

THE ACTIVIST



Published regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) **February 2025**

Happy New Year 2025

This promises to be a full-on year with most of our elected positions coming up. The order is the National President first followed by the National Management Committee (NMC) members and depending on the NMC results, the call for nominations for the KiwiRail Industrial Council Reps. We also have KiwiRail MECA Bargaining at the start of May 2025. KiwiRail are continuing to state that above rail needs to substantially increase its income. In my view, this will only come with growth and improved train plans that reduce or eliminate car running. Improved train plans could also address fatigue risk management. With the Desert Road closed for an extended period, this is a perfect opportunity for KR to offer an alternative to road, but will KR take those opportunities?!
Be safe out there, in unity
Todd Valster - RMTU General Secretary

Keep up to date with important union information by [updating your contact information by clicking here](#)

Call for Nominations RMTU National President



In accordance with Rule 24 of the Rules & Standing Orders of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union nominations are hereby called from current financial members for the position of National President.

Nomination Forms are available from the RMTU National Office by calling on 04 499-2066, or reception@rmtunion.org.nz or on the union website www.rmtunion.org.nz under "Hot Topics" tab.

Nominations shall be in writing and contain the signed consent of the candidate, and be proposed and seconded by current financial members (Rule 1) of the Union.

Nominations must be received by the National Returning Officer at the National Office of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union, PO Box 1103 Wellington 6140 no later than 1700 hrs on **Friday 14th February 2025**.

The term of office is 2 years (Rule 24.2) and the duties are as contained in Rule 27 of the Union's Rules and Standing Orders. For the information of members, it is advised that the incumbent will be seeking re-election.



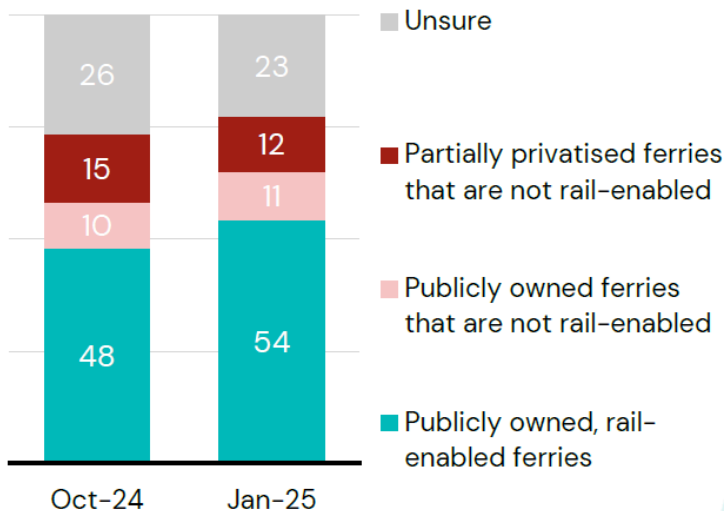
The fight continues for publicly owned rail enabled ferries- new poll results are in.

The poll was conducted by Talbot-Mills in January 2025. it shows public support for publicly owned rail-enabled ferries is growing, with 54% of New Zealanders now backing this option – up six points from last year.

At the same time, support for a privatised option has decreased, and considerably more people think Finance Minister Nicola Willis made a mistake in cancelling the original ferry contract .

RMTU General Secretary Todd Valster told media that the polling sends a clear signal to the new Rail Minister Winston Peters. “Voters want ownership and control of this critical infrastructure to remain in public hands and to be rail enabled. “That shouldn’t be surprising – it’s just common sense which is why a majority of voters for all parties of government are backing this option. prior to cancellation the new ferries were due next year.

Poll results show the majority of poll participants want publicly owned and rail enabled ships

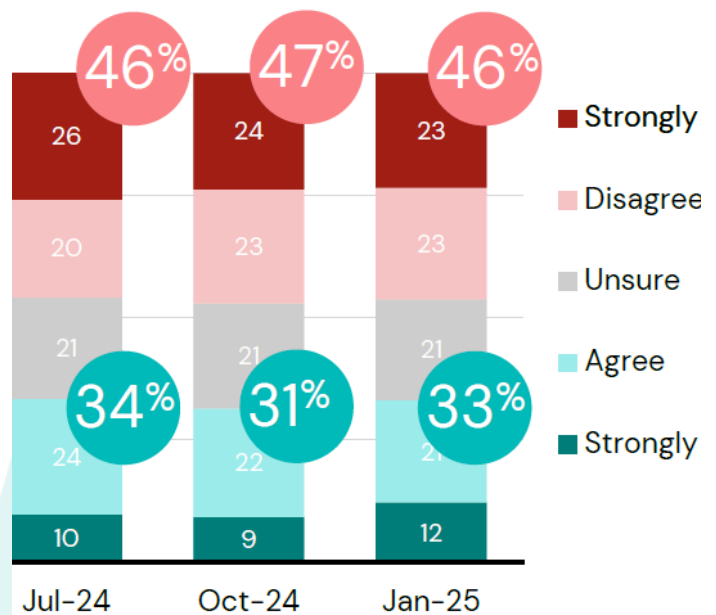


Minister of Railways Winston Peters told The Herald they’re on the hunt for a ferry deal and market engagement to buy new ferries.



Sign the petition for publicly owned rail enabled ferries below.
<https://www.munz.org.nz/2024/09/26/our-ferries-our-future/>

Talbot-Mills poll results show only 33% agreed with the Finance Minister’s decision to cancel the ferry contract last year.



1.7 billion sunk so far by cancelling the new ferries

It was reported in Stuff the Council of Trade Unions' Craig Renney estimates the coalition Government has already budgeted or spent **\$1.7b** since cancelling the previous replacement project, known as "iRex", last year.

Of that, \$1.16b is due to sunk costs, the cost of winding down iRex, and extra maintenance to keep the ageing Interislander fleet afloat.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/politics/360530998/unions-economist-predicts-new-cook-strait-ferries-will-cost-least-17-billion>

Auckland Branch update

Welcome back to all our members, and huge thanks to those who worked through, a large amount of work has been completed over the BOL, by the time this goes out, we will have initiated bargaining with Auckland One Rail.

With KiwiRail there is an HPHE project for Auckland Metro ongoing and making good progress. The organisers were onsite at Glenbrook Vintage Railway to witness a historic moment for Steam Loco JA1250, as the boiler and firebox were removed, with a new boiler being designed and built, the last time the boiler was removed on this loco was 1996, look out for the next Transport Worker for a bigger article and some photos. Also, keep an eye out as the Branch Secretary position is now vacant, and we will be looking to fill this position. In the meantime, the Branch Vice Secretary will step in.



You can update your contact details by scanning the QR code below



KiwiRail contractors- Union asks if KR workers should sign off contractors on the job training?

Recently a member of the KiwiRail Track Protection Team was asked by a contractor working onsite to sign off the contractor's on the job training (OJT) for operating a HiRail. The contractor's request highlighted a gap in KiwiRail policy about who has the authority to sign off contractors' competency. The topic will be raised by the union at the next Networks Industrial Council. We will report back to you on KiwiRail's response in the next Activist.

High number of rail incidents so far this year- TAIC has opened multiple rail investigations.

The Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) has opened three new investigations in January/February this year. TAIC's role is to investigate transport related accidents in the rail, maritime and aviation sectors with a view to avoiding similar occurrences in the future, rather than to ascribe blame to any person. They are not a Regulator such as Waka Kotahi, Worksafe or Maritime NZ and do not have the power to prosecute. If you would like to read the reports go to [Taic.org.nz](https://www.taic.org.nz)

Recent Auckland SPAD highlights the urgency for Electronic train control system (ETCS).

The SPAD A this week involving a KiwiRail freight train that passed a red signal that was protecting an Auckland One Rail Passenger train on the North Island main line highlights the urgency for installing ETCS (electronic train control system) on the North Island freight DL's. ETCS has been installed on one DL loco and is still in the testing phase. ETCS would substantially reduce the risk and consequence of a SPAD resulting in a collision.

Shunting incident Port Chalmers

TAIC said the incident occurred at Port Chalmers freight marshalling yard in the early hours of 23 January 2025. A remote-control operator and a rail operator were working to couple up a shunt locomotive to a rake of freight wagons. TAIC said, both workers noticed shadows of something big moving toward them. They stepped out from where they were working in time to avoid what happened next. Another rake of nine freight wagons rolled uncontrolled from the marshalling yard, and the runaway rake's lead wagon ran into the locomotive. Reportedly there was moderate damage to the coupling area where the workers had been. No injuries were reported. TAIC are investigating.

Rail incident-Southland

The TAIC Commission is investigating a rail incident in Southland in January where at a KiwiRail freight train passed a group of workers who were close to the track, maintaining a signal system.

Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) reports back on SPAD incident caused by COVID related "brain fog"

The SPAD A occurred in February last year on the Midland line involving a loaded coal train. The commission said the LE was suffering from cognitive impairment following a recent COVID-19 illness. Medical advice to the Commission was that 'brain fog' is a well-documented after effect of COVID-19 that can continue for some time. And COVID-19 may impair cognitive functions such as memory and concentration following recovery from the illness. TAIC said Organisations employing safety-critical workers should also be aware that the after-effects of an acute illness may reduce a worker's ability to reliably self-assess as being fit to return to work. To read the report go to the link here. <https://www.taic.org.nz/inquiry/ro-2024-101>

These incidents are a sobering reminder of the safety critical work our members do. Stay safe out there.

