

DECEMBER 2012

# THE *Transport Worker*

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



**RMTU delegates  
of the year**



## 8 PIKE RIVER REPORT



Scathing Pike River Coal Mine report supports worker safety.

## 9-15 CONFERENCE ROUND UP



Labour leader David Shearer talking at the RMTU annual conference plus report, comments and photos.

## 16 MATANGI SIGN OFF

Wellington's Matangi units signed off with plans to build more.



## COVER PHOTO

Mike Nijssen (left) Port Timaru and Dave Kearns Hillside Rail were voted top delegates for the year at the Annual RMTU Conference in Wellington in October.

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**Wayne Butson**  
General secretary  
RMTU

## Sad times for NZ workers

It is that time of year when the most frequent question you are asked by family is “what do you want for Christmas?”. The answer for the RMTU family is very simple: we want our members to remain in their current employment on good RMTU-negotiated terms and conditions. Sadly, this year has seen many of our port and rail members lose their jobs and, even sadder, in almost all cases they were preventable.

In KiwiRail, for example, more than 250 infrastructure and Hillside members lost their jobs as a direct result of the actions (or inactions) of the John Key-led coalition Government. His Government's record on job losses and the growth in unemployment numbers is disgraceful. A recent headline in the *Southland Times* summed up very clearly where the accountability for the Hillside Workshops sale and closure job losses lies: 'Joyce killed Hillside'. The headline sheets the responsibility home to Steven Joyce. It was he who suggested on a TV1 news clip at the time of the debate over the Auckland EMUs and the new diesel electric locomotives, that Hillside had nothing to fear as there were more than 4,000 wagons to be built. He implied they would be doing the work. We all now know that his words were empty like most other statements this Government makes on issues to do with workers and employment.

## Quinn meekly follows Government's cue

The fact that the KiwiRail board and CEO Jim Quinn actively engaged in, and attempted to divert accountability for the decisions to themselves, for the destruction of Hillside and the winding down of the infrastructure business, signifies the sycophantic acceptance of, and agreement with, the desires of their National-led political masters.

It is time for a change at the top of KiwiRail as this Turnaround Plan is driving KiwiRail backwards rather than forwards. Put another way, the Plan is so successful we are now headed back from whence we came.

Almost all of the people I have spoken to about the Hillside and infrastructure layoffs and closure believe that it is nuts to be doing so at this time. We need to be building up our manufacturing base rather than winding it down – especially as the nation's current account deficit is getting to concerning levels.

This is why the RMTU fully supports the union-inspired call from opposition political parties for an inquiry into manufacturing within New Zealand. Manufacturing is being double whammed: hit by the high dollar and by a Government-led missive for all purchases to go to the 'cheapest' supplier irrespective of this country's national interest.

Our dollar is the 10th most traded currency in the world while one of our most vigorous export commodities is skilled workers to Australia.

We also need to continue to invest in the upgrade of the national rail system rather than the current pruning where limbs are being hacked from the trunk. We all know the National Government's obsession with roads of significance and their development for the trucking industry is unsustainable in a peak oil future.

I know that it is Christmas soon and we are meant to be festive but our economic situation is nuts and just makes me so angry.

Four years after the global financial crisis, our top 1% continue milking it while the rest of us are left with the costs. Meanwhile our Government keeps on borrowing to pay for those tax cuts.

When my family ask me what I want for Christmas the first thing that springs to mind is John Key's Government out of office. Sadly we will have to suffer another two years before we can exercise our wrath at the ballot box. I just hope that most of us who are committed to a sustainable New

Zealand can wait that long.

On a more positive note I have had the opportunity to get out and about quite a bit of late and am greatly impressed with just how organised the vast majority of our branches are. The sustained push for more delegate training is clearly paying dividends. Thank you to our hardworking rank and file delegates for their efforts throughout 2012.

## Active year for RMTU

Setting aside the job losses it has been a very active and productive year for the Union. We have meaningfully participated and assisted within all of the major disputes such as CMP, Affco and more and continue to deliver real wages, terms and conditions growth to our members. That's why we have such high levels of member loyalty and high density within our membership sites. My sincere thanks to you all and I know that if we continue to build upon our levels of activism and unity we will continue to prove our worth to members and merit respect from our employers.

To you all who celebrate the forthcoming holiday period I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a safe, prosperous and joyous 2013 which may be unlucky for some, but not for the members of Team RMTU!

We are stronger together. 

## Appalling decisions from Key government

*The Key government's decision to sell Hillside is just part of a pattern from this government to punish New Zealand workers and reward the wealthy. We now don't manufacture our own rail cars, we don't mill our own timber and we don't commercially fish our own waters. Pretty soon we won't even be rebuilding our own cities. Their lack of understanding simple economics appalls me. Every dollar New Zealanders earn and spend, at least 50c (income tax and GST) goes into the hands of government. How much less would NZ have to borrow if all the taxes from jobs we have thrown away were filling their coffers? How much more would they have to do their work? The next election will be critical if we are going to put the brakes on selling off our family silver and supporting working New Zealanders.*

Wishing all our  
Union members a  
very Merry  
Christmas and a safe  
and happy New  
Year.

From the  
president,  
general  
secretary,  
NMC  
and  
staff.



## Gratitude for support

Dear Editor

Just a note to express my heartfelt thanks to the RMTU for the support I got in the battle with ACC over my hearing dispute.

It's unfortunate that I had to pull out before the dispute hearing but with only a 10% chance of it being successful I had to make the ultimate decision.

My hearing loss falls outside their window of cover – although they had previously covered the first hearing aids 100% in 2006. Their policy had since changed and a new report from two ENT specialists overrode the original report completed by Kathy Fergusson in 2006.

I visited Mr Faumui in Wanganui who agreed that part of the report from Messrs. Blake and Nicolson he could agree with but that he leant more toward the original report of 2006.

So after a long talk with Hazel Armstrong and my wife we dropped the dispute hearing.

Cheers

Malcolm Stone.

## Retirements

Dear Editor

I retired from KiwiRail on August 31, 2012.

Please accept my resignation from the Union after 22 years as a member.

Thank you for the years of good representation for the work force which I have been involved in.

All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Derek Lorimer

Dear Editor,

I hereby resign from the RMTU as I am leaving the Company as of October 19, 2012.

Thank you for all the support you have given me and I wish the RMTU well for the future.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Joe Holland,

Timaru.



Dear Editor,

It is with regret I tender my resignation from the RMTU. You will be well aware of the circumstances that led to this action.

I wish to thank the Union for its support for my 45 years in rail. Working conditions and management ability is at an all-time low. The need for a Union is greater today than it ever was.

I wish you and the Union all the best for the future and all the hard work in front of you to retain the conditions that have been hard fought for in the past. This will be no mean feat against the current management.

I thoroughly enjoyed my work as a delegate and member of the mechanical collective council.

All the best for the future

Yours sincerely  
Laurie Hall,  
Christchurch.

Dear Editor

I wish to resign my position of chairman of the Napier branch of the RMTU and from the Union. I am moving to Australia to further my career.

Thanks for all the help I've received from the RMTU with a special thanks to Todd and Phil. I've enjoyed my time at the national conference and the friends I've made there.

I would especially like to thank my fellow work mates of the past 20 years without whom the job would have been a lot harder.

To my fellow members, I wish you all the best.

Regards  
Dean Grant.

Dear Editor,

I would like to resign from the Union after 50 odd years and wish the staff and members all the best for the future.

Ross Clough  
Dunedin.



## H&S agreements determined

.. with KiwiRail

**O**N 27 September RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson and KiwiRail's acting national manager KiwiRail Safety & People Dianne Campton signed the RMTU/KiwiRail Employee Participation Agreement for Health and Safety (the EPA).

The joint agreement is intended to improve health and safety in the workplace by promoting a cooperative and collaborative approach between management and workers and their Union. It describes the role and functions of Health and Safety representatives, the process for escalating unresolved health and safety issues and H&S rep elections and training.

Shortly members of the Health and Safety action teams will receive an RMTU questionnaire asking for feedback on the effectiveness of the health and safety action teams (HSAT). This feedback will inform a review of the HSAT procedures. To get a copy of the EPA go to the RMTU website  
<http://bit.ly/T2m151>

... and at Port Nelson

**T**HE Port Nelson branch H&S reps and delegates have finalised an employee participation agreement with Port Nelson Ltd. The agreement sets out a cooperative and collaborative approach between the employer and the employees and the Union to improve the safety and health of workers.

The agreement includes the process of H&S rep elections, entitlement to paid H&S rep training, the functions of the H&S rep, H&S committees and process for resolving H&S issues. 🌐



## Surprise, surprise ...

*Often drivers on the Buller Gorge run don't know what to expect around the next corner. Here's one of their latest surprises!*

# Turnaround Plan a farce

**A**T the time of going to press over 100 RMTU members working in infrastructure and engineering have either taken voluntary redundancy or been made redundant.

The Company originally announced it wanted to slash up to 300 jobs as part of cutting vital spending on the network because it wasn't hitting its 'revenue targets'.

In plain English the Company had failed to take into account the impact of the global financial crisis and the long recession when it dreamed up its Turnaround Plan. Another factor was the Christchurch earthquake, which it's fair to say, no one predicted.

## Saving jobs

The RMTU ran a campaign to try and save as many jobs as it could and, through a combination of determined advocacy, hard work and persistence it managed to reduce the job losses to 158. Some pretty hard hitting publicity helped too, highlighting how false economies were now cost-

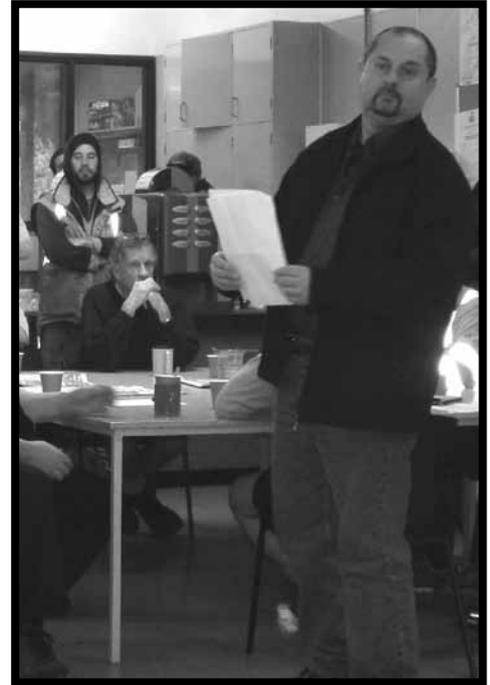
ing the Company more than it bargaining for. Who can forget the coverage of the Peruvian sleeper debacle and the state of one particular level crossing in the Waikato?

Other actions helped too such as when the Christchurch track workers held an immediate stop work when a local manager shot his mouth off about 'using and abusing' contractors, a move that led the RMTU to successfully negotiate a memorandum of understanding around contracting out as part of the collective agreement settlement.



## Company intransigence

Because the Company didn't fill vacancies and because some of our members put up their hands, we were left with only 31 compulsory redundancies – 31 too many but a lot fewer than there would have been had we not put up a fight. Of course, management didn't listen to us and insisted on maximising the disruption by making whole gangs 're-apply' for their jobs instead



of using objective selection criteria for redundancy.

This episode demonstrated that the Turnaround Plan is intellectually bankrupt – there are no 'self-sustaining' railways anywhere on earth, just as there are no 'self-sustaining' schools, hospitals and roads. Rail is part of infrastructure and grown up, developed countries with forward thinking governments invest in it. However, not so with this National government, who run it down so their mates in the road transport industry can keep clogging up the highways so they are able to cream off the profits. 🇺🇸



## Bruce Daniel Walker

22/2/1948 – 13/7/2012



Bruce joined the NZ port industry on 23 July 1990 as a signalman at the Tairaroa Head Signal Station Port Otago – a change from Bruce's previous role as a salesman for Resene Paints. But with his navy skills and experience he would get the Heads ship shape. The navy ethos ran deep in Bruce. The 'she'll be right' attitude wouldn't last five seconds as a reason with Bruce and would invite an immediate invitation for 'both barrels'.

Part of Bruce's legacy continues with the four by 12 hourly salaried week – a radical settlement back then yet it was characteristic of Bruce to recognise its merits. He battled tenaciously to establish it and ferociously defended it when necessary. It has now become the norm.

He appreciated and enjoyed the splendid isolation and natural beauty and wildlife of Tairaroa Heads. On approaching the station you could always tell when Bruce was on shift by the gang of gulls gathered there which he had tamed by feeding. By some unknown means the same gang would arrive and noisily stand about when Bruce was your relief. A practice he continued when transferred to Port Chalmers Otago Harbour Control after the Station was abandoned in 2001.

Bruce would also follow the nesting progress of the royal southern albatross and the ten months from egg to chick to juveniles and their first flight. Change of shift was often preceded with a progress report. His concern for the environment was exemplified when one evening, while observing the evening arrival of the little blue penguins, he saw someone in the dunes capturing some arrivals. Bruce rang the local constable who stopped the culprit and found penguins in his car boot – apparently to be illegally smuggled overseas.

For Bruce the closure of the Tairaroa Head Signal Station signaled the end of the best view in the world – and of a 50 kilometre commute!

Another important legacy Bruce left was meal and tea breaks after a hard battle for, again, what is now taken for granted.

He was elected branch secretary for RMTU Port Otago branch, a role he held until his death in June 2012. During which time he battled a serious illness that eventually led to his untimely death. But the stubborn strength he brought to the job of branch secretary was the same that kept him going during his long illness.

Bruce is greatly missed by wife Barbara, and family, by his union peers and his workmates.

## Leslie John Boswell

12/4/1928 – 27/6/2012



Les joined the NZR in 1946 at the Christchurch Linwood locomotive depot where he served time as a fireman at Springfield before transferring to Palmerston North. On gaining his engine driver's ticket he was transferred to Wellington where he gained his First Grade and moved to Frankton Junction.

In 1980 he was promoted to assistant locomotive supervisor

at Te Rapa, followed by senior assistant in Wellington. In 1985 he became a locomotive supervisor in Dunedin and finally chief locomotive supervisor back in Wellington – a position he held until retirement in 1988.

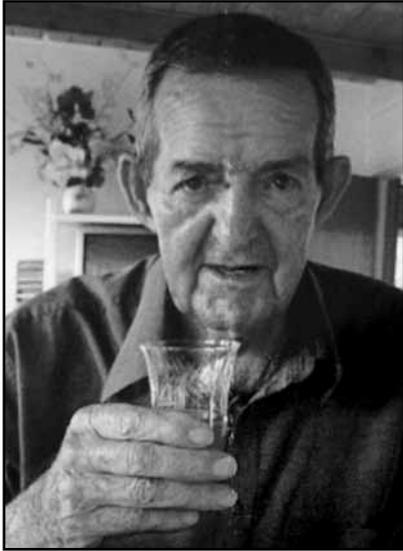
Les was well versed in all aspects of unionism and held various positions within the Engine Drivers & Cleaners Association and later the Locomotive Engineers Association. He served with distinction on many occasions as a union advocate. One of his lasting legacies was the LEA Trust Fund set up in the early 1970s for incapacitated locomotive men who, for health reasons, were unable to continue on the footplate of a locomotive. This fund is still in existence and has been a God send to many loco engineers.

When he retired Les became a member of the Waikato/Thames Valley branch of the NZR Superannuitants Association and in 1991 was elected branch chairman and delegate. He retained these positions until 2005 when ill health intervened. In 2001 in recognition and appreciation of a long and meritorious service to the association, Les was awarded a life membership.



KA 942 at Springfield on a recent steam special.

## Richie Smith - RMTU life member



11/2/1930 – 24/7/2012.

Richie joined the Marlborough branch of the NZ Harbour Workers Union in 1970. His no-nonsense attitude had him elected to the branch executive where he continued to represent workers until his retirement in January 1990. He was also on the Union's national council through the restructuring of the port industry playing a vital role locally and nationally.

Current chairperson Terry Beech reminded those at his funeral of the many battles Richie had fronted including protecting jobs during restructuring, securing better conditions for shift workers, serving on the inaugural port company board and confronting PM Rob Muldoon when the branch members had closed the port.

Richie's family remind us of his pedigree growing up in Lyttelton and as a young man delivering food parcels to locked out watersider families in 1951.

Others told of a family man who always had a joke and a smile. He served in the 10th Transport Company in Korea.

## Malcolm John Smeaton

6/08/1937 – 6/08/2012

Malcolm passed away peacefully at Hamilton on August 26, 2012.

He joined the locomotive department of NZR at Greymouth in approximately 1958. After obtaining his fireman's ticket he was transferred to Frankton Junction where he passed his 2nd. Grade and later, at Te Rapa, his first grade locomotive engineer's exams. He remained at Te Rapa until electing to take early retirement in 2001

The son of a former engine driver (Raymond Smeaton) Malcolm studied accountancy prior to joining rail and informed this writer that it was only with great reluctance that his parents permitted him to join New Zealand Rail. For many years he served as national councillor for the Locomotive Engineers Association representing the Waikato/Bay of Plenty District. On retiring Malcolm joined the Waikato Thames Valley Branch of the NZR Superannuitants Association and served for a term on the committee as a branch delegate until ill health forced him to relinquish the positions.



'Save our schools' campaign in Christchurch supported by the RMTU Lyttelton Port Branch.

**Retirement savings made easy**

**A Kiwisaver scheme for ALL RMTU members**

**RAIL workers can now piggy-back aboard the benefits port workers have enjoyed with the NZ Harbours Superannuation Plan by opening a KiwiSaver account with them or transferring to it from the one they have.**

The Plan is sponsored by the Rail & Maritime Transport Union and administered by Melville Jessup Weaver. Contributions are invested between four fund managers:-

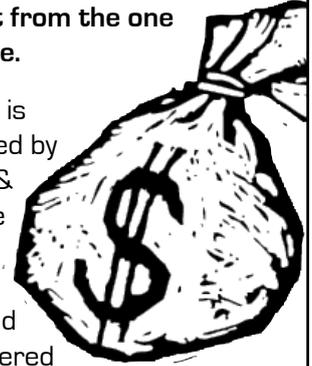
- AMP Capital;
- TOWER;
- Tyndall NZ; and
- Onepath

All top-rated managers.

The NZ Harbours KiwiSaver Scheme operates in similar fashion to all others; you get the most out of it if you and your employer make regular contributions at a minimum rate of 2% of your taxable earnings.

Download a copy of the investment statement and application form at:

[www.harbourssuper.org.nz](http://www.harbourssuper.org.nz)



# Pike River Commission recommends strengthening workers' rights

**Workers' safety given lower priority than shareholder profits**

**T**WO years have passed since the fatal explosion on November, 19 2010 killed 29 workers in the Pike River Coal Mine on the West Coast Paparoa Ranges. Two workers narrowly escaped with their lives.

The Royal Commission on the Pike River Coal Mine tragedy recently issued its findings.

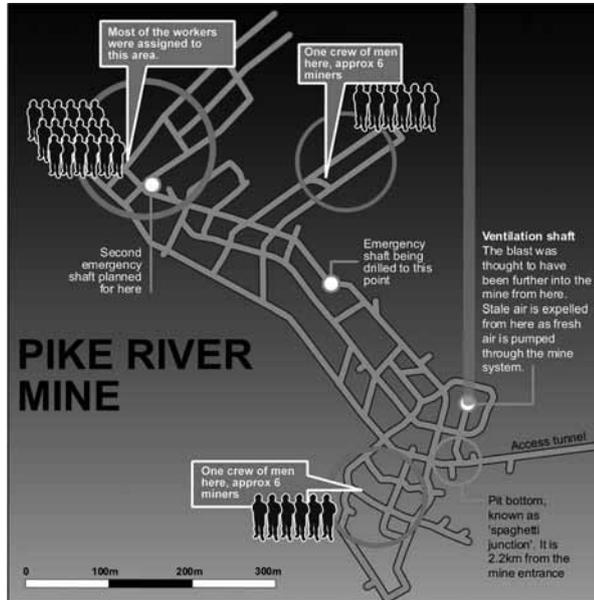
## Scathing report

Their report was scathing of the Department of Labour, described a lack of public faith and credibility and called for major and rapid changes. The company itself is described as having a culture that put production ahead of safety, where the executive management did not prioritise health and safety matters and safety and training were marginalised.

Inadequacies of the system included: insufficient gas monitoring, paltry emergency procedures, inadequate ventilation, insufficient training and supervision, lack of safety for contractors and a paucity of experienced staff.

## Early warning signs

The Royal Commission saw evidence of 21 methane spikes in the months before the explosion, many in the explosive range



(above) A diagram of the Pike River Coal Mine and (below) an aerial photo of the disaster site.



of greater than 5%. However, the company failed to notify the Department of Labour when these serious harm incidents occurred.

The Commission heard the poor standard of gas monitoring was a very seri-

ous problem throughout the period leading to the explosion. Monitoring equipment wasn't fit for task and maintenance and calibration of monitoring equipment was sometimes bypassed, resulting in men working in unsafe conditions.

## Recommendations include:

1. A single regulatory agency concentrating exclusively on health and safety separated from the mega ministry MoBIE;
2. Trained H&S reps should perform inspections and stop all, or parts, of operations where there is an immediate danger to workers;
3. The results of monitoring and investigation of health and safety to be automatically available to workers without needing to ask;
4. Introduction of union check inspectors in mines;
5. The regulator to provide an approved code of practice on worker participation which they promote;
6. Government funding to train all Health and Safety reps;
7. Promote workers' rights and obligations through education and publicity; and
8. Ensure inspectors routinely consult workers and Health and Safety reps as part of their audits or inspections.

## Where the %##\*# are you?

- Did you get that important notice from the Union last month? Last year? Any time? If you haven't had any mail from RMTU head office then you had better tell us where you've moved to. Check your address by:
  - talking to your branch chair who has a list of local members and their details;
  - going to the Union website and updating your details – <http://bit.ly/exmEyL>
  - phoning 04-499-2066;
  - faxing 04-471-0896 ;
  - giving us your e-mail to save on postage.

## Burn-outs



Examples of how loco engineers attempt to provide job security for track workers.



# Mission accomplished at Hutt Workshops

**G**OODWILL, cooperation, understanding and a good working relationship between the shop floor, management and the RMTU branch at Hutt Workshops was the key to getting the contract to refurbish the old ZH wagons.

The job entailed removing the fibre glass gull-wing doors, building a stronger roofing framework and installing plasticised fabric curtain-sided doors.

Initially the Company wanted to outsource the work but the Branch believed Hutt were eminently capable of doing the work, so they took that belief and supporting evidence to management and over a series of discussions a compromise was established which saw some of the work outsourced but the majority taking place at Hutt Workshops.

“Basically, the laser cutting and heavy steel bracing for the roof structure was done off-site while we did everything else,” said Branch secretary Terry Duffy. “We probably could have done the lot but there was a tight time frame and the quicker option was elsewhere.”

KiwiRail customers were not happy with the old fibre glass doors and neither was the Company.

They were continually getting damaged, repairs were proving time-consuming and expensive and far too many of them were out of service at any one time.

KiwiRail’s customers were keen to get the upgraded curtain-sided versions (now



called ZHC) before Christmas and Hutt Workshops were tasked, somewhat like Moses, with doing 40 wagons in 40 days – a tall order but one they completed before time and under budget.

So impressed, the Company is now sending all its fibre-sided wagons – about 110 of them – to Hutt Workshops for the bright red upgrade.

One problem remained: how to mitigate the graffiti vandals and their spray cans. The

old fibre glass doors were a sitting target for taggers’ marks but Terry says they may have a solution in a new product which will coat the red plastic in a sheen which rejects the taggers’ efforts. No doubt it will be put to the test before very long.

“The whole project succeeded because of the good relations established between management and the shop floor, the Company and the RMTU,” said Terry. 🌐



# Greens criticise use of money for unneeded highways

**T**HE National Government's reckless plan to build unneeded highways has created a huge budget hole that taxpayers will be forced to pay for with higher taxes, Green Party transport spokesperson Julie Anne Genter said last month.

The Green Party has obtained an internal New Zealand Transport Agency document which states there is a \$1.7 billion shortfall between the cost of the Government's transport plans and the projected revenue as a result of the huge cost of National's pet highway projects and stagnant traffic volumes resulting in lower than projected fuel tax revenue.

The briefing outlines three options to close the gap: delaying the so-called 'Roads of National Significance' by up to five years (which is marked as "not acceptable"); borrowing the money and using Public-Private Partnerships as a form of borrowing, which would only shift the cost to the taxpayer into the future and constrain future transport



budgets; or increasing petrol tax by nine cents a litre.

"Kiwis will be paying more to fund National's unneeded and uneconomic highways, and they will have few options to avoid rising fuel prices," she said. "The mammoth \$1.7 billion funding gap in the transport budget has been created by uneconomic projects like the Kapiti Expressway that will cost over half a billion dollars for \$120m worth of value. Lower than expected traffic volumes just further prove these expensive highways should not be the priority."

She added that National had created a "fiscal timebomb" and that the better options would be to invest in better buses and trains, safer walkways and cycling.

"This would free up the roads for those who are driving and gives Kiwis more options to avoid rising fuel prices," she said. "But the Government is planning to spend 85% of the money available for new capital projects over the next decade on a few state highways, and less than 5% on smart, green alternatives."

Genter said the Greens would prefer to see these roads of significance shelved indefinitely and, instead, direct the transport budget to passenger transport, walking and cycling as suggested by the latest Pure Advantage report.

"This would reduce our \$8 billion a year bill for imported oil, lower our greenhouse gas emissions and create more jobs," she said. 🌍

## Transition heads cause injuries

**T**HE RMTU considers KiwiRail has failed to adequately assess and manage the risk of harm associated with the manual handling of transition heads. The Union commissioned rheumatology specialist Dr Richard Wigley to provide a medical opinion on the risk of harm associated with lifting and fitting transition heads. He visited the Wellington shunt yard on 11 October to observe Wellington remote control operators handling them.

The frequency of manual handling them increased significantly with the acquisition of the new rolling stock late last year. Due to the incompatibility of the new and the old stock a transition head weighing between 27-30kg is required to couple the wagons together.

In the first seven months after their introduction there were 22 reported injuries attributed to manually handling the heads. In the previous year only one

injury was reported. Dr Wigley reported: "There is sufficient evidence of increased risk of injury (from handling transition heads) to warrant a major effort (for KiwiRail) to eliminate the risk." He said this is important because back and shoulder injuries often become chronic and lead to permanent disablement.

Dr Wigley's recommendations to KiwiRail:

- Expedite replacement of the old couplings as soon as possible. This should prevent a possible 36 injuries per year.
- Edit the DVD to include advice on minimising back twisting and reaching, by turning with feet while carrying the 27kg



*Paul Karston showing his injured finger caused manipulating a transition head.*

transition head.

- Wear the remote packs higher on the body to allow the transition head to be carried closer to the waist.
- Avoid lifting bull hooks from the ground, walking and carrying transition heads with one arm.

The RMTU urges remote control operators to continue reporting any discomfort and pain experienced from

manual handling of transition heads using the new, shorter, reporting form. Send a copy to your branch and health and safety action team so they can escalate the issue through the industrial councils. 🌍

# A need for change

National Conference 2012



*Conference delegates refresh with a bit of crowd control practice.*

**T**HE theme of this year's conference was 'The Need for Change', and at the conclusion of three days at the Police College in Porirua, RMTU delegates from around New Zealand were under no illusions that we cannot simply carry on doing things as we have done in the past and expect everything to be OK.

An array of speakers left us in no doubt that workers and their unions are under attack on a number of fronts. The lack of a coherent integrated transport plan and a national approach to coastal shipping and our ports, together with a government that is anti-union and anti-worker means we need to change – and change quickly.

We heard from the leaders of the Labour Party, Greens and New Zealand First; Australian unionists on the waterfront and road and rail transport; our brother and sister unions in New Zealand; and from representatives of the CTU. The messages were the same: hostile governments, militant employers and a difficult economic environment are all hitting workers' job security, pay and conditions, and the public provision of services such as health and



*GS Wayne Butson and Green co-leader Russel Norman contemplate proceedings.*

education which families depend on.

National president Aubrey Wilkinson spelt it out clearly in his account of the AFFCO/Talleys dispute – an aggressive employer with its confidence boosted by a National Government. He told of how Talleys sought to break the Meatworkers' Union and was stopped by a combination of traditional anti-union tactics and the application of economic pressure through whanau, community and iwi-led groups.

The need to mobilise our community in support of our struggle was a theme that came across as we listened to accounts of the Ports of Auckland dispute and of the successful battle the Australian TWU had

waged for 'Safe Rates' in the trucking industry.

David Shearer, Russell Norman and Winston Peters all referred to a campaign that we have to get more involved in the fight to stop the sale of public assets and to forge stronger links with those who oppose what this government and its allies are doing to working people. The bid to get enough signatures to make sure there is a public referendum has had enormous support but it's one area where we can do more. Ask yourself: have you signed

the petition? Have you got ten friends and relatives to sign it? If not, then please do so. This is a way we can stop the Tories and win friends in the community.

If we have to change to respond to the threat what does that mean in practical terms?

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson told us that unionised workers in this country cannot depend on their strength in high skill, high union density industries like rail, the ports, education, health and the public sector to protect us and our families. We risk becoming an isolated, relatively highly paid unionised elite – and that means we're

vulnerable if the Tories come after us.

So what should unionised workers like you be doing?

Building links with fellow unionists such as getting rail and port branches together, attending CTU-sponsored events and supporting campaigns like those of the meatworkers and aged care workers. It means getting behind the campaign to

stop asset sales.

It means reading 'The Activist' and 'The Transport Worker' and never, ever putting yourself in the position where you don't know what is going on.

At the very least make sure the RMTU has your up-to-date details: postal and e-mail addresses, cell phone and home numbers.

It means accepting that we can't win every fight by ourselves but we can win it when the community gets behind us. In the past year unions have built alliances with iwi, churches, local politicians and environmental pressure groups as well as our more traditional supporters.

We've shown we can win - but we must continue to strive for more. 🇳🇿

# Well being of RMTU is the issue

## President's report - 2012

**W**E have a lot of important decisions to make and require your full participation over the next next days as we map our direction going forward.

At our last conference we debated the need to return to fundamental principles. Not to re-invent ourselves, our union or our core values, but to again realise what true collectivism looks and feels like.

I cannot remember a time when the unions in this country have ever come under so much scrutiny and pressure or have endured so many major attacks. I have been heartened and proud at how the RMTU have performed collectively.

Now is an opportune time for us all to endorse our conference theme for the year ahead: **'TIME FOR A CHANGE'**.

In my travels around branches I have been amazed at some of the changes they have made to become more effective. I would like us all to recognise our Picton branch in particular, who have brought rail and port members together into a more effective and cohesive branch – a branch that can only benefit our members and our union as a whole. I now urge other branches which operate in the same town or city to consider moving to such a model. Well done to our Picton branch brothers and sisters for being the first to achieve such a fine example of a sound branch structure.

You may have heard the language used throughout our Union breaking down the divisions within our membership. We all know that divisions create an organisa-



tion that holds no benefit for us. We must continue to change our thinking and continue to dissolve these divisions that if left unchecked, will create chaos. I call for us all to remain constantly vigilant.

Moving now to the management of our organisation. I recognise and thank Wayne Butson for the effort he goes to in looking after the interests and well being of our members. Some of us may not realise, but this not only includes dealing with managers and CEOs, but also with other unions and politicians. So from us all, our sincere thanks, and gratitude.

To the NMC, thank you all for your

collective support and outstanding efforts to date. As the governing body of our Union between conferences, I believe you have all done an amazing job, as challenging as that does become from time to time.

To our organisers and staff, it can be a challenging time for you all, especially with the colorful characteristics of the women and men within our Union. Thank you so much for your continued efforts.

I welcome to the RMTU our two new part time staff members: Mani Raumati, and Karen Fletcher. We all appreciate the work Mani has done so far for the Wellington branch and region. His impact has truly been significant and of high value. Thank you bro.

Karen's efforts are held by us all in high regard. As the RMTU Health and Safety organiser, she has literally hit the ground running. Karen has made a significant impact with regards to health and safety throughout our industries and also in raising the RMTU's inherent philosophy of 'Safety First'. Her work can only benefit us all. On behalf of our members and our members' families, thank you and please keep up the good work.

To our men and women on the industrial councils, branch officials, delegates and activists, we sincerely commend you all for the work you do for our members. Union work is often performed in your own time for little or no reward. You all truly epitomise what a solid unionist is.

A change that will make our organisation more powerful, more influential, and

more effective is amalgamation with another union – or other unions – as written in our policy manual. Over this past year, I and others have endured a lot of issues,

been enraged beyond belief with some of the antics towards us. I take the view that my personal feelings pale to insignificance when it comes to the well being of our

Union. Amalgamation I believe is the path forward to better protect working women and men in our respective industries. 🌐

# Labour pledges level playing field for road and rail

(excerpts from Phil Twyford's speech to Annual Conference 2012)

I don't think anyone in politics disagrees with the idea that transport is vital to New Zealand. But there is a huge difference between Labour and National on what our priorities should be.

We think the Government's transport priorities are wrong.

In certain areas – like ports and rail – they have taken their hands off the wheel. They don't take enough care to make sure the taxpayer is getting value for money.

We think that the Government is not thinking hard enough about what kind of transport system the country needs in 20, 30 or 50 years' time.

These questions are important. Our freight transport system supplies the arteries of our economy.

And right now the greatest challenge we have is to kick start some growth into a stagnant economy. Transport is critical to that.

National thinks, or at least this is what they say, that they can boost economic growth by spending buckets of your money on building mega-motorway projects.

They call them the Roads of National Significance. We call them Roads of Significance to the National Party. Never mind that their own figures say that most of these motorway projects are low value. Some of them won't even break even. And they are costing the taxpayer a billion dollars a year. Twelve billion over the next 10 years.



Hardly a week goes by without the Minister getting up in the House and claiming that these seven projects will generate economic growth, but he hasn't presented a shred of evidence to support that.

That's because he can't.

And while it is spending on new motorways like there's no tomorrow, other parts of our transport system are being run down.

The rail network that should be the backbone of our transport system is being driven into the ground.

The Government's so called Turn Around Plan for rail is a bit of a con job.

The Minister likes to say that the Government has put \$750 million into KiwiRail, but he never mentions this is a drop in the

bucket compared to the huge legacy infrastructure backlog.

He also never mentions that fact that under the Turn Around Plan KiwiRail has to find \$3.5 billion from its own balance sheet for capital investment.

But it does explain why KiwiRail has been forced into laying off 158 workers and deferring half of its network maintenance for the next three years.

This is madness for a publicly owned rail company in the middle of an economic recession, at a time of record unemployment, to be laying off skilled workers and deferring desperately needed maintenance.

The same unrealistic Turn Around Plan is driving KiwiRail to flog off or shut down any part of the organisation it doesn't define as "core business".

I believe the air of desperation around the Turn Around Plan is also behind what has been a string of cheap procurement decisions: the Chinese locos and wagons, and now the 7000 rotting Peruvian sleepers.

Turning KiwiRail around and building a successful, modern rail company is a big ask. It is a project of true significance to our nation. I salute the work that RMTU KiwiRail members do. I know that many feel passionately about rail and want to make it a success.

Labour will back you.

We will ensure rail competes with roads on a level playing field.

If you applied to our roads the same profit and loss analysis that KiwiRail use to justify closing the Gisborne-Napier line, then a good many of our rural roads would get closed down.

Labour in Government will invest in rail as the backbone of a modern, efficient and sustainable transport system.

Our ports are another vital part of our transport system that this Government is ignoring. That careless neglect is not looking after the interests of our country.

Under the current law, ports are required to compete with each other. With so many ports that gives a lot of market power to their customers which include the foreign shipping companies, who strangely are not required by New Zealand law to compete against each other.

It creates a situation where, as members in Timaru found out recently, it allowed Fonterra to basically decide the future of a port.

We need a national port strategy just as the Labor Federal Government in Australia has done.

Without a national strategy we have no way of ensuring that the right investments are made so that our ports are set to cope with the projected doubling of freight volumes over the next 30 years.

Labour believes our ports are a vital part of the country's freight infrastructure. They are a strategic asset and should be publicly owned so they can be run in the interests of all New Zealand.

We don't favour the current dog-eat-dog model that in the case of Auckland has seen an employer trying to bust the union, casualise jobs and claw back conditions as a response to competitive pressures.

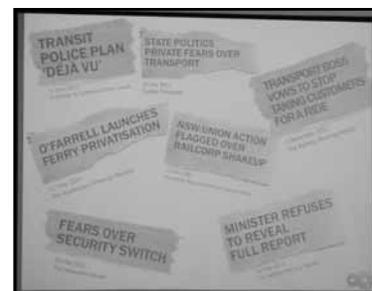
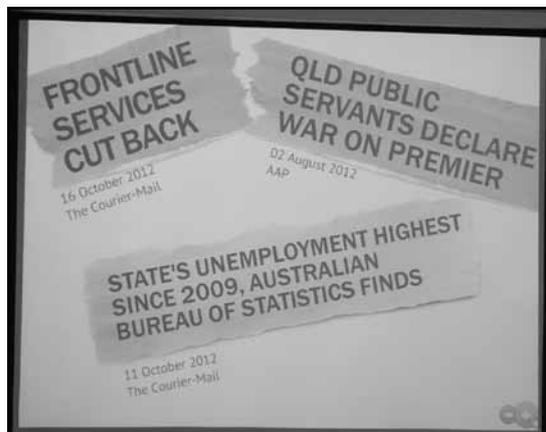
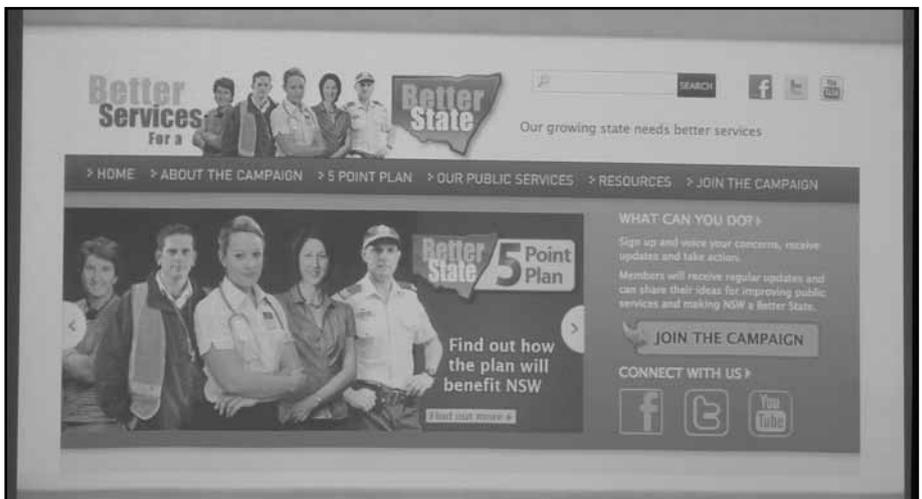
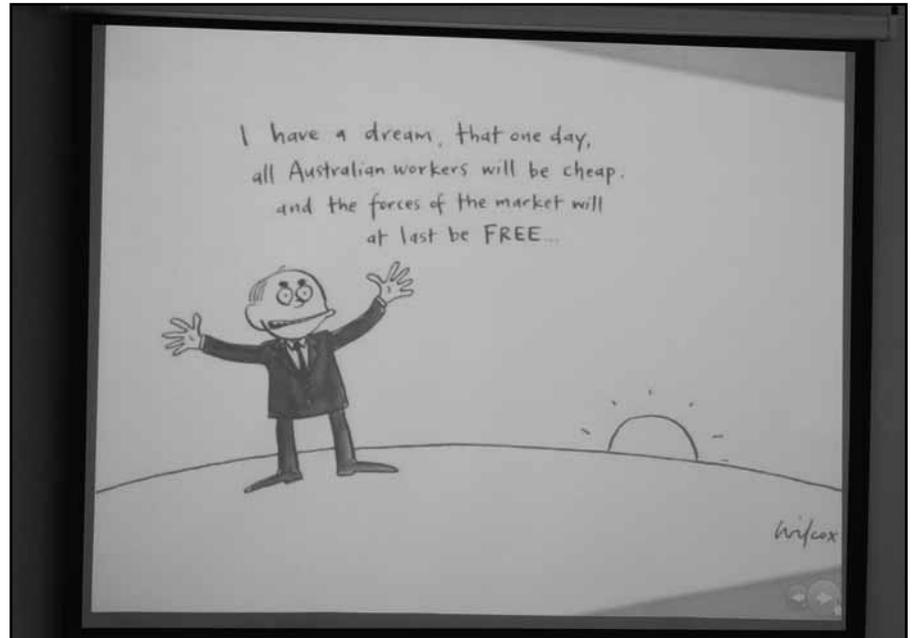
We believe we can get a truly efficient freight network by getting the best out of all the parts of the system.

We want to get the best out of rail, coastal shipping, roads and ports.

A Labour-led Government will build a transport system that moves people and freight with maximum efficiency, supporting an economy that allows New Zealanders to do what they do best – getting on with making this country world class again. 🌐

# RTBU's ongoing campaign

Alex Claassens, NSW state secretary from Australia's RTBU gave a strong speech at conference outlining some of the issues facing his union there. These slides are copied from his presentation.



**Karen Fletcher, RMTU  
H&S organiser.**

Really good conference with lots of participation from all the delegates. The political leaders were engaging particularly the Greens who discussed their commitment to rail over roading, the importance of signing the petition calling for a referendum against asset sales and how we need to be aware of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement and the risks to NZ sovereignty and Pharmac. Really enjoyed meeting all the delegates, thanks for a great conference.



**Mike Johnson. LE Veolia. Auckland.**

Great conference, good speakers, great to talk to other LEs from around the country.

**Ted Falwasser.  
shunter.  
Whangarei.**

Very good, and it was great to talk to other delegates about our issues in Northland.



# The new faces at the RMTU annual conference



**Te Roimata Rangī (Roi),  
C3 Tauranga.**

Knowing we are the largest specialised transport union, networking within our own is a no brainer. This conference, like many other forums our Union is invited to, it seems logical that we use this as a platform to do so. For myself, I know I must sit and listen! Information is knowledge. My challenge will be to pass this information onto our membership in a clear and timely manner. Kia kaha koutou.

**Steve Wilson  
fabricator, Hillside**

Very good, great speakers, good to meet fellow delegates and to discuss their issues.



**Joe Gibson,  
Networks,  
Napier.**

Very informative and educational especially the international speakers, and good to catch up with fellow delegates from around the country.



**John  
Carmine.  
C3  
Tauranga**

Brilliant – delegates, speakers and bar.



**Don Bates, LE,  
Dunedin.**

Bloody good and enlightening. I have a new insight into the Union structure and our relationships with other unions. This conference has reaffirmed to me the Union's commitment to the membership.



**Paul Dennis  
sparky. Lyttelton**

Great to meet other port and rail delegates and able to discuss common problems



**William Staniland. LE Auckland.**

A great way to meet other committed delegates from around the country and to discuss similar issues.



# THE PARTICIPANTS AND .....



**Stu Marsh** Lyttelton Port.



**Joseph Gibson**  
Hawkes Bay Rail.



**Ray Brown**, Waikato Rail and Te Kupenga Mahi network.



**Gary Innes.**



**Craig Cooney**  
BOP Port.



**Jenny Griffin**  
Wellington Rail.



**Brian Byas**  
Port Chalmers.



**Doug Blakie**  
NMC & Timaru Rail.



**Dave Marden** NMC & Port of Napier



**Phil Spanswick**  
BOP organiser.



**Don Bates**  
Otago Rail



**David Kearns**  
Hillside.



**Alan Robertson** -  
Christchurch Rail.



**William Lannigan**  
BOP Rail.



**Terry Duffy**  
Hutt Workshops.

# ..... THE SPEAKERS



**Nanette Cormack**  
UnionAID.



**Alex Claassens – RTBU.**



**Mario Soljan**  
AIL Insurance.



**David Shearer Labour Party Leader.**



**Garry Keane – MUA.**



**Ross Wilson**  
UnionAID.



**Hazel Armstrong,**  
Hazel Armstrong Law.



**Mea'ole Keil –**  
SFWU.



**Peter Conway**  
NZCTU Secretary.



**Wayne Butson**  
RMTU Gen Sec.



**Sosefina Masoe -**  
SFWU.



**Winston Peters NZ First Leader.**



**Anna Kenny NZ**  
Credit Union



**Roy Cowley NZ LE SAD**  
Fund & NZHSP



**Chris Ball NZ**  
Railway Welfare  
Trust Manager.



**Dr Russell Norman**  
Co-leader Green Party.



**Richard Olsen – TWU.**



**Andrew Cassidy**  
First Union.



**Geoff Davenport**  
Lawyer, McBride  
Davenport & James.



**Jim Quinn CEO**  
KiwiRail Ltd.

## Three good reasons for using IMP

**I**n November last year I suffered a work injury which resulted in minor surgery (10 months later). I am now rehabilitating and expect a full recovery. I have set down here why it is important to use the Injury Management Programme (IMP) to get the best possible result in terms of recovery and a return to work.

**1-** You will have a better recovery. My initial treatment plan from the Registered Medical Officer (RMO) was to inject a steroid and let the injury settle. I said 'No'! He was not in favour of me having a scan of any sort. Upon my insistence through IMP I had an ultrasound scan and later a MRI scan. These showed a tendon tear and ligament damage that would not have healed – over time or with a masking injection. So the

IMP process gave me a voice in my rehab plan that would be more difficult on my own. You will come out with an agreed treatment and return to work plan.

**2-** There needs to be a watchdog over the employer and their ACC administrator, in our case WorkAon. Your elected RMTU delegate is it. Let's face it, no matter what they say, our employer does not have our wellbeing at heart. This has been proven countless times when KiwiRail and AON have tried to have meetings without the appointed RMTU delegate present, then they have sent members to one specialist after another until they get the answer they want. This is all about denying a workplace injury in favour of degenerative illness. Also, they appear to have tame

RMOs whose diagnosis has been shown to be incorrect and a quick fix. At Hillside, management even got into attending members' appointments with them until this was stopped. Just remember, with the company, it's all about the money! Does this fill you with confidence that your health is a priority?

**3-** The IMP is a union initiative fully endorsed by the company so it cannot be refused to you. By RMTU members using it every time we will ensure that it remains. IMP is the envy of unprotected workers in other industries who often get dumped on the scrapheap following illness or injury. Let's make the most of it! 

Dave Kearns  
RMTU Hillside

## Piggy-back shame



*One of the new Chinese-built wagons suffers the indignity of having to accept a ride on a New Zealand-built wagon to be repaired at Hillside Workshops!*

## Unions have a long tradition of international solidarity.

Becoming a Kiwi Solidarity member is a modern way of expressing that solidarity and helping vulnerable workers in developing countries in our region get a fairer deal.

### Sign up to UnionAID today

UnionAID is the only New Zealand overseas aid agency that places workers' rights at the centre of its work.

tel: 04 385 1334 (ext 810), fax: 04 385 6051, write: P O Box 6689, Marion Square, Wellington, email: [unionaid@nzctu.org.nz](mailto:unionaid@nzctu.org.nz)  
Or phone 0900 UNAID (0900 862 43) to automatically donate \$30.



# Innovative solution for a healthier working life

**A**N innovative, smart and sensible solution has saved Tranz Metro train manager Dion Harwood's job – and his health. Just over a year ago he was facing redundancy, deemed medically unfit to continue working due to his size – a weighty 217 kgs.

"They said I was too big for a guards' role," he said.

However, following a visit to his doctor and discussions with KiwiRail and the RMTU he was told to take a year off and get his act together – lose weight, get fit and get back to work. And if he stayed fit and kept the weight off for two years he would reap further benefits.

This was motivation enough to get him moving.

A year later and he's back at work weighing in at 137 kgs – a loss of 80 kgs. That's 1.5kgs per week.

"I joined Weight Watchers and started walking every day," he said. "A few of my work mates joined me to give encouragement."

In fact his mission also inspired his mother and brother who lived with him – both also equally large.

"Mum has now lost about 40 kgs and my brother about 60 kgs," he said.

His plan is to continue down this track until he reaches 90 kgs – and that he will reach that target at the end of two years.

"I feel much better these days," he said. "I'm healthier and whereas I could hardly walk before I now walk 10 kms easily."

He has also stopped eating snacks – the main culprit in his weight gain – and if required, will ensure it's a bit of fruit or a yoghurt.

All up, the innovative and unusual solution to Dion's weight and the cooperation between him, his work mates, the RMTU and KiwiRail and produced a really positive result. The wider effects on his family is an added bonus which satisfies all parties.

"There's no easy way to lose such a lot of weight," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson.

"But with the right incentives and a heap of will power it can be done. We're really



*Dion Harwood (almost) a shadow of his former self.*

proud of Dion's efforts and delighted to have been part of the solution." 🌐



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*Union Plus is pleased to be bringing you more benefits in 2010 including discounts on tyres, health clubs and telecommunications!*

More value for money with insurances.

Only for current RMTU members.

Take out Life Cover with Sovereign and you will receive:

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■ [www.unionplus.co.nz](http://www.unionplus.co.nz)



**SOVEREIGN**

# Union supports single H&S authority

**N**EW ZEALAND'S workplace death and injury toll is a national disgrace. In an average year 100 people are killed at work. Nationally we have five times the rate of workplace injury than that of the UK while over 6,000 New Zealanders make notifications about serious harm in their workplace each year.

The RMTU has put in a submission to the Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety. Central to the Union's submission is the recommendation to overhaul the current health and safety regulatory framework and strengthen the role of elected and trained health and safety reps.

## H&S watershed

The Royal Commission's report on the Pike River Coal Mine tragedy is a watershed for New Zealand's health and safety system, and large changes are required to restore confidence in the regulator's ability to protect workers, says RMTU Health and Safety organiser, Karen Fletcher.

The RMTU supports the Royal Commis-

sion's recommendation to create a stand-alone, independent regulatory agency, separate from the current mega Ministry MoBIE. The RMTU also supports a single agency responsible for enforcing the H&S regulations including rail and maritime. This would be a departure from the current fragmented and light-handed approach to enforcement by the NZTA and Maritime NZ.

## Worker participation

The Royal Commission's report recommends strengthening worker participation in mining by empowering health and safety reps to perform inspections and stop activities where there is an immediate danger of serious harm. The reps' ability to direct workers to cease work on safety grounds is an important function of H&S reps operating under the Australian Model Act. The ability to stop unsafe work prevents the work from being contracted out or performed by vulnerable workers such as people in their first 90 days of employment.

Other key points from the RMTU's sub-

mission include

- Introduction of corporate manslaughter legislation
- More prescriptive standards which underpin the legislation. For example a current and comprehensive code of practice on manual handling which would support members with the hazard of manual handling of transition heads.
- A boost to H&S rep funding including the development of a stage four training course. Additional training would benefit the hundreds of RMTU H&S reps who have completed stage 3 training between 2-4 years ago.
- The submission also discusses the over reliance of lost time injury data, occupational disease, better access to H&S information by H&S reps and union officials, and a code of practice for employee participation.

The RMTU submission is available on the RMTU website.

[rmtunion.org.nz](http://rmtunion.org.nz) 



## \$1,500 AD&D

All members of RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children.

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please contact an AIL representative to deliver your AD&D Benefit and explain the additional insurance coverage available.

**If you have not filled out a response card, call our freephone for more information NOW!**



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Please note: To qualify for the \$10,000 of additional ADB coverage, an AIL representative must visit you, obtain an enrollment form and collect premium for the first year. You may renew annually thereafter for \$5.

# Final Matangi sign off

**A**HHHH! A moment of great achievement and respite as the last of the new 48-strong Wellington Matangi multiple units is put through its paces. This milestone represents the end to what has been an extraordinary process of balancing the needs and requirements of the Greater Wellington Regional Council, KiwiRail and the RMTU.

It must be said that this goal has been successfully accomplished largely due to the RMTU and its representative working party who have been intimately involved from the early days of the initial design concept through to the final commissioning process. This has not been easy and included joint face-to-face meetings with the design and manufacturing teams at the giant Rotem production facility in South Korea where, needless to say, the RMTU delegation acquitted themselves well.



*The gang of three behind the Matangi project (l to r) Hayden Smith, Harvey Patterson and Howard Phillips.*

The commissioning process began in mid September 2010 with a first stage overnight testing regime to ensure that the sets met all day and night design specifications. That's a lot of night shifts! This was followed by more focus on operational aspects and maintenance requirements so as to identify and rectify any short comings.

At a cost of \$235 million these sets are now the principle rolling stock of Wellington's commuter fleet operating in conjunction with the existing Ganz Magav stock which have been retained to meet peak hour demand. Although it was originally envisaged that the Ganz Magav fleet would undergo refurbishment to extend their operational working life for another 10 years a very competitive offer from Rotem has allowed the Council to begin

negotiating for the building of a further 35 Matangi sets. If the purchase is successful, it is envisaged that the second fleet would arrive in early 2015.

By and large the purchase and commissioning process has been a success as a direct result of RMTU input and represents a significant step forward for Wellington commuters and staff. With a life expectancy of 30 years Wellingtonians can finally reap the rewards of a more comfortable and reliable commuter service.

A special thanks to Hayden Smith, Harvey Patterson, Hayden Harwood, Howard Phillips, Mike Nicholson, Burt Milmurn, Phil Saying and the team at the Wellington Multiple Unit Maintenance depot for their untiring efforts. 🇺🇸



*Supporting Spring Crteek miners' march during September in Greymouth.*



# Delegates complete Chch organising skills course

**S**IX South Island RMTU delegates successfully completed the CTU's Skills of Organising course during September and November. (pictured l to r) Jason Lawn (LE Middleton), Mike Williams (LE Middleton), John Bannerman (Track inspector West Coast), Stu Johnstone (Mechanical engineer Hillside), Dave Kearns (Mechanical engineer Hillside) and Alan Robertson (RCO Middleton) [missing from the photo], all attended the three day session in September and a two day session in October.



## Putting skills into practice

The aim of the course was to help attendees put into practice the skills they learn in the first three days before returning for the second two sessions. They will report back on how they are going. Our delegates were working alongside full time paid organisers from a range of unions in the public and private sectors including the EPMU, FIRST, UNITE and the NZNO.

Course educator Sue Plowman had this to say:

"All the RMTU delegates completed the presentations on their planned organising work. I was impressed that all of them have incorporated some form of organising into their work and are actively trying to use some key organising techniques to make a difference in their members' workplaces and union. It was great to have these RMTU delegates on the course."

This is testimony to the calibre of our delegates that they can attend a course with full time professional union organisers and rise to the challenge. We have some outstanding people in our union and all of us should be proud of the good work our delegates do. 

### Rail & Maritime Transport Union Inc Statement of Financial Position As At 30 June 2012



	Note	2012	2011
		\$	\$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Bank Accounts	5	593,460	523,253
Accounts Receivable	3	19,820	12,804
Interest Accrued	4	24,508	10,311
Tax Refund Due	2	1,047	3,746
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>638,834</b>	<b>550,114</b>
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Fixed Assets	6	166,270	168,252
Investments	7	2,767,819	2,554,862
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>		<b>2,934,089</b>	<b>2,723,114</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$ 3,572,923</b>	<b>\$ 3,273,228</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Accounts Payable	8	104,586	99,188
Current Portion of Finance Lease	11	-	1,622
GST Payable		24,789	24,420
Konemu Provision		9,677	12,903
Provision for Leave		65,781	64,997
LE Reunion Trust Fund		6,350	6,350
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>211,184</b>	<b>209,481</b>
<b>NON CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Non Current Portion of Finance Lease	11	-	-
<b>Total Non Current Liabilities</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>\$ 3,361,739</b>	<b>\$ 3,063,748</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>	10	<b>\$ 3,361,739</b>	<b>\$ 3,063,748</b>

Signed on behalf of the National Management Committee

  
General Secretary 15 October 2012  
Date

  
National President 15 October 2012  
Date

The accompanying notes form part of, and are to be read in conjunction with these financial statements.

# NZ initiative discussed at MUA

**T**HIS year's Maritime Union of Australia annual executive committee meeting in Sydney was attended by RMTU national president Aubrey Wilkinson and national vice-president Howard Phillips.

Apart from reports from the Union's branches covering membership, finances, union fees and recruitment, some more significant issues were discussed including local political involvement and reaching out and organising with local communities.

## ■ International shipping register

The Shipping Registration Amendment Act 2012 came into existence on 1 July 2012. While the Register was established to provide a competitive alternative for Australian owned or operated ships it also will maintain a high quality of maritime safety and environmental standards. The meeting discussed the implementation and operation of this welcome initiative

which had been driven by the MUA's Paddy Crumlin and Anthony Albanese as the political bulldozer.

## ■ Health and safety

This was discussed in depth and included discussion of a national MUA strategy to inspect ships before being worked to gauge their level of safety.

## ■ Standardised training

A national standardised stevedore training incentive has been established which is linked to Australian health and safety standards

## ■ Global organising

The question was asked as to what MUA could do to more effectively organise globally. A panel of international guests described what happened in their countries while our delegates spoke about AFCO, CTU and affiliates coming together with iwi and how it was resolved along with the help of the ITF sending in messages of support

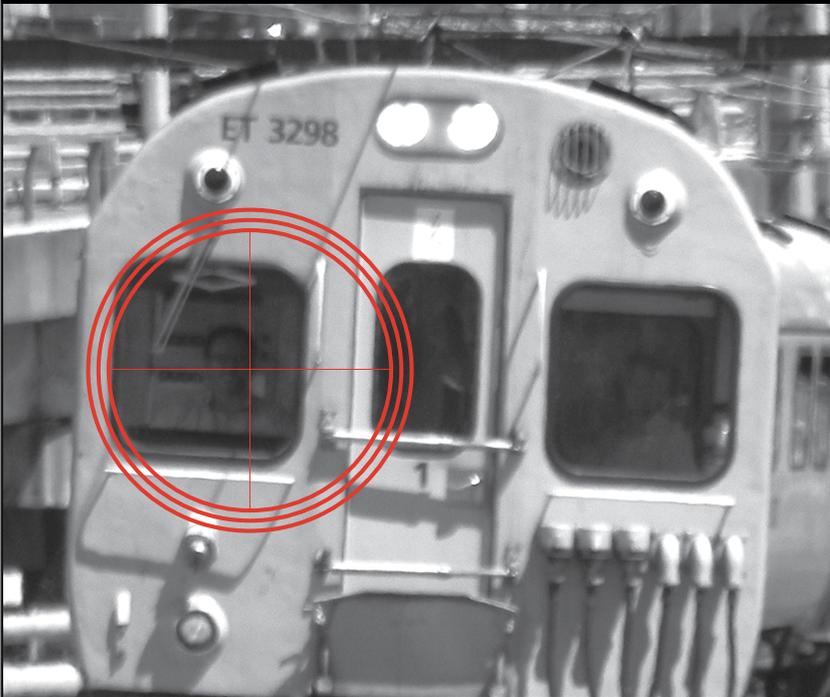
with the International Food Federation – an example of international organising together to bring a positive result. We also spoke of an opportunity to standardise training regionally and to possibly roll out training procedures to organise globally.

MUA were keen to learn more from this CTU/iwi initiative to reinforce international ties and to possibly assist other Australian unions to try and develop similar outcomes with the indigenous people of Australia.

Other countries represented at the MUA meeting included Fiji, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Timor Leste, Phillipines and Japan. Apologies were received from Papua New Guinea, USA, Canada, Vanuatu and UK.

"For me, attending the meeting gave me an opportunity to speak with the leadership from branches in Australia and learn about what the MUA is doing and how we might apply similar initiatives in our Union," said Aubrey Wilkinson. 

## Sickness, accident & 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!**

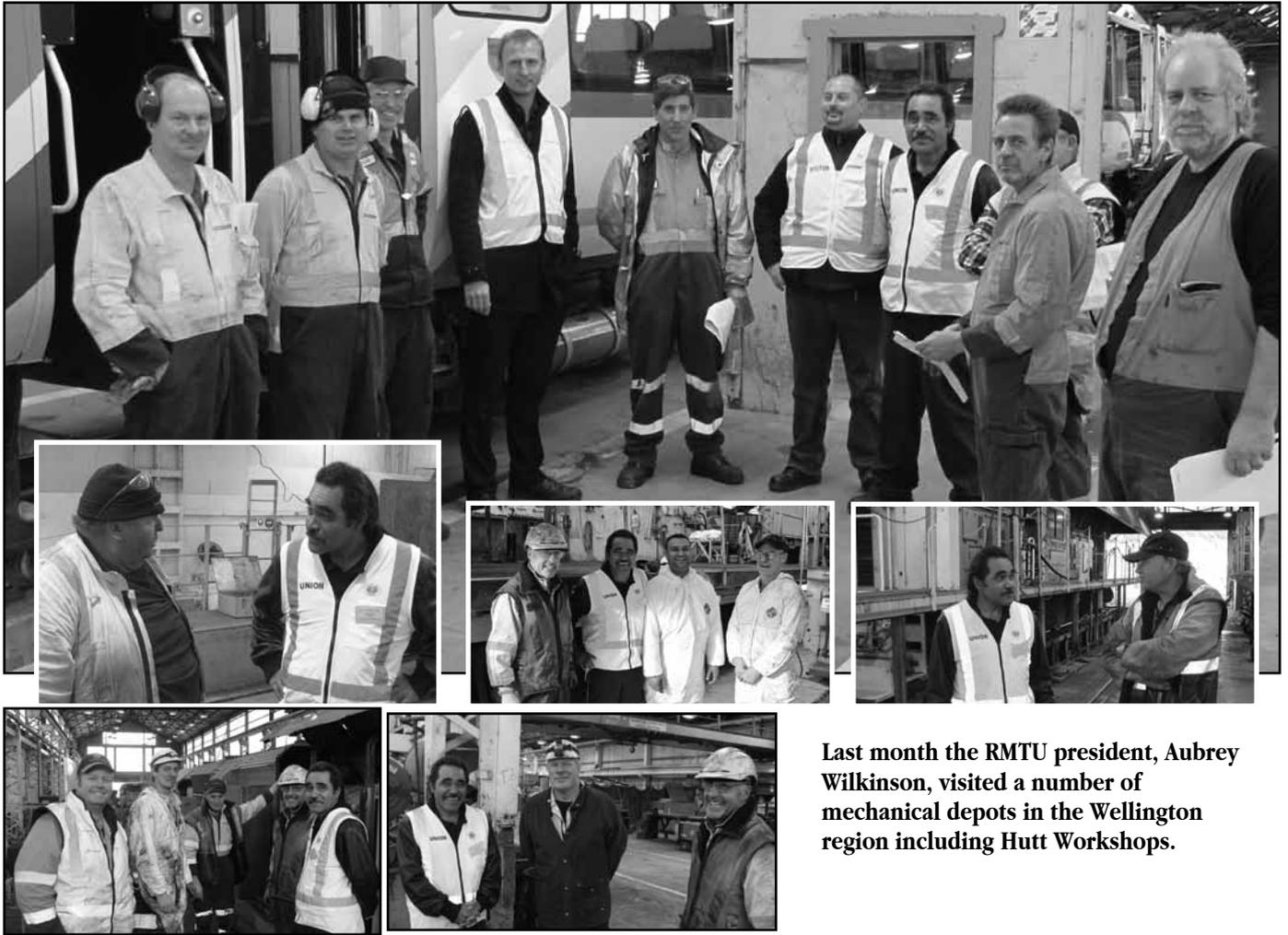
**For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.**

#### Contact:

Julia Harrison, PO Box 813, Wellington  
 Telephone: (04) 499-2066  
 Fax: (04) 471-0896  
 Email: [julia@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:julia@rmtunion.org.nz)

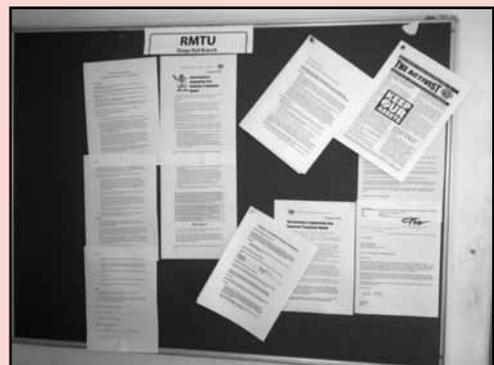
**Attention LEs  
 Join this Fund now for  
 your own peace of mind**

# President visits Wellington mechanical depots



Last month the RMTU president, Aubrey Wilkinson, visited a number of mechanical depots in the Wellington region including Hutt Workshops.

## Is your Union noticeboard noticed?



These notice boards were photographed in Dunedin. We're on the lookout for more fine examples.



# SOL-less rail line



**W**HILE the RMTU and the Taranaki faithful are trying to get the Stratford to Okahukura line (SOL) reopened to serious traffic a Waikato entrepreneur has managed to gain access to it as a playground for the wealthy.

Ian Balme's company, Forgotten World Adventures, began running his toy carts on the line in September using six converted golf carts. These toys now run daily on a line built in 1901 and used until 1933 and

finally mothballed in 2009 to much protest.

Balme's carts take a leisurely two days to cover the 142km of line with an overnight stay at the Whangamomona Hotel.

Travellers on the open-sided carts speak glowingly about the scenic delights, the many bridges, viaducts and eerie tunnels as they cruise along at a steady 20kph through stunning native bush and back blocks farms.

No doubt KiwiRail is reaping some rent from this enterprise which Balme advertises

on his website as 'experiencing the forgotten world'.

Taranaki rail folk would have similar sentiments about being forgotten.

RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson says: "Railway workers have spent nearly 90 years maintaining this line and to see it used as a playground is shameful. I'd like to know who is going to repair it when flooding or slips block it. Not Balme, I'm sure." 🌐



Please cut on the dotted line

## RMTU ERNEST WILLIAM FILE SCHOLARSHIP

**T**HE Ernest William File Scholarship was established in 1978 by members of the Locomotive Engineers Association as a tribute to Ernest William File, the retiring general secretary of the Association. The Scholarship was continued and expanded by the Combined Union of Railway Employees and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union has continued to support it on the same basis.

The scholarship is open to male or female applicants in two groups:

- ◆ those who are the children of a locomotive engineer; and

- ◆ those who have a parent who is a member of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union at the time of application.

### Three years

The scholarship is tenable for a maximum period of three years at any university or tertiary institution in New Zealand, by a scholar undertaking full time study for his or her first degree or qualification. The value of the scholarship is \$1500 a third of which shall be applied in each of the three years during which the scholarship is tenable.

Written applications may be made on

the application form on the following page and should include details of your most recent scholastic achievements, career intentions, the names and addresses of two referees and sent to the address below before 31 January 2005.

The General Secretary  
Rail & Maritime Transport Union  
PO Box 1103  
WELLINGTON

# More line outages will follow cuts to maintenance

**T**HE use of outside contractors will grow and outages like those experienced in Auckland last month will increase as a result of cuts to KiwiRail maintenance capacity, said RMTU acting general secretary Todd Valster.

Earlier this year KiwiRail announced plans to cut \$200 million and 158 jobs from its Infrastructure and Engineering division. Its own planning documents admit disruption will grow and performance will drop as result.

Valster said the increased use of contrac-

tors would see more outages and put safety at risk for rail operators and the public.

“It was a huge mistake to contract out jobs and the wealth of experience in KiwiRail’s Infrastructure and Engineering division,” he said. “Customers and staff will pay the true cost of these cuts, as contractors increasingly carry out essential maintenance work, because KiwiRail is cutting its own capacity back too much.”

KiwiRail’s 2013-2015 Business Plan, initially leaked and then later released, noted that the “asset will decline, disruption will

grow, asset failure risk will grow” as a result of its cut backs.

“Many will be familiar with 2001 UK film *The Navigators* about the privatisation of rail maintenance and the safety chaos that ensued,” he said.

“New Zealanders would be wise the get the film out from their local video store and remind themselves of both the risks and false economies of contracted-out maintenance work, and support rail workers’ concerns about this happening in New Zealand.” 🇳🇿

## Old steamers never die they ...



*Otira LE Mike Kilsby fires Ka 942 up the Cass Bank under tuition.*

*(photo right) LE Mark Scotson (seated) and Leo Niven who was wearing an LEA tie with pride. Leo (79 years old) drove the first heritage steam special out of Christchurch to Timaru in 1988 not long before his retirement.*



*(Photo left) Otira LE and minder fireman Lindsay Marshall in the big seat on KA 942.*

## ERNEST WILLIAM FILE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Surname Of Applicant:  Christian Names:

Contact postal address for academic year:

Age (yy:mm):  Date of birth:

University/institute at which enrolled:

Degree/qualification(s) for which enrolled:

Student ID if known

Which year is this of your undergraduate study? (eg first, second etc.):

References (use separate sheets if necessary):

Latest academic results (Sixth or Seventh Form and certified copy of Bursary results) – attach copies:

Parents name & signature:

Loco Running  Non Loco Running:  Parents please indicate

Applicant's Signature:

Date of Application:

**B**rothers and sisters, it is with a measure of sadness that we write these notes, the last from the Hillside branch. We write them on behalf of past and present workers and their families and the thousands who have gone before us who form part of the history of the Hillside Railway Workshops.

Hillside workers have fought off threats to the workshop's existence before. Many of us remember the downsizing and sale of rail assets from the mid 1980s onwards, which impacted on all the workshops with either closure or a major reductions in staff and investment. Little did we know before Prebble's "Save Rail" campaign, part of the treacherous Lange-Douglas Labour government policy of the time, which amounted to destroying thousands of public sector jobs. Labour regained considerable credibility with the re-nationalisation of rail in 2008 and with their fantastic support for Hillside workers. More recently we have witnessed Hillside being deliberately starved of work by the National-led government and its politically appointed KiwiRail board.

We pay tribute to the 44 workers needlessly made redundant in July 2011. Workers were told at the time that this was

## HILLSIDE WORKSHOP BRANCH

necessary to ensure the future viability of the business due to a downturn in work. Immediately afterwards contractors started appearing in increasing numbers and the branch has struggled ever since to stop core work from being outsourced.

It appears that the workload has been mismanaged again, this time with 90 redundancies and closure of the workshops. Despite resistance from rail workers and the New Zealand public – the real stakeholders of rail in this country – the Tories have destroyed a manufacturing legacy more than 130 years old.

While there was genuine debate about our ability to build locomotives and EMU carriages locally (a debate that still showed they could be done here) there can be no serious questioning of Hillside's ability to build CFT wagons – our bread and butter. The talk about price was always a side issue since the wagons should have been built in New Zealand as of right. We have no dispute with Chinese workers, rather with a government that pursues cheap and low quality contracts.

Hillside workers have fought and gone down swinging. Our message has been true

and we have tried our best. We will get up and continue to fight.

We give a huge thank you to the community, unions and opposition political parties who continue to fight alongside us because they see how short sighted it is to outsource our work and our jobs. People who view New Zealand railway workshops as a dinosaur industry need to be reminded that we turn out a superior quality product despite decades of underinvestment in plant and machinery. Imagine what we could do in employment, training and manufacturing if we had a government minister as committed to modern rail as he was to building roads!

We wish our workmates and their families the very best, whether they face the dole queue, employment elsewhere or retirement. We acknowledge all those who could and should have been trained here in the future and carried on the legacy.

There is a general election in 2014, and the immediate task is to make this National-led government redundant by then so New Zealand communities can realise a brighter future.

Merry Christmas to all, kia kaha and much aroha to you and your families. 🌐

## Impressed with cab and carriage

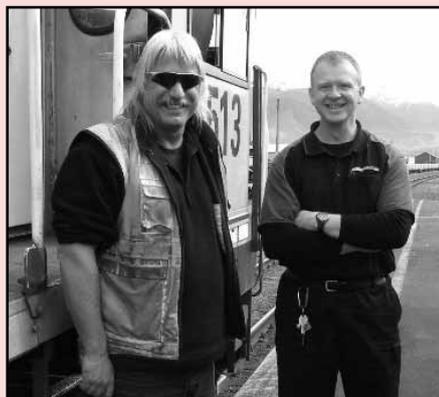
**L**AST month Eileen Kerr, South Island organiser John Kerr's wife, needed to go to Kaikoura for a course so John arranged for part of her trip to be in the cab, courtesy of permission from Jed O'Donoghue of Middleton Yard LE management.

Eileen said it was "such a privilege" to be at the front end with (pictured) LE Steve Stringer (left) and trainee LE Neil Davies who she said, "made the trip wonderful with their explanations and descriptions".

"Neil had recently come to New Zealand from England and was able to compare the two jobs, which I found interesting," she said.

Both gave her a "a wonderful insight to their work and gave me a completely different view of railway work".

She said that while the view from the



cab is similar to that from the carriages behind, the perspective is truly awesome.

"Bridges were the biggest surprise – and quite frightening," she said, "with only a small barrier on one side – and not the one I was sitting on – allowed to see straight down to what was below."

She also spoke highly about how informative and knowledgeable both her

companions were about life in the cab, the route and the equipment they used – and kept her well amused with their many 'cab' stories.

They also spoke about some of the downsides of being an LE including the dangers of level crossings and impressed her with just how little control they had to avoid accidents.

"They said some crossings they could see the road on either side for some distance but others they couldn't," she said. "Either way, they said they had little chance of stopping in time."

Eileen's return from Kaikoura was aboard one of KiwiRail's new AK carriages – built at Hillside.

"These were simply wonderful," she said. "The craftsmanship, the finish, the whole feel was first class. They were gorgeous carriages." 🌐

## PORT NAPIER BRANCH

**A**NOTHER year on the downhill run. Conference last month and the ICLS in December in Wellington. We continue our fight for the rights of workers and do what we must. It has been a busy year for our Union to say the least – both at management and branch level. We will not go into a rant over the hit our Union has taken across both rail and ports but we are all well aware of the ramifications of the feckless thinking by greedy people and a government that continues to sell out the working people and the assets of our country. Their heads are so far into the

clouds they've forgotten how to look down, and in their wealth and personal gain, they don't want to.

At Napier Port we have again seen growth over the last 12 months. As a consequence, the Union and the Company negotiated rosters via the CA for the ship-side staff. Twelve months on we have just embarked on a roster that gives guaranteed time off – which in essence is the core of any roster. We are still coming to terms with it as it is not all plain sailing. But at the end of the day if one has the ability to plan time away from work toward a whanau-orientated life

style, it has got to be good.

It's interesting that this flies in the face of what Ports of Auckland are trying to do. Their management's pre-historic and mindless approach to its (CTU-affiliated) unionised employees. I guess enough said.

As we move into the festive time of the year, ensure you work safe, holiday safe, and use a little wisdom when it comes to being party safe.

To all our brothers and sisters and families of the RMTU, have a good, safe, happy and prosperous new year, and let's continue to stick it to the blue Tory brigade. We need to get cranked up and see a little more red – or green. Raua te rawa. 🌐

## HUTT WORKSHOP BRANCH

**S**INCE the last edition, I have filled-in for our MCC rep (Kasia Kurene) at both a wage round meeting and the routine MCC meeting. I came away from both satisfied and grateful that we as a membership, and indeed the greater compliment of staff at large, are represented (both directly and indirectly) by people that have the genuine interests of all at the forefront of their endeavours. The attention to detail in both forums was extremely pleasing and we should all be thankful for that. By the time you read these notes, the proposed joint report-back meetings and the subsequent postal ballot should have been conducted. Perhaps the results are elsewhere in this magazine!

Our previously reported ZHC conversion project of 40 wagons was completed ahead of time and within budget, so much so that an extra five wagons have been squeezed in in time for KiwiRail's busy season. This would not have happened without the collaborative effort of the management and the union so we hope this bodes well for the future, not simply at this site, but across the company as a whole. Perhaps we could get a working party together to address the TAP!

The branch executive, along with the team leaders and production managers attended a two day action planning forum held off-site so as to avoid any distractions – but not so far away as to incur any unnecessary travel expenses! The main thrust was to look at ourselves and our processes

and confirm where and how we can make improvements. It was an interesting two days with a follow-up session planned for early December to tidy-up some loose ends and to confirm the plan for the future. More detail in the next edition.

We continue to have plenty of locos coming through the shops. I recently diverted from my well-worn path between my workbench and the union office through the Valhalla that is the locomotive area. No matter how often or infrequently one passes through, there is often a different group of locomotives being attended to; some for a lick and promise others for an overhaul and paint job. I would hasten to point out that the painting isn't a five minute job. A lot of effort goes into producing a smartly turned out locomotive and the paint shop team are a top-flight bunch.

Readers of *The Express* (KiwiRail's newsletter) will have noticed we still have vacancies for mechanical engineers. Management are progressing with recruiting apprentices however, there have been some delays due to the necessary ring-fencing of vacancies to allow placement opportunities for staff impacted by restructuring and the recently announced carve up of the Hillside workshops. It is our hope to inject some new blood into the workshops and we hope to finalise things in the foreseeable future.

There is still no word on when the recladding of the south wall of Plant 1 is to commence but now that the sunnier weather is here, it may be left until next

autumn! The engineering report for the site has been done and senior company officials are reported to be unsatisfied with it, so some toing and froing may occur before a strengthening programme gets underway.

Our AGM filled most of the vacancies in our branch and HSAT committees and they are well underway and hopefully will continue to do good things in a timely manner. As always we find that time runs out when we want to tidy up loose ends before the festive break. We are devoting our energies to completing some disciplinary actions. However, as we're not in charge of the 'timetable' we must remain ever patient.

On a cautionary note, I would point out provisions in the MECA concerning fitness for duty. If you are not fit for duty, don't come to work. Ring your manager and tell him/her that you are unfit, unwell etc.

It has been a busy year and unfortunately it is truly over for many who have been displaced from the company or are about to be so. For some it is an enforced retirement, for others it's the closing of doors on what has probably been some very enjoyable years. I sincerely hope new doors will open and begin new career adventures. I recall my own redundancy when head office was relocated. After 22 years it was an enforced change but after a short break and a dabble in sales and marketing, I found enjoyable work in the hospitality industry for six and a half years before returning to the rail. You just never know what's around the corner!

Have a safe Christmas everyone. Arohanui. 🌐

SOME notes from Wellington:

- We are still awaiting results from Employment Relations in regard to restructure in Tranz Metro.
- There have been many KiwiRail members involved in multiple sporting fixtures around the area.
- Congratulations to the second place achieved by the indoor soccer team.
- KiwiRail staff competed in the 'Cycle for cancer' ride held outdoors in Civic Square on Saturday November 11.
- Notice boards and magazine racks have

## WELLINGTON RAIL BRANCH

- been set up now at the majority of the work sites with the remainder to be completed in the near future.
- Aubrey Wilkinson, Gary Innes and Jenny Griffin attended the ACC Futures Coalition for A Better Future, with guest speaker Sir Geoffrey Palmer being well received.
- Early December a number of our members will also attend International Centre for Labour Solidarity – 8th Inter-

national Conference.

- Members of the Wellington freight terminal (all work groups) met with senior management to discuss the proposed new terminal recently. A healthy debate was held with staff turning up in good numbers to express their reservations about the proposed building.

Wishing all members and their families a very merry Christmas and may 2013 be all you wish. 🇳🇿

## Goodwill Express

**T**HE Salvation Army and Tranz Metro have teamed up to deliver the Salvation Army's Christmas food bank by providing a special train for collections on December 1.

The Goodwill Express stopped for a few minutes at every station on the Wellington to Upper Hutt, Waikanae and Johnsonville lines. A number of Tranz Metro and RMTU members volunteered to help on the train for the day.

The Goodwill Express started out of a discussion between RMTU members Garry Innes, Wayne Bedford and Michelle



The RMTU's Tranz Metro team on Goodwill duty

Thomas. Gary said he was pleased to see the Goodwill Express back on track after missing out last year. "It's all about people helping people," he said. 🇳🇿

**W**OW! What a tough few months we all have been through this latter half of 2012, with the announcement of Maersk/Hamburg Sud withdrawing its combined weekly standalone service from the port in mid September. The company was faced with completely closing down its container terminal. Fortunately an eleventh hour deal was struck with MSC and a service was retained, saving the terminal from closure. Even with greatly reduced numbers expected, early signs are positive, with good support from local

exporters. Unfortunately around 40 staff (mostly RMTU members) were still made redundant under a proposed restructure. Part of that process was that Primeport would no longer be in the business of stevedoring. C3 was awarded the contract to work both the MSC and Swire vessels. This saw a lot of our casuals being rehired by C3. Phew! We are experiencing some initial issues around this latest arrangement, but it is still certainly a much better outcome than we

## PRIMEPORT BRANCH

were originally facing. Marshalling for these vessels is done by Primeport workers on either a 32 or 24 hour guarantee. The port remains a viable business with a very strong log trade, frequent calls by tankers, various cargo ships and an active fishing industry. Fingers crossed for now, we are hoping for more settled waters in 2013.

Merry Christmas brothers and sisters. Stay safe and, most of all stay, RMTU. 🇳🇿

**W**HERE has this year gone? It's almost Christmas time again! It has been a busy year down in the south, monopolised by negotiations for a number of weeks but with lots of persistence and good humour, we managed to secure a pretty good deal and most peo-

ple were happy. The company did table a 12 roster, however, they were unable to show us exactly how it would work so it disappeared rather rapidly.

July was a tough month for us. Bruce Walker, our secretary, died after a struggle

## PORT CHALMERS BRANCH

with illness. Bruce was a very respected and dedicated RMTU member and played an active role right up until the night before his death. He will be – and is – missed greatly

Continued on the next page ▶

PORT CHALMERS BRANCH [cont]

by all at the port.

As we approach our busy season, we see a substantial increase in rail. POL with Kiwirail have jointly launched a service from Timaru to Port Chalmers twice daily. It's our belief that we will be working rail on a 24 hour basis in the very near future to keep up with the expected volumes. Of course, with increased volumes we see more staff being hired with even some faces from the past coming back. One has to wonder why we continually decreased the work force then rehire a few months down the track.

The dynamics here have changed like all workplaces I guess. Workers' rights are being attacked constantly, we don't seem to get verbal warnings any more, records of conversations are placed on

your file – it seems bizarre and there is a very pointed distinction of inconsistency coming through.

For the first time in history POL seems not to be paying the staff their profit share. Don't get me wrong, there is no question that we did make a healthy profit. All of a sudden we are hearing that it's a 'discretionary payment' and not in the 'collective'! Of course management have all been paid their very healthy bonuses. Maybe it's time management familiarised itself with Port Otago values – especially honest communication!

As I'm writing this I learn of the fate of Hillside Workshops. This is an absolute catastrophe for Hillside workers and for Dunedin as a whole. The government should be ashamed of itself for not allowing

Hillside to manufacture the wagons. If they only look closely at the fleet of UK/PK wagons running around now they will see their reliability and quality– and they all rolled out of the Hillside gates about 30 or 40 years ago! How many of the Chinese made wagons are out of service now? I believe in excess of 200. We applaud the fabulous work Clare Curran, John Kerr and the Hillside members who did try convincing Jim Quinn and his cronies to notice Hillside's great potential. The only way we can stop these hideous decisions being made and stop the daily attacks on workers is to collectively organise and get rid of this idiotic right winged Tory government.

Port Chalmers branch extends a very merry Christmas to everyone and hopes you all have a great 2013. 🌐

TARANAKI RAIL BRANCH

ONE doesn't need Jim Hickey to tell us when summer arrives. We just look for the 'Caution Heat 40' boards that appear around the network warning us of tracks buckling in the hot sun. Just another legacy of bad management decisions made in the 1990s still having their affects felt today. Train times go out the window and with the numbers of I & E staff bring reduced, one wonders if the track will ever get fixed. *The I & E staff are on a 'downer', having been kicked in the Abernethys by a bunch of Fulton Hogans.* With their layoffs, the morale around their depot is at all time low. Just as well KiwiRail did their staff survey when they did. The results would be very different if taken now.

Tuesday November 6 finally saw two trains cross at the reinstated Manutahi Crossing Loop. A site meeting was held the previous week between the project managers, KiwiRail management and the RMTU to sign it off. Unfortunately it was obvious that it was built for crossing trains on the move and not for staff to be on the ground

to change over, nor if they have to walk back and check a train. The open drains



and steep banks, with no protection, were health and safety hazards. The company agreed to put some minimum required solutions in place, with all parties agreeing to an opening time of 18:00 hrs on Wednesday November 7 should the work be completed. Unfortunately senior management put huge pressure on the local reps to get it signed off early but they resisted until it was safe to use. The green light was given at 18:00 hrs on the Monday. Unfortunately on that day the signalling system had other ideas, and crashed almost causing one of the drivers to have

a SPAD. So much for the commissioning procedure. Future Projects, who oversaw the whole operation, must be so proud that it has only taken since August 2011, when the project was first started, to have the loop in operation. All the hazards magically disappear once the company issued a bulletin putting the onus

Continued on the next page ▶

## TARANAKI RAIL BRANCH [cont]



back on staff if they get injured.

Corey (duck, duck, goose) Gosney has started his railway career in Whareroa as a rail operator whilst Duncan Matthews is back on light duties after recovering from serious surgery to fix his crook ticker. One of the modes of transport in the Whareroa yard, a very second hand quad bike, packed up at the start of the milk season. Some of the rail operators are now walking up to 10 kilometres extra per shift.

With the staff having to pilot the trains on foot, following safe operating practices and taking their allotted meal breaks, train delays are an unfortunate by-product. At the time of writing, management are firm in not

*The staff in Raquel's (left) group photo are (l to r): Dave Creagh, Raquel Doreen, Brian Baldwin, Rod McGhie (Loco team leader), Allan Robertson, Kevin Jenkins, Kerry Potroz, Murray Cotter (Taranaki KM), Serge Bernier and Robert Stone.*

replacing the quad. Let's hope a sensible solution is found soon.

It is with regret that Taranaki's only female locomotive engineer, Raquel Doreen (pictured above), resigned due to personal reasons. It doesn't seem that long ago that she was gracing the front page of the Transport Worker. She was wished all the best by some of the local staff in a send off at Stratford.

KiwiRail must still have some money stashed away because the top brass have

enlisted the help of Partners In Performance to tell them what is wrong with the company. Obviously, it's no good asking the staff because they don't know, but, staff shortages in critical areas, the lack of transition heads and the failure of both old and new equipment would seem to be as good a place as any to start.

Will our pay increase be enough to fill Santa's sacks? I guess we'll find out soon enough. All the best for the festive season and keep it safe. 🌐



# Hillside supporters not giving in

*Christchurch port and rail branch members stage a very successful protest at the launch of the Hillside-built AK passenger wagons on the 25th birthday of the TranzAlpine service. Once again the message was clear – ‘National Killed Hillside!’*

**A**T the time of going to press, the fate of 90 workers at Hillside looks bleak. In mid-November KiwiRail announced that they had been unable to find a buyer for the 130 year old Dunedin railway workshops, although the foundry has been bought by Australian company Bradkin. The impact of the Christchurch earthquake on maintenance facilities in the South Island means that Hillside’s heavy lift operation will remain in operation, but everything else will close.

Responsibility for what is happening lies with the National Government – ever since the political appointees on KiwiRail’s Board chose to buy rolling stock overseas the clock has been ticking for Hillside. Minister of Transport Gerry Brownlee, and his predecessor Stephen Joyce are the guilty men. What’s happening to Hillside is shameful.

Our Hillside members are not going quietly however. Alongside South Dunedin Labour MP Clare Curran, the RMTU has waged a campaign to make sure the public know who is responsible for the debacle at Hillside.

Members around the country have been vocal in their support of Hillside. Our Christchurch port and rail branch members staged a very successful protest at the launch of the Hillside-built AK passenger wagons on the 25th birthday of the TranzAlpine service. Once again the message was clear – ‘National Killed Hillside!’

But we’re not dead yet...

The Board’s rejection of a study by KiwiRail management to



build a short production run of flat deck wagons at Hillside looks like it will come under closer scrutiny. Clare Curran has written to the Auditor-General demanding he investigate KiwiRail’s tendering procedures and political interference in the Company’s operations. Depending on what’s uncovered, this has the potential to become a political scandal. Wagongate?

Meanwhile, we are working hard to try and secure redeployment for Hillside workers within KiwiRail and are reviewing our options to organise those who Bradkin want to employ on lesser terms and conditions. Branch chair Stu Johnstone went to the Labour Party Conference the week after the announcement of the job cuts and gave a tremendous speech. A remit was unanimously passed to re-establish Hillside in 2014 when we finally get rid of the National Government.

Hillside is not finished – we’re still fighting and we’ve no intention of giving up. 🌐