

THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

MAR 2022

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

- **Waterfront
women**

- **Jim Kelly obituary**

- **Port safety**



5 INFLATION PRIMER

An explanation to help you understand why New Zealanders are experiencing such high and rapid inflation.

8/9 SAFER PORTS

Two stories focussing on safety in our ports and how the RMTU and its members are improving things.

18 STUCK OVERSEAS

Rebecca Hauck still stuck in the USA with the family's latest acquisition.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Steph McLaughlin and Kim Campbell - two newly employed RMTU women members working for Lyttelton Port Company. See page 15.

The Transport Worker is published by the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, P O Box 1103, Wellington, Aotearoa–New Zealand.

Design and production by Mike Regan.

Printed by Pivotal Print
P O Box 11-025, Wellington.

WWW.RMTUNION.ORG.NZ

ISBN 1173-6488



Wayne Butson,
General secretary
RMTU

Flat rate fairer

WELCOME to issue 1 of our pinnacle publication for 2022. It is another bumper issue full of happenings and matters of interest and/or concern.

It is really pleasing to see the KiwiRail MECA resoundingly ratified by a huge majority of members. The \$2.48 per hour across the board increase will provide a real boost to low paid members whilst at the same time move everyone by a common universal amount.

In my view flat rate increases are the only mechanism for compensating workers for cost of living increases. When petrol and other baseline commodities increase in price they don't move as a percentage of wage rate, they move at a flat rate, and so to use percentages to compensate for consumer price increases just distorts the wage inequality which already exists. I know I run the risk of winding some members up with this discussion but I do not resile from my strongly held belief in equity and fairness which are the bedrock of my moral compass.

So-called 'freedom' protest will restrict us all

As I write this I can look out of my office window and observe the occupation of central Wellington. I refuse to call it a freedom protest as it is oxymoronic to have a freedom protest which takes away the freedom of movement and association of the citizens of Wellington.

When leaving the office I have been spat on, had people attempt to remove my mask and been subjected to personal abuse. The windows on the front of our building have been smashed and we had tents and vans all set up in the building environs with the inherent smell of human waste both materially and bodily.

This occupation is going to alter our democracy in a similar way that the Springbok tour protest altered our police force.

During my travels around the world, which have often involved meeting with Government officials in other countries or addressing protest rallies outside their parliament etc, I have always been struck by the contrast with our almost free and easy access to political and other governmental officials here in New Zealand compared to these countries where the parliament is almost a fortress.

Sadly, I believe that this will now change. I believe we will soon end up with security fencing and more layers of security around our Parliament and the influence of right wing fascist factions will grow within the disaffected.

I have listened to some of the speeches at the occupation site in parliament grounds and their disconnection with every day reality is staggering. There are people walking around with tin foil covering their heads with eye slits and one such person tried to convince me that 5G was the cause of Covid. They failed, of course.


A number of our port collectives have recently been settled and so our usual

collective bargaining continues as normal.

We are currently conducting a strike ballot of members for new Auckland rail operator Auckland One Rail as talks have broken down and in Wellington we have had a number of the Transdev Wellington senior managers resign which will make that negotiation, which kicks off in May, challenging from a relationship perspective.

The KiwiRail settlement makes both negotiations challenging from a financial perspective because members will quite rightly be citing relativities as a basis for any increase. Add in the constantly evolving Covid scene to all CA negotiations and work situations – including rostering – and it illustrates the saying that "there is nothing easy in life worth doing".

However, union work is well worth doing and so United we shall succeed.

RMTU – Here to Stay! 


International condemnation

THE International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) called for an immediate ceasefire in hostilities following the military escalation in Ukraine.

They said: "All our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine. The hearts and minds of transport workers around the world weigh heavily as we witness war breaking out. This conflict must stop now."

They added that transport workers are particularly under threat having had reports of military targeting transport infrastructure, the changing control of airports and railways, and the shut down of airspace and ports.

"We stand in solidarity with all the people of Ukraine, Russia and neighbouring countries calling for peace, dialogue and diplomacy and urgently need leaders on all sides to show restraint, diplomacy and urgently de-escalate the conflict to minimise the threat to civilian lives and livelihoods."

They called for all parties to do all in their power to de-escalate tensions and seek a peaceful, diplomatic end to this crisis. 

Resignation

Dear Editor

I have recently retired from working at Port Marlborough and so I wish to tender my resignation as a member of the RMTU. I have absolutely enjoyed being part of the RMTU and would sincerely like to thank you all for your help and support over the last 25 years.

Until I joined Port Marlborough 25 years ago, I had not been a union member. However, having enjoyed the experience I would totally encourage any new employees to the industry, to join the union and receive all of the help and support that being a member brings.

Nga mihi.

Yours in solidarity,

Murray Burgess.

Trains more efficient

Dear Editor,

What a surprise that the report from the national trucking representative association should say, we only need more trucks and let's scrap rail.

They claim it is only 'ideology and rhetoric' that talks about rail as a serious competitor to road transport.

Facts of course always get in the road of rhetoric, and the fact is we are drowning (in Westport's case literally) with the effects of climate change.

And our transport infrastructure is one of the biggest reasons for that.

Fact; steel railway wheels on steel rails are more than six times more efficient than rubber on tarmac.

Fact; trains can easily be powered by electricity.

Fact; there is going to be a cost for fixing climate change, and investment in cleaner greener transport is a must.

Of course the rhetoric that their chief executive Nick Leggett himself uses throws such things as "how many trains do you see backing up to farm gates or the supermarket".

Of course we don't see that, but he needs to acknowledge that it is sensible to have a mix of transport options.

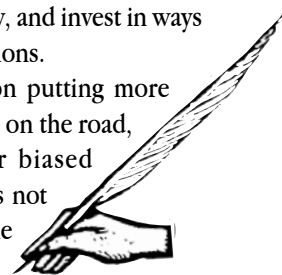
A sensible way is not by putting shipping containers on the back of trucks, clogging up our arterial roads, rather than hauling several at a time by a more

efficient train.

That is one sensible way to do something right now about reducing our emissions. We have to do something about climate change like it or not, so my vote is for a government that will accept that it is going to cost money, and invest in ways to alleviate our emissions.

Just continuing on putting more diesel belching trucks on the road, as Leggett's rather biased report wants to do, is not going to help that one little bit.

Neil Anderson.



Kudos for Alby

Dear Editor,

A champion for the RMTU and its members is moving on, hence this note of sincere thanks and gratitude to Alby Barr.

Seldom have I come across a union rep with more passion and commitment than Alby – a champion for workers' rights for decades, with a special focus on workers of Northland.

He has held multiple roles including:

- Various roles for the RMTU since 2005, including the NMC [2019-2020] (track member);
- Waikato branch vice chair [2008-2013].
- A representative on Unions Waikato.
- Chair Northland rail branch [2013-2021]
- Elected co-convenor of Union Northland, [2017-current].

Alby's dedication and drive for improving worker rights and conditions, and his passion and enthusiasm for these outcomes, has been unwavering. He has been a highly valued member of the RMTU whanau.

Alby has now let me know that in order to pursue some of his Northland passions further, he has decided to resign as an employee of KiwiRail.

However, I have no doubt whatsoever that he will remain very much connected to our rail community, and to supporting and advancing workers' rights.

This note is but a small token of our sincere thanks to Alby for all of his efforts, dedication and passion for the rights of our members.

In unity

Wayne Butson.

Social insurance a game changer for Aotearoa?



THE CTU warmly welcomed the government announcement to explore a social unemployment insurance scheme. The CTU, together with Government and Business New Zealand, have already been looking at possible ways to support workers through change in the Future of Work Tripartite Forum.

"When someone in New Zealand loses their job, the pressure to get their next job quickly means they grab the first thing they can find. As a result their income from that job, and subsequent jobs, takes a hit. It's called 'wage scarring', says CTU president Richard Wagstaff.

"The evidence from overseas is that social insurance helps to reduce the 'scarring'. It also makes sure that workers have time to find the job that best fits their skills and needs. That's good for them and it's good for us all.

"These schemes are very common overseas. New Zealand is almost unique in the developed world in not having any income protection for workers who lose their jobs.

"Having a scheme which protects workers will remove some of the fear associated with redundancy and will particularly support communities hit by large-scale job losses.

"The CTU looks forward to working closely with the Government and Business New Zealand on the details of this proposal. Together with Fair Pay Agreements and improved sick leave, this proposal could go a significant way to improving the industrial relations of New Zealand." 🌐

■ *The leaders of five unions recently wrote an opinion piece on the subject for Stuff. You can read what Kerry Davies (PSA), Laures Park (NZEI), Rachel Mackintosh (NZCTU/E tu), Glenda Alexander (NZNO) and Sandra Grey (TEU) had to say here:*

<https://bit.ly/3gCJp2V>

Auckland metro talks derailed

AUCKLAND ONE RAIL (AOR) have replaced Transdev (TDAK) as the franchisee holder for the Auckland Metro Network. After several years of struggle, the RMTU's relationship with TDAK had finally got to the point where the Union and the Company, while not best friends, were able to discuss issues relatively openly.

There were, of course, disagreements, but there was a better relationship than there had been in the past.

Unfortunately, AOR have not shown any of the cooperation that we had begun to see from Transdev. Despite the rhetoric of openness and transparency, it is no exaggeration to say we are now in a position that is not dissimilar to where we were with TDAK in 2017.

The bargaining with AOR is now at a point where it has broken down.

We are in the process of balloting members to take industrial action. This is not a

To ask them to take what amounts to a pay cut is deeply unfair and downright immoral.

step taken lightly.

The Company has offered 5.4% across the board for 16 months, or 5.5% for drivers and 5.3% for all other staff for 16 months.

Our claim is for a reasonable pay increase coupled with a weekend allowance for drivers for a 12-month period.

At the time the collective agreement

expired, inflation was 4.9% for the year.

What the Company is offering is a pay cut, because the offer for the extra four months amounts to 0.5% for that period.

We know inflation will be far higher than that, having already reached its highest level in 31 years.

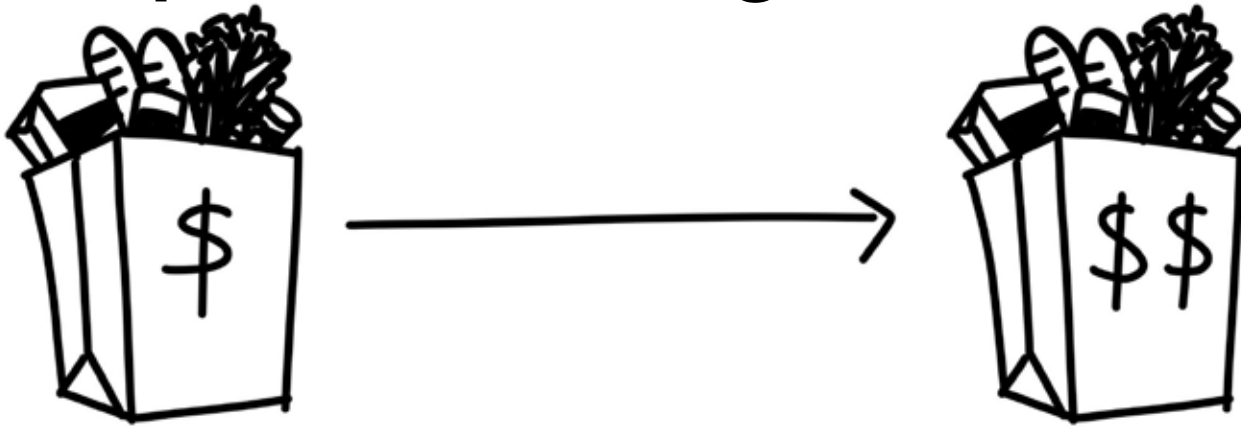
Our members have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic putting their health, and their whanau's health, at risk.

Like the rest of the country, our members are feeling the pressure of skyrocketing prices in the supermarkets, at the gas pump and increases in mortgage rates and rents.

To ask them to take what amounts to a pay cut is deeply unfair and downright immoral.

Kia kaha. 🌐

Rising inflation does NOT equal lower wage demands



A guide to the underlying causes for our current dilemma

INFLATION is back in the news with the announcement that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the year ending 31 December 2021 is running at 5.9%. This is the highest rate of CPI for three decades, and the highest many of our members will have experienced in their working lives.

CPI is the most common measure of the rate of price increases, or 'inflation', that we use. Our longer serving members will remember when CPI was last this high, in the 1980s (in fact the CPI reached its highest ever recorded rate in 1987 at 18.7%).

The aim of this article is to explain some of the terms being used in the media, and else-

where, and to examine what is causing inflation.

The CPI is measured every quarter and is expressed as a percentage figure. This percentage figure is a guide to the rate at which prices have risen across the economy over the previous 12 months. So, if CPI is running at 5.9% for the year ending 31 December 2021, that means that a 'basket' of goods and services which cost \$100 on 31 December 2020, now costs \$105.90. What goes into this 'basket' of goods is decided by Statistics New Zealand and is supposed to reflect the spending pattern of Kiwis.

If your income doesn't rise by the same amount prices have risen over a 12 month

period, you are worse off. Conversely, if your income rose by more than the rate at which prices increased, you are better off. For most working people, their biggest (and often only) source of income is their wages. So, if price increases outstripped wage increases these people are poorer.

In the context of collective agreement negotiations, our Union sometimes claims for 'real wage growth' or a 'meaningful wage increase'.

What do we want?

What we mean by this is that we want an increase to wages that is greater than the rate at which prices are increasing. If we can win a wage increase higher than the CPI rate, our members will be better off.

Of course, it's not quite that simple.

One problem is that the 'basket' of goods and services that Stats NZ uses to measure price changes doesn't accurately reflect everyone's spending patterns.

A young person living with their parents will most likely spend their money differently to a young family with two children for example. If you are a smoker and live 50 km from work you probably spend more on petrol and tobacco than someone who is a non-smoker who cycles to work. So, your personal rate of inflation is likely to be different to that of your workmates.

The 5.9% 'headline' rate of inflation is made up of a few sub-categories.

We know that the 5.9% rate of CPI is largely being driven by increases in fuel prices, groceries and costs associated with

New Zealand's consumers price index



housing. In other words, prices at the pump have gone up way more than 5.9% but because people don't spend all their income on fuel the rate of CPI is not the same as the increase in fuel prices. Some items will have fallen in price. For example it's quite common for some electronic goods to fall in price over time. Remember how expensive DVD players were when they first came out?

Basket case?

Another way the basket of goods and services used to measure CPI can be divided up is according to those things that are 'tradable' and those that are 'non-tradable'.

'Tradable' goods and services are those we can buy and sell overseas, for example cars, oil and cheese; and 'non-tradeables' are those that we can't, for example, dental examinations or restaurant meals.

Part of the challenge with increases in the price of tradable goods is that we as a country have very little control over these. New Zealand can't control the global price of oil. There's a fair bit of evidence that much of the inflation we are experiencing is being caused by these sort of increases. Increases in the costs of building materials is arguably being caused by increased shipping costs and pressures on the supply chain for example.

Another problem is that some prices are a result of the rise or fall of the New Zealand dollar in comparison to the value of

other currencies. Our currency is a bit of a tiddler and if a bunch of Belgian dentists or Japanese office workers decide to exchange the savings they have in NZ dollars for US dollars then the value of the NZ dollar will fall. This will make imports (like fuel) more expensive.

Some price increases are arguably being driven by other factors however.

As we went into the COVID19 pandemic the government and the Reserve Bank were very concerned the lockdowns and consequent reduction in economic activity would lead to job losses and business failure.

They got ahead of the game and, instead of waiting for people to lose their jobs and go on a benefit, they subsidised wages across the economy.

The Reserve Bank also reduced interest rates, which is merely the cost of borrowing money. The results have been very low unemployment and people buying lots of goods and services on credit because credit was relatively cheap.

Combined with a shortage of housing stock, this drove up house prices very rapidly.

The combination of low unemployment, cheap credit and shortages of some goods and services all drove up prices.

What is missing from this picture is something called "wage driven" inflation.

This is where wages increase and the

amount of goods and services don't. This means there is more money chasing the same amount of goods and services. In other words demand is up and supply is static. Which means prices will rise.

Key solution

The key to beating this isn't to restrict wage increases, but to increase productivity. In fact there is evidence that high wages drives high productivity as it encourages investment. For example, high wage economies like Germany are often the most productive because capitalists invest in technology.

The current relatively high rate of inflation in New Zealand is being driven by external price increases like fuel and shipping costs, shortages caused by supply chain constraints, and low interest rates. Wages aren't keeping up with the rate of inflation.

The Council of Trade Unions tells us more than half of all Kiwi workers didn't get a wage rise last year and the average increase in wages and salaries as measured by Stats NZ is only 2.6% for the year ending December 2021.

In conclusion, while inflation is high compared to what it has been in recent years, it isn't been driven by wage increases. Union members should not be shy of demanding better pay and should be ready to fight for it. 🌐

PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

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



**Ports
Retirement
Plan**



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

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited

Minimum wage raised

LAST month the Government delivered on its election pledge to raise the minimum wage for New Zealand's lowest paid workers.

The increase to \$21.20 per hour begins 1 April 2022.

Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Michael Wood said:

"Many Kiwis who earn the minimum wage have gone above and beyond in our fight against COVID-19. We remain committed to supporting New Zealanders by raising their wages, as we continue to recover and rebuild from the pandemic."

The CTU also welcomed the increase saying it ensured that Minimum Wage workers do not fall further behind other workers and means that their incomes are protected in real terms.

CTU president Richard Wagstaff said: "For a full time Minimum Wage worker this means an extra \$48 a week in income, or

\$2,496 annually. Official estimates are that around 300,000 low-income workers will benefit from this change."

Woods pointed out that with the arrival of Omicron frontline workers – such as cleaners, supermarket workers, and security guards – will once again be called upon to keep the country running as the virus spreads.

"I think everyone agrees those contributing so much to our COVID response deserve a pay rise," he said adding that the wage increase will also have a stimulatory effect on the economy "as many workers will spend the extra money on goods and services, which in turn, will help support businesses".

The starting-out and training minimum wage will also increase from \$16 to \$16.96 per hour from 1 April 2022.


Wagstaff added that the increases were essential and desirable especially as unem-

ployment is at record low levels.

"There has never been a better time to increase the minimum wage. Despite suggestions to the contrary, international and New Zealand evidence suggests that increasing the minimum wage does not increase unemployment."

Wagstaff says the increase will help ensure lower income families across New Zealand can look forward to better pay packets from April.

"Along with Fair Pay Agreements and Social Insurance, this is another step in creating better working conditions for Workers in Aotearoa," he said, adding that while supporting the increase "the CTU is disappointed that the government did not choose to increase the Minimum Wage to the Living Wage".

Wood says the rise to \$21.20 per hour is estimated to boost wages across the economy by \$216 million. 

Company fined \$90,000 for dropping excavator overboard

ATauranga-based stevedoring company has been ordered to pay a fine of \$90,000 and costs of \$20,000 for safety failings which resulted in an excavator being dropped overboard from a logging ship in 2018.

C3 Limited had previously pleaded guilty to a charge of breaching its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 and was sentenced Friday, 4 February in the Wellington District Court.

Maritime NZ's central compliance manager, Blair Simmons, says that the incident, which took place at Wellington's Centreport on June 2, 2018, was particularly disappointing given it followed a similar incident at Northport in 2017 where it was incredibly lucky that no-one was injured.

The previous incident resulted in a prosecution of C3 Limited and another person, with C3 being convicted and fined \$240,000.

"The excavator, which was being moved between two cargo holds where it was being used to load logs, fell from its lifting arrangement attached to the ship's crane, hit the side of the ship and fell into the water," Blair Simmons says.

Contributing factors

The Maritime NZ investigation found several factors contributed to incident:


- C3's standard operating procedure (SOP) for lifting heavy machinery was not developed or reviewed by a qualified engineer.
- The lifting technique C3 was using has been identified as poor practice and is no longer being used by other stevedoring companies in New Zealand.
- Workers were not properly trained in the procedure.

■ The lifting lugs fixed to the excavator were not certified.

■ C3 did not have a system in place for regularly testing and monitoring its workers' hearing and vision to ensure they were fit to operate machinery such as cranes.

Mr Simmons says the sentencing highlights the importance of staying up to date with industry best practice and having strong training and health and safety systems in place.

"While no single factor can be identified as the cause of the incident, there were clearly several serious health and safety failings that needed to be urgently addressed."

C3 were charged under section 49 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 for a failure to comply with duties under sections 36(1), 36(2), 36(3). 

Safer ways with hoists

THE SonaSafe project has continued through the current Covid-19 climate to install the safety system on container hoists and excavators. The system is an engineering control to identify when our staff and their vehicles are near a mobile plant.

The RMTU has been working with KiwiRail, using HPHE principles, to introduce this technology after an incident on the Midland Line and other serious incidents in the transport industry.

"The system is really helpful for operators and staff on the ground, alerting us when there is someone close by," says Southdown team leader and RMTU CT KIC delegate, Nash Ali.

"In the past year there have been two hoist on hoist collisions and this system is now helping us to avoid operating close together. We have had to change our approach to the way we work, which is a good thing."

Container terminal delegates and HSAT members have started a process to assess how effective the system is and have already identified several potential improvements.

"Unlike other projects we are getting real engagement and involvement in the project which gets a better product at the



Container transfer operator at Southdown, Matthew [Matty] Savelio.

end of the day," said Ali.

Due to Covid, Southdown Container Terminal is the only location where the system is live however, the following locations have the technology installed:

- Christchurch CT
- Canterbury and West Coast infrastructure
- Te Rapa
- Wellington CT
- Waikato infrastructure

■ Wellington infrastructure.

The installation team is now concentrating on the central region and then moving to the lower South Island. Sites will go live once the current Covid risk drops.

A member of the project team observed: "Working on this project has highlighted how much power the contractors have. Plus they charge for everything." 🌐



Southdown Container Transfer Terminal in operation and (inset) an HPHE meeting in progress.

Safer and healthier ports

RMTU helping to tie up waterside worker safety plan

OUR Union is working with the ports industry, regulators, Maritime NZ, WorksafeNZ and other maritime unions to lift the standard of health and safety in the country's ports.

RMTU president Aubrey Wilkinson who represents the RMTU on the Port Sector Leadership Group is overseeing the strategy.

The strategy's vision is to create a "high performing, resilient port sector where people thrive and worker health and safety is prioritised through high-trust and tripartite collaboration".

The group will deal with cross-sector issues relating to harm-at-work on ports and will approach the work with a te ao Maori viewpoint.

Maori workers on average are seriously injured at a rate of 55% higher than non-Maori across all industries and sectors nationally.^[1]

Information obtained by the RMTU from Worksafe NZ under the Official Information Act paints a grim picture of health and safety in the ports industry.


It said: "The number of injuries to stevedores (requiring more than a week away from work) tripled and injuries for ports and water transport, terminal operations quadrupled between 2013-2018."

Data shows that soft tissue injuries to the lower back and spine caused by 'body stressing' were the largest number of ACC claims requiring more than a week away from work for ports, water transport, terminal operations and stevedoring services. Injuries included, muscular stress while lifting objects, carrying or putting down objects, repetitive movements, lashing, pulling on heavy wires and ropes, climbing ladders, slipping on wet surfaces, rolling ankles on uneven surfaces and using

container spreaders.

The second most frequent accident type was being hit by moving objects – people vs plant.

The ports health and safety strategy includes the following actions;

- A port industry guide for managing the risk of fatigue.
- An online tool for identifying technology to manage the risk of people and plant in the ports.
- Identifying the most significant risks to workers' health and safety and creating guidance/tools to help manage the risk.
- A project on what good health and safety leadership and worker engagement looks like.
- A joint national compliance strategy between Worksafe NZ and Maritime NZ. 

^[1] Worksafe NZ *Te Kabu Matai: Improving the equity gap for Maori.*

RAIL - TAKING STRESS OFF NORTHLAND ROADS

It's time to reconnect Northland's extensive railway network enabling industry to use the safest way to move freight and increase high value rail tourism.

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union Fully Supports re-opening lines to Dargaville and Otiria. Reconnecting rail to Kawakawa - Opuia for rail tourism.



Rail is the Strategic missing link to Northport.

- Logs • Woodchips
- Dairy • Bulkloads • Tourism
- Large Consignment freight



RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

Kellyanne Bullen

Train manager and trainer on Scenic Journey trains based out of Christchurch.

What does your job involve?

In my role I look after operational aspects of the train consist including pre departure safety checks, control of movements, door operation, on-board maintenance, attaching engines, brake tests, calling the train onto the platforms at stations, overall control of the consist. Then of course there's the emergency response part of the job which can be very wide ranging from individual issues with a passenger to a potential evacuation and/or major problem in a tunnels.

I also have a customer service role in relation to our passengers and I train new train attendants and train managers into their new job roles.

How long have you been a member of the Union, and tell us why you got involved with the RMTU?

I've been a Union member since 2015 when I started with KiwiRail. I started as a train attendant, then a train manager and trainer. I had a short spell away after redundancy in the aftermath of the Midland Line fires in 2017 but I came back. As we spend the vast bulk of our working time on the trains I've not had much opportunity to be active in the RMTU but this last year has been a bit different. With the lockdowns and various levels we've spent a lot of time at



Kellyanne and her daughters Lexi and Ally.

home on special leave. KiwiRail didn't make us redundant which was pretty decent of them but I also know the RMTU does a lot of work lobbying on behalf of the services I work on and I appreciate that. Last year, because we weren't running trains my colleagues and I had the opportunity to attend a report back meeting on the MECA talks at the Woolston Club, something we wouldn't normally be able to do. It was really interesting to hear the discussion and see the bigger picture.

This last year has been pretty unusual with COVID but even though we've been away from work we've felt part of the whanau. That includes KiwiRail, our immediate colleagues and the RMTU.

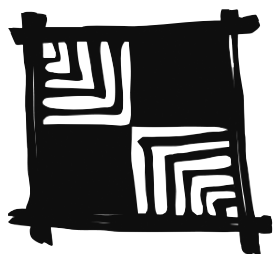
What do you think about working in a male dominated industry?

I've always felt an equal in my job at KiwiRail. I know the industry is 'male domi-

nated' but our service has a lot of women working in it. I like working with the blokes anyway, so it's never been an issue. I don't mind being assertive and I'm fairly outgoing, which kind of goes with the job if you think about it. I have two daughters and I want them to be confident and to have good opportunities so I figure as their mum I have to lead by example.

What would you say to women school leavers who were thinking about a career in the rail?

You've got to be interested in it. If you are, then get stuck in and go for it and be persistent. I didn't get the train manager job at the first attempt but I had another go when an opportunity arose and I got it. Don't be afraid to back yourself. The world is changing rapidly. There are more women in rail than ever before so that says something. 🌍



BECOME A KIWI SOLIDARITY DONOR -
SUPPORT REAL CHANGE

UnionAID

Better Work, Better World

You can help vulnerable workers in developing countries in our region get a fairer deal by making a small monthly donation by direct debit by visiting:

www.unionaid.org.nz/donate

Rogue roster upsets nascent HPHE plans

A case where procedures were ignored by middle rank bosses and smoothed over by wise leadership from both sides

C OVID19 has led to many of us changing the way we work. At Lyttelton Port it led to a serious spat between our members in maintenance engineering and their managers.

Rosters can only be changed by negotiation at LPC, and this has been a bone of contention over the years, often raising the temperature in bargaining and contributing to disputes.

Since the thawing of relations with management a couple of years ago, and the signing of a High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) charter, the maintenance workshop roster was identified by the RMTU and LPC as a project the parties could usefully work on. This work had started and several productive meetings had resulted with an agreed issue statement and declaration of the parties' interests. So far so good.

Then, on the Friday afternoon going into the long Waitangi weekend, RMTU workshop delegates at Lyttelton port were summoned into a meeting with their manager and presented with a so-called 'COVID Roster' putting our members on two shift rosters of 11 hours each, with four days on and four days off.

This was a severe departure from the existing roster and it was required to be implemented within a week.

They were, in effect, told this was happening and anyone who objected 'would have individual meetings with their manager'. Maintenance fitter and Lyttelton branch chair Andy Kelly said: "This was seen as a clear threat, and it backfired."

RMTU branch secretary Heiner Benecke takes up the story.

'I was immediately alerted by the workshop delegates. To me this looked like a classic case of ramming something through just before a holiday weekend with zero consultation, never mind the negotiation



The Union team discussed the roster requirements in one room while management did the same in another. A rep from each side ferried the discussion between the two. Not HPHE as intended but it worked!

the employer was obliged to undertake. The managers would then sail off into their long weekend while our delegates were left to deal with the fallout from members who would have to work throughout."

He called RMTU South Island organiser John Kerr and they started to mobilise a response.

"This was happening just as Omicron was breaking out in the community and we knew we might have to change how we worked to keep the port open," said Benecke. "We also knew it was our members who had kept the place going right through this pandemic, and that their family lives would be impacted most by the proposed roster changes. So it's not something you mess with unless you have to."

"John called the workshop manager who had dropped this bombshell and politely,

but firmly, informed him that employment law and our collective agreement hadn't been suspended just because of COVID. He told him a retraction would have to be published if management wanted to avoid an industrial response that could well lead to the suspension of HPHE. The fact is we have to take our members with us for HPHE to work, and this sort of behaviour by rogue managers can undo months of good work."

Late on the Friday prior to the long weekend a statement was produced by management saying the roster was an "interim proposal" and that any change had to be "consulted on and negotiated".

"That was welcome but the damage had already been done," said Kelly. "The lads were really wound up all weekend and were saying that this showed management's true colours. As far as they were concerned the

"it's clear there is no room for rogue bosses doing their own thing"

◀ HPHE roster project was a dead duck. There was some pretty strong language."

Workshop management wanted to meet with the delegates. Instead, Kelly, Benecke and Kerr went directly to LPC's senior leadership and received a sympathetic and pragmatic response.

It seemed that workshop management had acted without fully informing their superiors.

It was agreed that the general manager - container operations, and workshop management would meet with the whole of the membership in mechanical maintenance.

A meeting was duly convened in the straddle workshop (to ensure social distancing) almost a week after the issue blew up. However, it was almost torpedoed when workshop manager presented a document which implied variations to the recently negotiated collective agreement and was about to be rubber stamped, and said to some members that the RMTU organiser had been invited to ensure things went smoothly.

Kerr said: "I conferred with said manager

and explained this was inaccurate, that it undermined me in front of the members and he was doing nothing to extricate himself from the mess he'd created,"

"The upshot was an impromptu membership meeting and an immediate vote of no confidence in workshop management," said Kelly. "To his credit, the general manager of container ops fronted up and apologised and said he wanted to work with us to discuss measures to counter the Omicron threat. The lads said they'd be happy to talk to him as they recognised the need to discuss possible interim roster changes in the current situation, but there was no way our delegates would sit in a room with their immediate bosses."

What happened next was illuminating:

"The rock solid unity of the members was critical, as was the pragmatic and conciliatory approach by senior management. We agreed to have our delegates and their bosses in separate rooms, with the general manager and myself shuttling between the two. At first I wasn't sure we would get there in just one session, but both sides made

proposals and counter proposals with the meeting going an hour longer than planned until we got agreement," said Benecke. "The result, after a genuine dialogue, was that we agreed we could reduce the risk to an acceptable level by means other than messing with the roster. Mask wearing, staggered breaks and minimising contact would suffice. The members were happy and the port should be able to continue operating. Sadly the damage to the relationship between workshop management and the members has been immense."

"The members stuck together, our delegates were well supported by the branch officials and senior management acted as the honest brokers in this," said Kerr in summing up: "Anyone with experience of HPHE will tell you it's normal to have some hiccups at the beginning, and this was definitely one of those. It will take a while for this to heal over and it's clear there is no room for rogue bosses doing their own thing if we are to make HPHE a success." 🌐

\$10,000 ADB

All members of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union are now covered by a \$1,500 *Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit*, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the Rail and Maritime Transport Union. **Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year.**

To have an AIL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain additional insurance coverage available:

Reply online: ailnz.co.nz/request

Reply by email: **Email your name, address and contact number to pr@ailnz.co.nz**

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 for \$5. A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A (Excellent) for overall Financial Strength (as of 7/20).



iPhone users – open the camera and point it at the code. Android users please download QR & Barcode Scanner from the Play Store

AIL of New Zealand Ltd

☎ 09 827 9900 ✉ info@ailnz.co.nz 🌐 ailnz.co.nz
📍 PO Box 15446, New Lynn, Auckland 0640



UNIONS MAKE WORK SAFE

**Remember the dead,
fight for the living**



28 APRIL
Workers' Memorial Day

Worker's Memorial Day

APRIL 28 is International Workers Memorial Day each year. On WMD we “remember the dead and fight for the living”.

The RMTU was the first union in New Zealand to commemorate the day by organising events to remember those workers who are killed or injured through their work but at the same time we pledged to continue the fight to make sure that such tragedies are not repeated.

The international theme this year is: Unions make work safe.

Union safety effects are well known. Recently a study of 1.7 million Canadian construction sector workers found that unionised workplaces are 31% more safe than non-union companies.

The research found 'the union effect' was associated with 29% fewer critical injury claims and 25% fewer musculoskeletal claims.

Workers' Memorial Day events will be occurring around the motu on April 28, please advise the RMTU national office about your branch's plans to recognise the event. 🌐

WHERE ARE YOU?

**Problems may be looming and we may need to
contact you quickly. Please check we have your
correct address and contact details.**
<http://bit.ly/exmEyL> or 04-499-2066

Shocking and una

Lack of toilets is a real and pressing issue for locomotive engineers as well as

LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEER, Angela (name changed), had to self-medicate with Mirena to control her menstrual bleeding due to a lack of clean and/or adequate toileting facilities along the route she worked.

An RMTU member she dutifully reported the situation to her superiors over two years ago. To date nothing material has been done.

Her cause was taken up recently by an operations competency manager (OCM) who said to general secretary Wayne Butson in an email: "This beggars belief that we have a female employee taking extreme measures to stop her periods due to the lack of toilet or clean facilities in the lower South Island."

He added that the situation is now more urgent as more female staff have joined the work force.

In Angela's words (with some context removed to protect her anonymity):

"Upon finding out that I had secured an LE position and knowing there were no toileting facilities along the route - apart from one at the beginning of our journey - I made the decision to get a Mirena. Today there are still no toilets in our our main crew crossover although they are in the process of

planning them. However, it has been a good 18 months and I have had no toilets there which I could use. At another town I use the public toilet across the road from where we cross over. I have to first isolate and secure the train before I can go though! At another town there's a filthy toilet but we never end up at that end of the yard."

She said another possible stop had a port-a-loo that looks as if it had never been cleaned or maintained.

"There are cleaning supplies there for us to clean it ourselves," she said, "but I refuse to do it. I am not paid to clean toilets and it needs cleaning on a regular basis. Quite frankly I am tired of asking for these things to be done. That's why I took matters into my own hands and, at the expense of my health and womanly nature, just so I didn't have to deal with the no toileting facilities."

RMTU health and safety organiser, Karen Fletcher said: "Access to toilets is a basic legislative workplace right, even for remote workers. It's totally unacceptable that workers are still having to fight for this."

She advised that the local health and safety action team (HSAT) take action by formally recommending (under the Health

and Safety at Work Act) to the KiwiRail Group that they install appropriate amenities including toilets, wash facilities and sanitary disposal for staff to use.

"Local LEs will need to have input on where these toilets should be situated and the recommendation needs to have a date on it for completion. If KiwiRail doesn't meet the recommendation, then HSAT can issue a PIN and call in WorkSafe NZ."

She adds that often the simple suggestion of involving Worksafe NZ and the implied threat of an improvement notice causes prompt action.

"Getting such a notice is not a good look for a company." 

MIRENA

Mirena can be used as a long term and reversible method of contraception for the treatment of excessive menstrual bleeding. It is placed inside the womb where it slowly releases the hormone over a period of five years or until it is removed. Mirena should not be used without seeking medical advice.

Wheel lathe – Wellington

FURTHER to our December 2021 article in *The Transport Worker*, the fight continues for Hyandai Rotem Wellington (HRW) wheel lath operators to have the most basic of workplace amenities, a fixed toilet.

For six years staff have had to make do with a temporary port-a-loo despite repeated requests to their employer to work with the building owner Greater Wellington Regional Council to install a fixed toilet.

Having access to toilet and hand washing facilities are a minimum legal requirement under the Health and Safety at Work General Regulations 2016.

Late last year HRW's health and safety committee collectively issued a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN)

to their employer. Trained H&S reps can issue a PIN if they believe there has been a contravention to the health and safety legislation. A PIN can trigger Worksafe NZ to issue a workplace improvement notice.

The PIN required HRW to provide a fixed toilet fitted to the building and a formal apology to staff within 30 days.


HRW responded by asking Worksafe NZ to review the PIN notice. WorkSafe NZ investigated the issue and discovered the building consent for the wheel lathe building originally required KiwiRail's Tranzscenic to build toilet facilities for compliance.

On January 19, 2022, WorkSafe NZ confirmed (agreed with) the PIN but with changes made. This included the removal

of the port-a-loo and GWRC and KiwiRail to formally agree access for HRW staff to the Tranzscenic building toilet by February 17, 2022.

The wheel lathe operators and RMTU have advocated that a fixed toilet be installed regardless and without further discussions. HRW was able to get the stakeholders to look for a future solution.

Currently HRW, Transdev Wellington and GWRC are in the process of planning to fit a toilet to the wheel lathe building. GWRC have confirmed it is achievable with minimal disruption to the infrastructure. HRW have now been tasked to get a quote for fitting a toilet within an agreed cost.

To be continued . . . 

James McKenzie RMTU/HSR delegate.

acceptable

s line gangs as this story illustrates.



Main pic: Kilometres of rail and not a toilet in sight. (left) Mechanical engineers and wheel lathe operators (l to r) Martin Valais and Paul Harris protest outside their inadequate toilet facilities in Wellington.

PHOTOGRAPH: Biggles Maindonald

'Save Our Trains' campaign

A Save Our Trains Campaign has been launched for long distance passenger rail services in New Zealand - all of which are under severe threat.

The Save our trains campaign was started by members of the public concerned about KiwiRail's announcement in December to pull out of providing same day scheduled passenger services on both islands. The campaign to save, improve and expand the network has the support of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union.

A spokesperson for the campaign, Michael Nicholson, said: "KiwiRail's decision decimates the limited national network we had. It leaves us with disconnected urban services and large parts of the country unserved by rail. It just isn't good enough, especially when the Government talks so much about regional economic development and climate action."

His colleague, Paul Callister, said: "We need to make bold decisions around the future of public transport if we're really serious about making a dent in CO2 emissions. National passenger rail needs to be part of the solution. But it's also about

creating a service that meets the needs of local communities. The first step is to save what we have."

The decision by KiwiRail to convert two of its key services, the Northern Explorer and Coastal Pacific, to multi-day rail tours leaves the country with a disjointed and disconnected passenger rail system. The only regional services remaining are Auckland to Hamilton, Wellington to Palmerston North, and Christchurch to Greymouth.

Just one year ago our three largest cities were connected by rail and it was possible to travel from Auckland to Greymouth by train. Real transport options have been removed from New Zealanders.

Decades of underfunding has limited the development and use of our national passenger rail network to the point of collapse. The state of passenger rail in New Zealand is the worst it has been for more than 100 years and comes at a time when Government has said it is committed to climate action and reducing economic inequality.

National passenger rail transport offers solutions on both fronts. Passenger trains have an important place in our future, but it requires investment and planning from Government.

Passenger rail provides a more sustainable and climate friendly method of transport

Some of the publicity planned by the campaign team.

across the country and between cities.

Passenger rail can invigorate the social and economic life of small communities by making them accessible to remote workers, visitors and tourists.

Trains can bring our diverse country together by connecting people and landscapes across wide distances.

Trains provide an accessible method of point-to-point transport for the elderly and disabled.

Passenger rail connects friends and families for weddings, graduations, holidays, and business for generations.

With commitment and vision, our rebuilt passenger network can do so again.

More people off the road and onto trains means less congestion and safer roads, perhaps most importantly the network can be an important part of our country's climate change action.

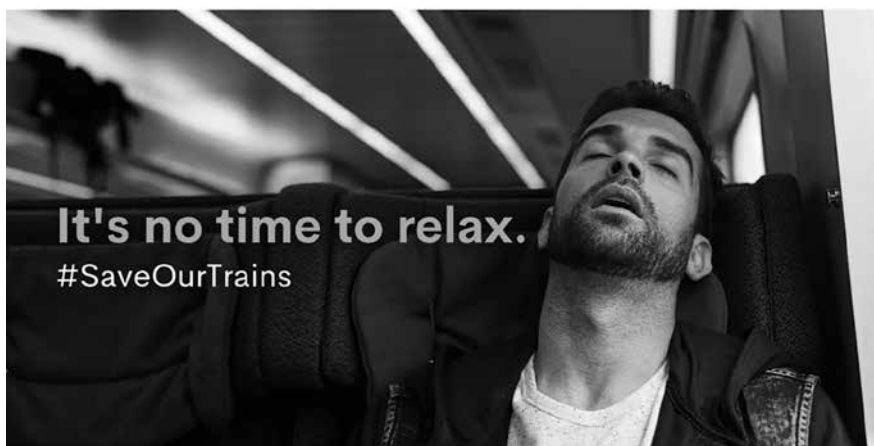
We strongly encourage RMTU members to get involved and join the campaign.

You can help by:

- Signing the petition and collecting signatures at:
www.allrailways.co.nz/petition.html
- Writing to the Minister of Transport, local MPs, regional and local councillors
- Volunteer support and get involved. 

For offers of support and general enquiries, email:

saveourtrains@gmail.com
allrailways.co.nz



The petition reads:

We call on the Government and KiwiRail to commit to maintaining existing intercity passenger rail services. Furthermore, we ask for a comprehensive national strategy for future passenger rail services built around concern for climate action and economic development.

Women power grows on the waterfront

THE RMTU has just recruited four new members at City Depot in Woolston, one of two 'inland ports' owned and operated by Lyttleton Port Company. In doing so we have doubled the female membership in our branch, something we're very happy about.

Our Union has a collective agreement which covers members working as fork hoist operators, container surveyors and repairers and wash operator in the inland ports.

The new members do not fall under the coverage of this collective agreement as they

are office based staff doing a wide range of administrative and operational support work.

One of our first priorities will be to organise these members into the RMTU-LPC Inland Ports Collective Agreement.

Hopefully, we'll be able to do this by way of a variation before the document expires in September this year but if not then the branch will be recommending to members this is a key claim in the bargaining.

Given that City Depot was the focus of an independent review in 2020 which came to some pretty damning conclusions about its culture and identified a lack of diversity as an issue across LPC, the fact these members have chosen to join our Union is significant.

City Depot is however, a prime candidate for High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) work between unions and management that could yield benefits for both the workforce and the shareholder.



Kim Campbell and Stephanie McLaughlin.

Whether we can secure collective agreement coverage for these members will be something of a test of management's commitment to the much improved relationship between the RMTU and LPC.

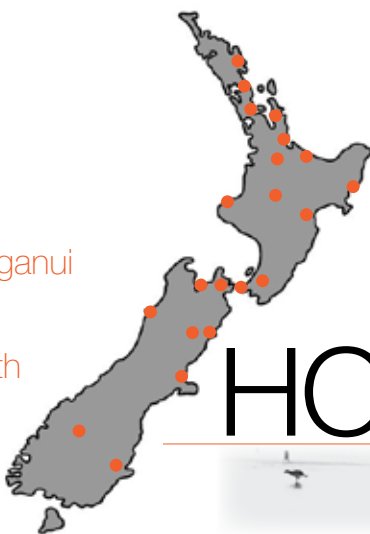
One of the benefits workers can reap from a successful HPHE project is the value their union is recognised by management.

In the meantime, a very warm welcome to Lauren, Steph, Kim and Gabrielle to our Union and our branch. We look forward to seeing you at branch meetings and other events. 🇳🇿



Gabrielle Li at LPC city depot.

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



HOLIDAYS



All current RMTU members are eligible to join after paying a Welfare Trust membership fee. Contact us to find out how.

Phone: 0800-806-444

Website: nzwelfare.co.nz

E-mail: info@nzwelfare.co.nz

Facebook: facebook.com/nzwelfare

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



Stranded in the USA

MIQ foils attempts of Dunedin rail operator to return to Aotearoa

RMTU National women's NMC rep and Dunedin rail operator Rebecca Hauck is stuck in the USA.

She had to fly there when her father became seriously ill and then, due to various Covid19 restrictions and MIQ vagaries she is still there desperately trying to get back to New Zealand.

Sadly, her father died shortly after her arrival, but she needed to stay on a wee while to help her mother come to terms with her loss.

"But I didn't expect it would be this long," she told *The Transport Worker*. "MIQ changes meant I lost one spot after another despite having my flights booked and being fully vaccinated."

In fact she now has sufficient time on her hands to get the booster shot too.

Being at home in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania at such a sad time amidst "an emotional rollercoaster" and apart from friends in New Zealand she has been grateful to spend these recent "special weeks with family".

"I know others around the world were not so lucky and the MIQ lottery has stopped so many people from being with their loved ones in time of need," she said.

However, in a sense, she has an inkling of how it felt for Kiwis trying to return home in similar circumstance as she grappled with MIQ.

Twice she had her reserved places cancelled meaning changing flights and making new MIQ bookings.

"Now I've pushed my flight back to mid-March and have arranged to self-isolate at home in Dunedin," she said. "Only problem now is a flight from Auckland to Dunedin!"

She thought being an essential worker might have made a difference but the Year of the Essential Worker was 2020 - not 2022.

For a while she was really concerned she might lose her job but she has had that worry removed by promises from her boss that no such thing will happen.

Unlike the dreadful things she been



hearing from an ex rail worker living nearby in Pennsylvania who told her when Covid19 first kicked in the company there almost immediately wanted to down size and instituted a campaign of carefully reviewing every aspect of everyone's job. Managers hung about, hovering over workers, watched intently, took copious notes and generally got on everyone's nerves. Eventually workers cracked "just as they hoped would happen" and resigned thus saving the company paying redundancy.

"And the unions here are so fractured and disorganised they didn't - or couldn't - do anything about it," she said. "Such a terrible situation."

She tried visiting a local rail depot to talk to some like-minded folk but couldn't even get in. It was closed up tight to any visitors and the only people they would put up to chat to her from HR.

Meanwhile, her holiday pay and bereavement leave is running out and she's on the hunt for some local work. For now a new family pet puppy is keeping her busy - a Shapoo or Shih Tzu miniature poodle mix - given to her mother in lieu of her loss. It needs a spot of training and exercise and

Rebecca's right there on the spot.

Fortunately she has free board and keep with her mother, her siblings live close by and she has a large family in the vicinity including at least one aunt with a farm - so plenty of company.

And finally a word to her RMTU brothers and sisters: "My KiwiRail whanau - a huge thank you for all your support and for checking in on me and my family during those early morning chats with the night shift crews and phone calls from my workmates. I thank you so much. I'm very blessed to have managers and workmates like you all in my life." 🇳🇿

Auckland AGM

Covid wreaked havoc with the 2021 Auckland branch AGM. As a consequence, after several false starts, we are now holding a postal ballot for the contested officer positions. This will be followed by a Zoom meeting shortly afterwards to announce any changes and to fulfil the RMTU's procedural requirements. There will be a second AGM run later in the year to cover off the 2022 AGM.

NAPIER RAIL

Despite fewer logs trains continue to attract new customers

FOR the KiwiRail freight side of our branch we welcome Rick Lister our new loco engineer just transferred in from Wellington replacing Jeff Van Zoomeren who can now retire with 48 year's service under his belt. Jeff will be missed as he is our depot larrikin and funny man who has spent at least the last 40 years in the Napier depot after transferring up from Dunedin.

Our branch and social club wish Jeff and Wendy all the best going forwards.

On the freight side of it the log market dropped out again resulting in some trains dropping in size rather rapidly.

One train that could have been a casualty was our Napier-Wairoa service as the customer who pays for it sources logs from the Waikarimoana area out the back of Wairoa. He was one of these who had to cut production but instead of cancelling the train he talked another groups (some anti rail) to utilise the train and see what they thought.

So JNL Gisborne took a leap of faith and used the train instead of trucks. End result saw 20 fewer trucks between Gisborne and Napier port on a daily basis and one happy customer who now wants to co share

the daily service with our Wairoa customer! Hmmmm...

Problem now is insufficient wagons to keep everyone happy!

Another issue is staff shortages just like everywhere else in the country but funny enough we never got hit by the Covid19 mandate

in our yard. All members here were fully vaxed prior to the mandate being imposed. However, we really desperately need RCOs so other members can progress onto locomotive training.

So if it's sun, sun, sun, sun tan and heat you're after watch the situations vacant and apply and hopefully become one of the Napier team.

On the Network (infrastructure) side of the branch we haven't been able to attract any new staff for track or structures for last eight to 10 months! Let alone retain what trained staff we have.

What an interesting start to the year it has been in the Bay.

On a positive note we have two H/S reps



The 'famous' Ormondville Viaduct is getting some extensive work done on it from March onwards.

from the Bay being trained in Palmerston North mid February – Blair Parkinson from freight and Harpreet Khalsa from networks.

Work trains have been busy of late discharging rail and sleepers between Dannevirke and Hastings ready for heavy gangs from Palmerston North to do sleeper renewals. And the all famous Ormondville Viaduct is getting some extensive work done on it from March onwards. Once all the timber work is completed the structures' engineers are looking at raising permanent 15 km/h restriction.

Further south work is being undertaken to clear a large slip on the Wairarapa line.

Till next time, think safety for you and your teams. 🇳🇿

NAPIER PORT

New public ownership shows profits being reaped by bosses

NGA whakamihi o te tau, 2021 – a big year for RMTU organisers in light of the number of collective agreements which were up for negotiation. Napier Port being one of them!

We encountered an emotively driven set of talks this time round, not so much driven by the RMTU negotiating team, more so from management, as it was quite clear, the 2020/21 pay increase of 3.3% was a bug bare for the CEO, who endeavoured to seek a variation and offer us 1% as a cash pay-out instead.

Long story short, the vote was unanimous to retain the status quo for the 20/21 pay increase. The NPC went on to make a profit and according to the company's annual report, both the board and CEO

did exceptionally well through the 2019 to 2020 financial year.

It is apparent, that since becoming a public company, the board and CEO are the main beneficiaries of the company's profits. Frankly, I do not give a monkey's about what they earn, it is about equity. To come to a negotiation after making the largest profit yet, given themselves a pat on the back and then offer the RMTU general collective 0% as a starting point was a red rag to a bull!

Management usurping the current negotiation process as pay back for their loss in terms of their seeking a variation to reduce the pay increase in 2021.

In this scribe's view, these negotiation was redemption for us not bowing to their will in 2021 with the reduced pay offer via

their proposed variation – all at the workers expense!

After two years of Covid, a yard that is 30% smaller as a result of the new wharf construction, being essential workers and with ongoing staff shortages, they have certainly set the tone for what will be a rough ride.

A total insult and disregard for the efforts put in by the workers, without so much of a thank you!

As a result, we sought a strike ballot which produced a landslide result with well over 90% of the membership supporting strike action. We believe it was the catalyst needed to get the ball rolling in the right direction for the talks.

Although this negotiation was arduous

◀ in its task, a good result was met just prior to Christmas of 3% for year one, 5% or CPI, whichever is the greater + 2% in year two, 2% or CPI whichever is the greater + 1.5% in year three.

Which ultimately will keep us ahead of inflation in years 2 & 3. Along with other improved outcomes. It is fair to say historically we have been tentative over three year deals, however, the overall package had its benefits, and leant us toward the finalised outcome, including penalty payments when exceeding more than five days continuously, or working more than five days within the working week (Saturday through Friday) for both rostered and none-rostered members.

In using the TW forum, thank you to

the branch negotiating team and Dasha our RMTU organiser for the huge effort to get to where we did, a real battle when starting at zero.

On the drug and alcohol front, the Port company undertook a port wide swabbing operation just before Christmas, for methamphetamine only. It was a disappointing outcome to be advised that many of the swabbed areas, plant, facilities across the whole port were found to be positive. We do not need this shit in the work place! We do not want to be working with people under the influence of and placing yourself and others at risk!

For anyone indulging in illicit drug taking, think about not only the whanau but your work mates. If support is required, get

it! There are work mates who can provide support and find the appropriate people to help. There are many of us who will do what we can to assist.

Consequently, the company will be reviewing the D&A policy early 2022, which this branch will be part of.

The new six wharf project is well ahead of schedule and potentially will be up and running by July 2022.

The new wharf is parallel to the current yard layout in terms of rows, and will pose some challenges initially or until the operation changes to a trucking type of container vessel exchange, scheduled for 2024. A little bit of 'watch this space' from a trial perspective.

I kotahitanga. 🌐

HUTT WORKSHOPS

Bubbles ready for Omicron outbreak

WE start these notes in the hope the ratified MECA has been put into play and the hard-earned wage and allowance rates have been applied.

A few kilometres south of here the multi-party demonstrations/protests/encampment on Parliament Grounds was taking a new turn with crowd-sourced aggressive behaviour being directed towards Police. Perhaps it will be all over by the time you read these notes!

Another issue at this time was the continuing climb of Covid-19 cases with daily numbers exceeding 2000.

I am glad to say that with all the ever-changing restrictions and processes, Hutt (at the time of writing) had continued to hold the line with only one contractor-sourced outbreak which required a very short stand-down of a small group of staff as a precaution – within a framework of common-sense safety and well-being.

We have our site operating as structured 'bubbles' matching our building locations and authorised interactions.

There has been a small group of staff who have opted not to conform to the Company's stand on vaccine mandated roles and their releases have been (sadly) actioned.

Our continuing endeavours have proven to be sound (thus far) and thanks must go to the leadership team which includes the RMTU and HSAT for keeping a tight (but fair and pragmatic) hold on the situation.

The workload remains both heavy and difficult as the continuing worldwide supply-chain interruption issues continue along with some sabre-rattling between NATO, Ukraine and Russia. Costs continue to escalate and this will prevail for some time.

Recruiting new staff continues. However, the process takes so damn long that you wonder if we'll ever fill the available slots.

Other vacancy filling has been held-over for an apparent candidate who is out of the country. If this isn't treated carefully, we may see a PG being considered.

Our first formal LCC (local consultative committee) meeting is scheduled for March which should ensure the year past is reviewed and the year ahead set-out with regard to issues of common interest. We have reduced the number of formal HPHE projects running concurrently to three to ensure governance remains effective and productive.

It was pleasing to read in another forum that progress has been made with Lyttelton Port Company to engage under the auspices of HPHE. Thanks must go to John Kerr for pushing this barrow with the enthusiasm we expect from a regional organisers.

Until next time, take care and stay safe. 🌐

WELLINGTON RAIL

True to predictions rostering became a major issue over the summer

A Sizzling start to the year in the capital and at Transdev it has been a flying start to the new year for many delegates where a number of projects are on the go, most to do with rosters.

A debrief of a hurriedly introduced

disruption timetable following slips on the Kapiti line showed that interfacing it with a normal staff roster and high pre-Christmas passenger loading did not really work. A post-mortem of the Christmas roster has resulted in a number of steps being taken

to ensure there will be a vast improvement in the future.

A number of key management positions within TDW are vacant at the time of writing. Branch officers and delegates will be working hard to ensure that hard won ▶

agreements carry on into the future.

Roster delegates have also been involved in the preparation of a Covid/Omicron roster and timetable should it be necessary to reduce service levels at short notice. At the same time as all of this there is work going on creating a master roster which should include the new RoM requirements.

There were an unusual number of pay queries resulting from the Christmas-New Year rosters.

A number of interpretations were different from past years. The vagaries of the Holidays Act apparently mean there can be several ways of reading various sections. It is likely staff will be less inclined to work statutory holidays in the future!

Speaking of the Holidays Act, there has been no word on when the next instalment of the holiday pay remediation will be paid.

'We want to make sure it is right before we pay' has been the company line. Retired and resigned staff have not received the first instalment to date.

We keenly wait for a promised new payroll system to be introduced this year.

The vaccine mandate has meant that a small number of our colleagues have opted out of our work place.

Our colleagues at Hyundai-Rotem are expecting some new faces in management with the depot manager and the health and safety manager both having moved on.

It was great that we were able to hold a branch AGM, although a little disappointing to see a small turnout from greater KiwiRail and Toll. Our greatest strength is our size and unity.

The KiwiRail MECA negotiation report back meetings have been held and as these

notes are being prepared, the results of the ratification ballot are expected to be known.

Having achieved a provisional settlement without having to resort to a strongly supported strike was a good win.

For Transdev and Hyundai-Rotem members it is time to think about remits for the MECA which expires in a few months.

Remits which are deeply felt and well supported are the ones most likely to reach the bargaining table.

To our new members - WELCOME. The many benefits of being a member of the RMTU are written in the MECA. It is well worth while taking the time to read so that you know your full entitlements. These have been achieved over many years and through the unity and strength of our Union membership. 🇳🇿

MARLBOROUGH PORT

Mike Adams leads six year battle to correct pay misalignment



Ken Boese's colourful character lives on in the linesmen but on Long Arm 2. Ken started in the watch house in 1972, retired in 2013 then came back to work as a casual until he passed away last September.

A year ago we highlighted the history and progress of our pay review. I am happy to report that 2021 finally saw out the end of that long saga with both current and former staff having had their pay corrected to align with the Holidays Act and our CEA.

All credit for this six year battle goes to our steadfast member, port caretaker Mike Adams who moonlights as a most excellent Holidays Act guru. Mike identified

problems, researched legislation and articulated solid reasoning for reparation, both clearly and logically. With his doggedness and unwavering belief to do what was right, material payouts were credited to a number of our members.

The scope of the review was for the whole payroll, so non-members also benefited from Mike's mahi. Let it be said, Union drive and persistence raises the standard for all!

On a sad note for 2021, we lost two of our staunch union brothers, Ken Boese and Vince Cowie. Our aroha extends to their wives and families with their presence living on at the port (see photos).

The new year kicked off extremely busily for our marinas' staff with more Kiwis getting into recreational boating this summer. Our branch has awesome members who have been under the pump on that front. They have incredible boat-

ing knowledge and the skill sets to deal with a demanding public. The Waikawa Marina extension continues on in their background with Covid impacting on its timelines.

The port is also gearing up for the KR Irex project. We should see the start of enabling works this year.

Burning issues for 2022 include:

- * The ongoing impact of our port Covid policy requiring all staff to be vaccinated; in-house thrice weekly saliva testing; boosters; safe distancing and mask wearing in situations where it is difficult to comply; and management's desire to track staff with an app to "keep us safe". The Covid new normal definition keeps expanding and perhaps we need to start a conversation on how all these demands affect workers.



Vince Cowie, who passed away in November, was passionate about the environment and heavily involved in the early development of the Kaipupu Wildlife Sanctuary. A seat with a plaque dedicated to him was erected in the Sanctuary and overlooks the Port.

- Staff recruitment issues. It seems harder these days to recruit new workers for shift work, call outs and line duties. We seem to be losing pay relatively to outside trades.

- Our port-wide fatigue management policy is still to be developed.

Plenty and more for our branch to sink its teeth into this year. 🌐

WEST COAST RAIL

Hopeful that impending border openings will provide a local stimulus

AS your scribe writes this we are bracing ourselves for a predicted bout of bad weather with all its attendant disruption. This after a relatively good summer, both in terms of the weather and the lack of disruption to our daily lives by the pandemic. It appears that both COVID and the weather are about to turn nasty and by the time you read this you may well be aware of yet more heroics performed by our track gangs keeping the line open and an exponential increase in daily cases as a result of Omicron.

It was great to see the Tranz Alpine return to service, albeit just at the week-ends, and we are hopeful that this will be extended as the year unfolds. With the much heralded border opening there should be some recovery of the overseas tourist market. In the meantime KiwiRail are offering some good prices to locals and

the service appears as popular as ever. Our branch is less impressed with the decision by KiwiRail to scrap the Coastal Pacific and the Overlander. At a time when passenger rail is growing around the world it seems short sighted in the extreme to cut inter-city services, in our view the opposite should be happening.

At the end of last year we had a very well attended MECA report back meeting where we had an opportunity to hear the views of our bargaining team representatives on the decision to withdraw notice of industrial action and to settle the pay talks. There is some controversy about this, although the ratification ballot will tell us just how much. What was good was that people turned up, weren't backward in coming forward about their views and, whilst some opinions were forcefully and strongly expressed, remained relatively civil throughout. By the time you

read this you will know the result anyway.

KiwiRail moved to mandating vaccination for all staff before Christmas and we have a handful of members who are classed as 'vaccine hesitant'. KiwiRail has provided their thinking behind the mandate and an extension to the time for people to get their jabs but remains adamant that staff need to be vaccinated. The RMTU has offered support and representation for individuals, notwithstanding union policy is to encourage vaccination, but is bound by the law. It's a delicate matter and one that may well be overtaken by events as Omicron spreads rapidly through our community.

Our branch was saddened to receive the resignation of Ron Nijssen as our secretary early in the new year. Ron had a bout of ill-health and this caused him to think about his priorities. The overwhelming response from the membership was appreciation

of the work he has put in over the years as well as acceptance that there are times when one has to put oneself first. Ron has spent the best part of a decade as branch secretary and has done an immense amount of work for our branch and its members. He has steered many of his brothers and

sisters through complicated disciplinary cases; handled more than a few collective issues – ranging from contracting out to regulator investigation of incidents; taken the time and trouble to develop his skills and knowledge through CTU courses; represented his branch at RMTU conference;

and kept smiling through all of it.

You leave a very large pair of safety boots for your successor to fill Ron, but we know that you will still be around to offer sage advice if needed.

Thanks brother. 🌐

CANTERBURY RAIL

Cancelling same day passenger trains a retrograde step

LET'S start with the (partial) good news: at the time of writing the TranzAlpine is back on track! The service is running under the red traffic light setting on Friday-Monday exclusive and there is some attractive pricing aimed at local customers. Our members who work this service are happy to be back at work after languishing in limbo for months post the arrival of the Delta variant of COVID.

Less positive is KiwiRail's announcement that they want to end same day intercity services between Picton and Christchurch (and Auckland and Wellington) and replace these with multi-day rail cruises. This sounds like the death knell for New Zealand's 100 year old national passenger rail network.

It is good to see the RMTU backing a campaign to 'Save Our Trains' (see page 14). At a time when we are facing climate system breakdown and an urgent need to decarbonise our economy the decision to run down inter-city passenger trains beggars belief. The opposite should be happening: massive investment in upgrading the network and developing fast, frequent, reliable passenger services should be a priority. It makes social, environmental and economic sense.

Our branch had its traditional joint meeting with the Lyttelton Port branch before Christmas. Normally an end of year celebration, the meeting was necessarily 'hi-jacked' by our RMTU KiwiRail MECA bargaining team representatives, to allow

them to report back on the settlement which led to the withdrawal of strike notices as we approached Christmas. The report back was comprehensive and members were generally positive about the steps taken.

This was not wholly the case during an earlier report back meeting at Middleton operations, where some members expressed their disappointment with the settlement and the manner in which the bargaining team had conducted itself.

Whether the mood in this latter meeting is reflective of wider membership is subject to the ratification ballot which, at the time of writing, is yet to reach its conclusion. By the time you are reading these branch notes we will know the result and whether we have a settled a collective agreement or whether we're heading back to the table and perhaps the picket line.

The discussions around the KiwiRail wage round were fuelled (pun intended) by news of the increase in the rate of inflation to almost 6% for the year ending December 2021. Looking at the forecasts for inflation our branch does wonder about the plight of non-unionised workers who lack the collective strength to negotiate their wages.

We took the opportunity during our joint Canterbury Rail and Lyttelton port branch meeting to wish Eric Bryant all the best for his retirement. RMTU life member and former organiser Paul Corliss was on hand to mark the occasion and also the

retirement of two of our port branch veteran members. We wish all of you the very best for a long, healthy and happy retirement.

Most of our members are classed as essential workers and those employed by both KiwiRail and Toll have been subject to employer mandated vaccination requirements for COVID19. We have had a few members in our branch who have been classed as 'vaccine hesitant' by KiwiRail. They are relatively few, about a dozen across the branch, and all have been offered representation and support by the RMTU bearing in mind our Union's policy is to encourage vaccination.

Of course, by the time you read this we could well be experiencing thousands of new cases per day as this is being written on the eve of a predicated exponential growth in infections as the Omicron variant is now in our community. If this is the case the debate around vaccination and booster shots may well be academic.

Many of our network services members participated in the block of line and associated work in Auckland over the Christmas period, finishing off an already busy year with some very intense work on the rail network in our largest city. Well done to you all, this work is critical in keeping the system running, and the sacrifice of time not spent with family at this time of year further underlines the essential worker status you all have. 🌐

LYTTELTON PORT

Union sorry to see departure of current CEO

IN the last issue of *The Transport Worker* our branch noted the failure of High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) in KiwiRail to survive the transition to a

new CEO and identified the need to embed HPHE, providing demonstrable benefits to our members, if such an event occurred at our port.

The ink was barely dry on the charter we signed with LPC when news broke of the resignation of our CEO to take up a position at Ports of Auckland.

It follows that if HPHE is not to be stillborn at LPC there is going to have to be some very good work done in a short time.

That said, there are a couple of significant pieces of work already underway.

The fatigue management project has acquired some momentum as had a project to look at the roster in the plant maintenance workshop. Unfortunately the latter has been derailed by an extreme case of incompetence whereby workshop management dropped a 'COVID19 response roster' on members on the Friday afternoon going into Waitangi weekend. There was no acknowledgement of the requirement to negotiate change and the so-called 'proposal' was presented as a fait accompli.

The upshot was all our delegates have withdrawn from the roster project and a vote of no confidence in workshop management was passed by members.

HPHE training is being rolled out across the port and we are hopeful other projects will go more smoothly and result in 'quick wins'.

The branch was pleased to have the opportunity to speak with the chair of the board about the change of CEO and to make a plea for continuity. This was significant as under the previous board such a conversation would never have taken place.

As these notes are drafted the Omicron variant of COVID has arrived on our shores and we are on the cusp of a predicted exponential increase in daily cases, to a level beyond those we have experienced to date.


As frontline border workers, most of our members are covered by the government's vaccine mandate and the outgoing CEO extended this to cover all staff late last year. This created some angst, as there were around a score of staff who were either vaccine 'hesitant' or 'resistant'. Some of these have had the vaccination, some have left LPC, others are still embroiled in a fight over the issue. All those who were RMTU members were offered representation and support and some took up the offer. As a branch we abide by our Union's policy to the letter. The overwhelming mood amongst the members is supportive of vaccination.

At the end of the year we had our now traditional joint meeting with the Canterbury Rail branch. This is usually a festive, celebratory occasion but in the unusual times we live in this aspect was overshadowed by COVID and the settlement of the KiwiRail wage round. Understandably the rail membership wanted to use the bulk of the meeting time to discuss the settlement and some of our members stuck around to hear the detail. Very interesting it was too. The contrast between our sectors is stark with the strength of having largely one union and a national agreement in rail throwing the disunity in the port industry into sharp relief.

We did use the opportunity to say farewell to two long serving members, Ray Spain and Bobby Murray, who have begun a well deserved retirement. Life member Paul

Corliss came along to present these veterans with their certificates and told a few tales of their time on the waterfront. This was hugely informative and demonstrated the responsibility we all have as members to fight to keep the benefits our predecessors struggled for.

A positive initiative has been the recruitment of some office based staff at City Depot into our union. These are all women and their recruitment has, at one stroke, increased the diversity of our branch considerably. Given the sobering review into the culture at City Depot we will be working hard to ensure these members are well looked after, starting with a bid to get their roles under the coverage of our collective agreement.

The increase in the rate of inflation has focused members' minds on the value of our wage packets, particularly as we are in the forefront of the struggle to maintain supply chains in the pandemic. The inland ports members' collective agreement is up for renewal this year and our larger 'waterfront' agreement in 2023. This year we will see if the government delivers on promises to reset the wage fixing mechanism in New Zealand through Fair Pay Agreements. Given all wage systems are built from the bottom up, we will be watching developments carefully. 



TIMARU RAIL

Twin pressures of Omicron and inflation making life difficult

HERE in Timaru we are looking forward to the KiwiRail MECA ratification ballot result. Our branch held a well attended MECA report back meeting with representatives of the RMTU bargaining team before Christmas at which some members expressed their views very passionately. The focus of their ire appeared to be the way they heard about the bargaining team's decision to withdraw the strike notices for 16-17 December; that they were balloted for industrial action but not the withdrawal of it; and the fact the settlement reached was not fully backdated to expiry of the collective agreement. There

was also some criticism of the ratification process.

The representatives went through each concern in turn and explained the reasons behind what happened in the case of the issues particular to this bargaining round and nature of the ratification ballot which has been in place since the formation of the RMTU. As you read this issue of *The Transport Worker* the ballot results from the MECA ratification will be known and we will have either concluded bargaining and have a settled collective agreement in place through to 2023 or be dealing with the fallout of a rejected settlement.

Whatever the result, democracy will have been the winner, as our bargaining team representatives pointed out: we all have a right to vote.

Like all RMTU members, and all New Zealanders, our branch is facing the prospect of a serious outbreak of the COVID19 Omicron variant as these notes are written. According to the predictions you may well be reading this as daily new case numbers reach the thousands with all the associated pressure on our health system and supply chains. Furthermore annual price inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), is nudging 6%, largely due to increas-

es in fuel prices and the costs associated with housing.

Regardless of whether the KiwiRail MECA is settled or not, the twin pressures of the Omicron outbreak and economic situation will make life very difficult for all of us. Over four fifths of workers in our country lack any ability to collectively bargain as they are not in unions. Many of those who will be keeping the country going such as supermarket workers and delivery drivers are not in the position that unionised health workers, wharfies and rail workers are. We at least have the ability to use our industrial strength to try and preserve the purchasing power of our wages.

COVID has proved a challenge for another reason apart from its impact on public health and the supply chain. Some

members have chosen not to abide by KiwiRail's mandate to be vaccinated and are now facing the prospect of losing their livelihoods. We know of only one individual in this branch who has taken this stance but hear of some heated debate in our neighbouring branches where 'vaccine hesitancy' is more widespread. To say this has the potential to divide lunchrooms is no exaggeration. Once again, by the time you read this events will have moved on and if COVID is endemic in our community this may lead people to adopt different views to those they currently hold.

Over in the operations depot we welcome Xavier Johansen to our Timaru Rail team. Xavier is a Southland lad who has just finished shunting school.

And on the question of shunting we

continue to deal with problems with our ageing shunt locos. We're awaiting an Arataki controlled DSG from Christchurch that has apparently been allocated to us. Of course, our RCOs will need training, not to mention the question marks over the fitness of this system.

In the meantime your delegates are doing a great deal of work behind the scenes supporting and representing members on the myriad of routine and not so routine issues that keep cropping up. Regardless of the pandemic and wage talks, people still get into trouble and need support and bosses still need to be made to follow due process, so spare a thought for your branch officials and, to coin a phrase, practise a little kindness. 🇳🇿

TIMARU PORT

Pleased to have secured a positive wage increase

HERE at Timaru Port we ended the year by concluding the negotiation of the two collective agreements covering our branch members. Our attempt to secure a multi-employer collective agreement (MECA) that would have brought Prime Port and Quality Marshalling into one document proved too difficult in the face of strong employer resistance. That's the bad news.

The good news is that we did manage to secure better wage increases than were initially on the table and that provides some protection against cost of living increases. A big thank you to our branch officials who did an immense amount of work behind the scenes.

Many of our veteran members remember the days when inflation was in double digits, with annual percentage increases in

New Zealand nudging 19% in 1987. For our younger members, the current annual rate of 5.9%, largely caused by increases in fuel prices and housing costs, is the highest they have experienced in their working lives. A key point is this rate of increase is not being driven by rising wages. Our members are fortunate in that whilst we lacked the industrial strength to secure a MECA, we did have the power to extract better offers on wages from our employers. Most workers in our country lack this strength and are facing very bleak prospects.

To get increases that blunted the impact of the rising prices at the petrol pump or the cost of housing we had to issue a series of strike notices to both our employers and attend a mediation run by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. This at a time when our employers are

profitable and the national supply chain is under immense strain due to global impact of COVID19. That essential workers have to threaten to strike in order to simply tread water in face of rising prices demonstrates something is fundamentally wrong with our wage fixing mechanism. Time for the government to dust off those Fair Pay Agreement plans?

We said farewell to two of our long serving members over the last few weeks. Roy Hislop left Prime Port to go into business by himself and Andy Donahue left QM to try his hand elsewhere. Both were very strong supporters of the RMTU and loyal and valued members. We wish you all the very best for the future brothers.

Until next time, stay safe and healthy! 🇳🇿

OTAGO PORT

As inflation rises calls increase for a national wage fixing mechanism

THESE notes are being written as the COVID Omicron outbreak is just beginning. At the time of writing we're hovering around 100 new cases per day, although the predictions are that could change very quickly. Some are saying we could have thousands of daily

new infections within a couple of weeks. COVID is certainly the issue in the forefront of people's minds.

As frontline essential workers we're veterans of what is required of us, and those of us who are classed as border workers have just been mandated to get our booster

shots. We have had one member who was not vaccinated leave employment with Port Otago but the rest of us are fully vaxxed.

Management is working on us to remain in discreet work bubbles, which is all well and good while we are at work, but something of a farce when one considers

◀ we do have lives outside of our jobs and we do socialise.

The relationship with Port Otago management remains difficult. Petty authoritarian edicts such as demanding we remove RMTU branded apparel achieves absolutely nothing other than antagonisation of the membership. We're waiting for a member wearing an RMTU branded mask to be instructed to remove it. Apparently the security team are being instructed to require staff and visitors to replace cloth masks with replaceable 'medical grade' masks. One can't help think that situations like this brings out the best and worst in people, some of the worst being the exercise of power for the sake of it and to no good end.

We've also been told that people who contract COVID who don't have any sick leave to draw on won't be paid. One assumes an option would be to use annual

leave if there is any but the message being sent is punitive and counter productive from a public health perspective.

Anyway, the branch has not given up and shouted all members a mask, lunch box and pens. We're waiting to be told we can't use our lunchboxes!


Looking at the bigger picture, the port remains busy, despite advocacy in some quarters that shipping lines bypass so called smaller ports. The supply chain crisis, which is part of the reason the cost of living is accelerating, demonstrates the need to view ports as national infrastructure and plan accordingly. More coastal shipping, and an integrated transport policy with a national approach to ports would alleviate much of the pressure.

The increase in inflation has demonstrated the need for a national wage fixing mechanism, perhaps the government will

make a priority of fair pay agreements? One may well be required on the waterfront where the fracturing of labour through contracting out and multiple unions means there are definite winners and losers. With rising inflation this is becoming a more pressing issue.

Our collective agreement, one of the few remaining multi union documents on the waterfront, is up for renegotiation this year, although it does not expire until July 8, by which time the world could look a very different place.

As unionised workers we are in a much better position to negotiate wage increases that maintain our purchasing power and this will doubtless be the focus of discussions this year.

Until next time, stay safe and healthy, and stay RMTU! 

OTAGO RAIL

Heralding the return of Hillside as the 'Jewel in the crown'

HERE in Otago we're eagerly awaiting the result of the MECA ratification ballot. Before Christmas we had a chance to hear a report back and ask questions from representatives of the RMTU bargaining team at a well-attended stop work meeting. There were relatively few questions which may mean most people had made up their minds on the merits of the deal, or perhaps the explanation from our reps was so good clarification wasn't needed. However, it was good for members to have the opportunity to meet and by the time you're reading this we will know the result of the vote.

Increases in the cost of living have certainly made people think carefully about wage rises. For some of our members the current rate of inflation is the highest it has been in their working lives, and the fact that as unionised workers we have the power to negotiate with our employer, unlike many non-unionised workers, is not lost on us.

We look at all the workers who don't have our bargaining power, supermarket workers for example, and it soon becomes apparent that some form of national wage setting mechanism is necessary. Let's see if this year is the year the government deliver on the much heralded 'fair pay agreements'.

COVID19 is a big issue in our branch. Apparently of those who responded to KiwiRail's survey about mandating vaccination, roughly 50% in Dunedin were against mandatory jabs. This is in contrast to the national average of around 75% in favour. The result of that has been a significant minority, in double figures, of members who have, at the time of writing, been classed as 'vaccine hesitant' – ie they haven't had a jab.

Zero Harm convened a meeting in January and outlined the thinking behind the mandate. Whether it convinced the unvaccinated to change their positions was unclear, although by the time you read this people may be pre-occupied with the impact of Omicron and mandates may have become a secondary issue.

Good on our branch chair and South Island NMC rail rep for attending the meeting however. The question is certainly divisive and some people have very strong feelings so it was good to have our senior elected officials in attendance.

Our branch lost two of its stalwarts over the summer. Former RMTU national president and life member Jim Kelly passed away before Christmas. His funeral was attended by many in our Union's whanau and from the wider labour movement, demonstrating

the high regard in which he was held. Jim retired shortly after he was redeployed from Hillside to Cumberland St in 2012 and had been unwell for some time but always took a keen interest in our Union's work and the wider political scene in New Zealand. He is a great loss and is deeply mourned by our branch. Many of the benefits we enjoy as members we owe to the men and women of Jim's generation and their unrelenting commitment to the struggle for working people.

Our members at Dunedin Railways, and elsewhere in the New Zealand Rail fraternity also mourned the unexpected death of LE Mike Lynch just after Christmas. Mike was a well known figure and a railway man through and through. He had a colourful career but always spoke out for the disadvantaged. In 2019 when our Union concluded a landmark wage deal with Dunedin Railways delivering the living wage to the less well off, it was Mike who was most vocal in its support. As one of the better paid workers this demonstrated his selflessness, as he was prepared to forego a bigger wage hike so his fellow members could achieve decent pay. Mike fought hard alongside his comrades to save Dunedin Rail and when the company started to run

excursions as we emerged from lockdown he took on casual employment to assist it to do so. The funeral, held at Ferrymead Heritage Park in Christchurch, was very well attended.

Last year also saw the retirement of Graham Irvine, a staunch member of our network services membership, after four decades plus on the job. Graham finished up on the bargaining team was the MECA talks as he won election to the industrial council mid year. Alas his health meant he could not continue to work and so he took retirement. Thanks for all the work you did for members Graham, and now you're not subject to the demands of work we trust your health will improve and we wish you

a long and happy retirement.

Our national women's rep Rebecca Hauck is, at the time of writing, still in Pennsylvania (see story page 18). Rebecca had to return to the family home last year as her father was very ill and she subsequently lost him. One of the impacts of COVID is she is still there! We're all thinking of you Rebecca and looking forward to your return.

Over at Hillside the development continues. This is very much a good news story and any challenges and problems we encounter are nice ones to have. They are certainly better than those we wrestled with back in the dark days of 2012 when Hillside came within a whisker of being closed. That said there does appear to have been some

slippage in anticipated progress to date. We look forward to the day when Hillside returns to its rightful place as the jewel in the crown of New Zealand manufacturing.

Our operations members are dealing with some challenges. Difficulty in recruiting has put pressure on the roster and we are still arguing with management over a proposal to, in our view disestablish a position in Balclutha and to compel members to go and work down there. At this stage there is something of a stand off but we are optimistic the matter can be resolved before too long.

Until next time, look after one another and stay safe and healthy! 🌐



SOUTHLAND RAIL

Significant shortage of LEs needs addressing

WE'VE had a busy time of it here in the deep south over the last three months or so. As well as the usual pre-Christmas peak with all that entails, particularly moving milk and coal, there have been a number of other challenges the branch has faced. Many of these are common to everyone working in our industries, and, in the case of COVID 19, even the whole of New Zealand.

As far as purely local matters go we're somewhat light on our locomotive engineer establishment and this is having an impact. Given the time it takes to train LEs we really do need a more pro-active approach from management or else these shortages will never go away. Members are also somewhat sceptical of managers' professed 'open door' policy when their presence is somewhat lacking.

Before Christmas representatives of the RMTU bargaining team reported back on the MECA settlement and the ratification voting process. It was a very well attended meeting, probably the best attended RMTU meeting we have had in Invercargill

in recent years, which says something in itself. There were plenty of questions and some people clearly have strong views they wanted to express. That said, the views expressed were not all one sided so there was a healthy debate. As this is written the ratification process is underway and by the time these notes are published the result will be known.

Whatever the result of the MECA ballot one thing appears clear, the inflation figures that came out in September were not a one off and the cost of living is increasing at a rate that is greater than it has been for the last thirty years.

As unionised workers we are in a much better position to secure wage increases to offset inflation than the unorganised. The media is full of stories of those on individual employment agreements that have no bargaining power and who are facing a bleak future.

The other big issue in our branch is KiwiRail's vaccine mandate. A number of members feel so strongly about this they have engaged a lawyer and at this stage

remain unvaccinated. Our branch is aware that RMTU policy is to encourage vaccination but also to represent members who do not wish, or cannot, be vaccinated. Feelings are certainly running hot over this issue although rapid spread of the Omicron variant of COVID means that the matter is no longer academic and this may shift the debate onto ground we have hitherto not experienced.

As your scribe writes this we are at the beginning of the Omicron outbreak. By the time you read this the world may look a very different place, that's how fast events are unfolding.

We bade our branch chair Adam Bedgood farewell before Christmas. Adam had been with rail for over a decade, working his way from being a rail operator to an LE. He was a strong supporter of our Union and put in a great deal of work on behalf of the branch.

Thanks Adam for your efforts over the years. We all respect the decision you have made and wish you all the very best for the future. 🌐

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO KEEP DUNEDIN RAIL MOVING

The Dunedin City Council needs to use innovative thinking to keep Dunedin Railways rolling, including the iconic tourist attraction of the Taieri Gorge Railway. No to mothballing

Sign the petition at: facebook.com/dunedinrail



JAMES KELLY

JIM KELLY, “MrHillside”, was a passionate, determined leader in the fight to keep the South Dunedin’s Hillside railway workshop open. It was a battle with great highs and searing lows: from new work to the decision in 2012 to close down altogether - a decision that near broke Jim’s heart.

However, before his death in Dunedin on December 3 last year, aged 74, Jim was able to raise a glass to toast the Government’s decision to revive his beloved Hillside.

While ill-health kept Jim away from the formalities he was not forgotten with almost every speaker referencing his staunch commitment.

Ironically for such a proud Scotsman, Jim was born in London on October 18, 1947, although his parents James and Margaret Kelly took him back home to Glasgow three weeks later.

Schooled in Govan, home of the Rangers football team he followed for decades, and Drumchapel, Jim left Knightswood High School in the city’s west to start an apprenticeship as a motor mechanic working on Minis.

He later worked for a bus firm and for British Rail before he and wife Liz, who he married on December 30, 1967, made the decision to migrate to New Zealand in 1982 with daughter Lisa and son Steven.

Jim grew up steeped in unionism and left-wing politics thanks to the influence of his communist crane-driving father, and rather than singing hymns in church on Sundays as a child, like his peers, he instead attended the Socialist Sunday Service singing The Red Flag.

The Kelly family’s decision to move to the other side of the world was down to the policies of Conservative prime minister Margaret Thatcher and the fact his parents, a brother and sister had already made the same decision and were living in Dunedin.

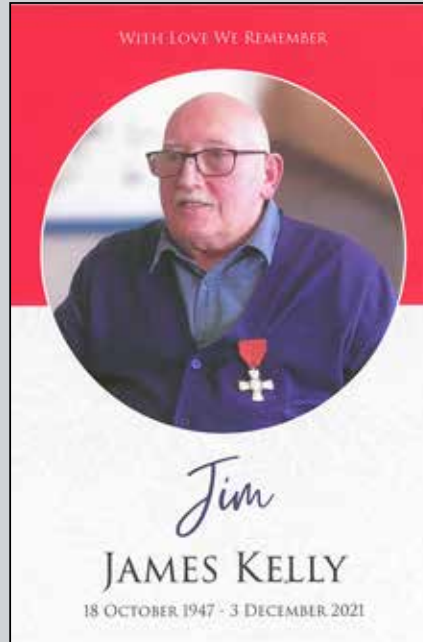
Shortly after arrival he landed a job at the Hillside railway workshops as a fitter and turner.

In due course he was asked to take the place of unwell then Hillside Railway Trades Association delegate Stan Forbes and thus began a lifetime commitment to bettering the working conditions for his colleagues and preserving the important role the railway workshops played in the South Dunedin community.

Like many a Scot before he found his way into the Caversham Football Club as well as playing masters’ grade football and coaching senior sides.

After various union mergers, Jim wound up president of the Combined Union of Railway Employees, and then inaugural president of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, which he steered through its first 21 years of existence.

Although he developed a well-earned reputation as a strong leader, he was far from being a militant: in his time at Hillside he



only once led the workforce out on strike.

That was not to say rail management got a smooth ride from him. He never shied away from a good argument, particularly when he was certain he was correct.

Union business meant he was often away from home as his voice became an influential one, nationally and internationally, especially on the issue of worker safety.

The need for every workplace to be a safe workplace was fundamental, and in 2002 he added his influence to support a campaign for a memorial to be built at the Market Reserve to remember Dunedinites who had been killed at work.

These were turbulent times for rail workers and railways both, as thousands of people across New Zealand lost their jobs through privatisation and modernisation.

Hillside was highly vulnerable where a workforce which once numbered more than 1000 was slowly whittled away to several hundred, and then as low as a few dozen as its core construction and then maintenance work was gradually contracted off.

Not one to step back from a scrap, Jim was a tireless ambassador for Hillside and the quality of his colleagues’ workmanship.

However, while continual downgrading of the workshops was deeply depressing, it drove Jim’s determination to reverse what he consistently argued were foolish short-sighted decisions.

In 2012 it seemed that battle had been lost after KiwiRail’s decision to close the workshop. Jim fought back by becoming become more involved in the Labour Party.

He served as chairman of the local electorate committee and parlayed that position to help influence the party’s position on the importance of buying New Zealand-made, engineering and railways in general but Hillside in particular.

Jim was made a life member of the party.

Eventually Hillside was saved, but by then he had shunted his wagon to Wakari School for two years as a caretaker and while relishing still being useful and loving the social contact, indifferent health meant he finally had to retire.

No longer on the frontline didn’t mean he had lost interest in politics, far from it. He avidly watched Parliament TV and regularly dispensed his collected wisdom to the many activists who came to call.

Although gone from Hillside Jim was far from forgotten and last year he was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the union movement.

The award citation noted it was made to recognise his advocacy for fair and equitable treatment of workers. For a man who fought so long and so loudly for workers’ rights, that summed up what he considered to have been his life’s work.

-Mike Houlahan, Otago Daily Times