advice.

Shjarn rang the RMTU, who put him in touch with the RMTU's lawyers Armstrong Thompson Law. They lodged an application to review Work Aon and KiwiRail's decision to cut entitlement.

The RMTU organised and covered the costs for Shjarn to see a musculoskeletal

pain specialist, who confirmed his injury and gave advice about the treatment he needed.

On the strength of the specialists opinion, the Union took Shjarn's case to review and won.

The reviewer said KiwiRail's decision to suspend his entitlements was incorrect and he is entitled to weekly compensation – backdated for the period it was suspended – and all entitlements for the covered injury.

It was a lengthy process and took one year from when the review application was lodged to the review hearing date. Going without income or treatment for that long came at great cost to Shjarn.

Life is looking much better after winning his case.

Shjarn said: "I can move forward now. My recovery was put on hold and now I continue with that. That wouldn't have happened without the help of the RMTU, and Ben and Hazel, the lawyers. I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't made

contact with the Union "

On taking medical retirement, Shjarn said, "I really enjoyed working with the guys at KiwiRail, I enjoyed the work, it was a shame to leave." 🇳🇿

Injury management

Union request for worker's voice

- Have you been injured at work in the last 18 months?
- Was your (ACC) claim managed by a third-party – ie: Work Aon or Well NZ?

The RMTU is surveying workers about their experience. We're talking with workers confidentially whose injury claim was managed by a third party provider rather than ACC. The information will be anonymised and used for improvements in ACC policy and union education.

If you'd like to participate or find out more please email Karen at the RMTU

kfletcher@rmtunion.org.nz