

THE

JUNE 2017

# TRANSPORT WORKER

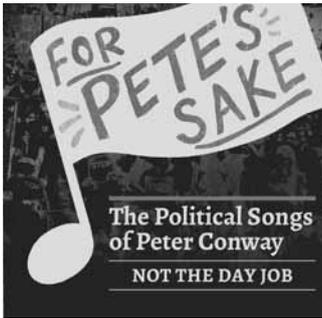
The journal of the RMTU – NZ's largest specialist transport union



## Tangiwai: remembering the drivers



## 5 FOR PETE'S SAKE



A new CD celebrating Peter Conway's musical talents and remembering his countless qualities.

## 13 TANGIWAI MEMORIAL



Sixty-four years after the Tangiwai tragedy the railwaymen are honoured for bravery.

## 32 SOLIDARITY



RMTU members show their solidarity with the struggles pressing other unionists by turning out at pickets and demonstrations.

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** The memorial for locomotive engineer first class Charles Parker and locomotive fireman Lance Redman who died at Tangiwai on Dec 24, 1953. (see page 13 to 15).

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PHOTOGRAPH: Darin Campbell

**Wayne Butson**  
General secretary  
RMTU

## A race to the bottom

**W**ELCOME to issue two of our premier publication. This is a busy issue and it reflects what is occurring within our membership including a fulsome report on Workers' Memorial Day events. (see story page 18) It is gratifying to see that we have a steady increase in the locations which include this event into their branch calendars. A new memorial was unveiled in Kawerau while another in Palmerston North was dedicated to ex-CTO president Helen Kelly. It is essential we remember those who have died at work.

I was privileged to be invited to be a judge again in the New Zealand Safeguard Awards which recognises achievements in health and safety in workplaces. It was very gratifying to see so many nominations for awards coming from work associated with our Union. A judges commendation was made by the panel in connection with our Red Card campaign in the South Island on the Dc class locomotives and its connection to whole body vibration (see story page 10). This Union is recognised as a leader in workplace H&S and we punch way above our weight of being New Zealand's 11th largest affiliated union to the NZCTU.

We are equally privileged to have Karen Fletcher as our H&S organiser. Her passion, determination and experience in this area is paying dividends with our employers and members alike. Karen is ably supported by Hazel Armstrong who was a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Safeguard Awards and is recognised as a leading H&S campaigner and advocate.

What is not pleasing at the moment are the attacks against public transport workers. Almost all of these attacks are related to the Public Transport Operating Model. It is alleged that the model will grow public transport patronage with less reliance on subsidy. It was developed with two overarching objectives:

- to grow the commerciality of public transport services and create incentives for services to become fully commercial; and
- to grow confidence that services are priced efficiently and there is access to public transport markets for competitors.

The model is a planning, procurement and business development framework. The new model places the emphasis on regional councils and operators taking a partnering approach to the planning and delivery of public transport services in regions.

The reality for workers within the sector is that whenever the operator changes or the contract is renewed councils and operators can only cut back on one area of the operation without severe blowback from communities and that is to attack workers' terms and conditions of employment.

Communities will react if a prospective tenderer puts in a tender for fewer



services or a lower standard of bus. So how do they compete if four companies are bidding for runs? The only way left is to cut the price of labour. Existing operators invariably have union-negotiated collective agreements and when/if they tender in accordance with their costs of operation they lose out to low cost, new operators who tender at a lower rate. The new operators bank on being able to buy the busses in a fire sale and to pick up workers now desperate to have a job.

This is wrong – it's a race to the bottom.

It is state sponsorship of the destruction of workers' terms and conditions of employment and one explanation as to why we are a low wage economy.

National wants it that way and have structured laws to achieve it. We have the Employment Relations Act amendments that the Nats have made over the years which have systematically cut union power and the ability of members to exercise their right to undertake collective action while at the same time empowering employers to attack individual workers by reducing worker personal grievance rights.

Take Wellington public transport for example. NZ Bus, the established operator, which lost almost all of its bus runs in the recent tender round. They are fully unionised and have good collective agreements. When approached by unions the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) refused to make it a requirement of the tender process that workers would be carried over to any new operator on their current terms and conditions (T&C) of employment. I am advised that GWRC stated, when asked, that there was no way that they could require the tenderers to take the workers on their existing T&C despite them doing just that in the rail tender bids of 2015/16 where all bidders were told that worker transfer had to be on the "Same or more favourable" T&C of employment.

In my view this is recognition of the strength of the RMTU and the skills of its members and a shocking indictment that the true intent of PTOM is to exploit workers in the name of transport efficiency and lower cost.

We have another situation in Auckland where approximately 60 RMTU customer services officers have been in-sourced into Auckland Transport (AT). AT has determined that they need fewer than 20 of them to add to their internal ranks to cover the same tasks. This is regrettable but if it was only this then it would be business as usual. However, AT in collaboration with Transdev Auckland have stated that any member who is offered a job with AT will be eligible for one third of their redundancy entitlement and will be placed on substantially inferior T&C.

Our advice is that there is nothing legally the Union can do as it will be up to individual workers to choose whether they accept this or not. We have offered to do a grandfathering deal with AT to see our members remain on their current T&Cs, as we have done with other employers in the past, but this has been rejected.

We have approached politicians. Labour's Phil Twyford has written to AT protesting the tactics. The same announcement to staff advising of the CSO outsourcing also advised that we will be in a major stouch soon over driver only operations. Those of you who don't know what this means then go to our comrade union's website in the UK – the RMT – and look at the many disputes they are having with operators looking to take the guards and train managers off the trains.

The central common theme in all of this are that changes and exploitation is occurring because of the legislative changes enacted by the current Government.

This September we have a choice to vote for more of the same or for a more worker-focussed and -interested government on the Treasury benches.

For me the choice is clear: we have to have a change of government policy and direction as more of the same will not deliver fairness to workers. Nor will we begin turning around the growing inequality of our society. 🌐

## Ooops

A gremlin crept into the last issue. The caption for the photo on page 12 should have read Roger Harris and not, Roger Smith. Our apologies to both!

## PTSD - it's real!

Dear Editor,

PTSD - post traumatic stress disorder. It is real. Ask for help. If people think less of you, they're not worth knowing.

I am putting pen to paper, as my journey is coming to a close.

My employment within the rail as an LE for over 40 years did not end happily and I take this opportunity to give my sincerest thanks to ALL the officers of the RMTU who supported me during my battle.

After several level crossing fatalities, two of which included children – one of them a good friend of my own son's – and compounded by further traumas, I looked for, but received little to no support from the company. I chose to battle on in my position as an LE hiding behind a 'harden up' attitude and a happy face.

When the mental crash came, it came with a rush that no-one could imagine. I was diagnosed with PTSD and believe me, it is real.

Constant nightmares, cold sweats and extreme reactions to close calls on level crossings – and even to loud bangs. Right down to a dread of even going to work. Racked with depression and self loathing – including the embarrassment that this could happen to me.

I completely switched off from all friends and family and after a year of psychological help and a further year in new employment I am now on the road to recovery. I will never be able to forget what happened but at least I now have the tools to deal with it.

The RMTU got completely behind me, supporting me with legal help and getting me all the proper medical aid and financial assistance I needed for my family.

One of the lowest points was when the ACC panel turned down my claim. This was when the Union stepped up with their lawyer to fight the claim for me – for which I will be eternally grateful. Without the Union I could never have fought this battle.

I know this is full of clichés and sounds like a plug for the Union, but when the shit hits the fan, big corporates will chew you up and spit you out without losing a minute's sleep. Most of their health and safety rhetoric, is just that, rhetoric, and mainly to cover their own arses.

I may sound bitter toward the company. That's because I am.

I may be preaching to the converted but if you're not in the Union rethink your position. One day you might need them and you couldn't ask for a better team to have your back.

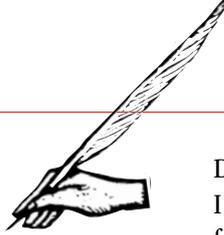
A special thanks to Wayne Butson, Phil Spanswick, Ben Thompson (lawyer).

Eric Olson (Goldie)

ex loco engineer

Kawerau.

(see story page 9)



## Retirements

Dear Editor,  
After 51 years in the railway Industry I have decided to call it a day and retire. I am therefore tendering my resignation from the RMTU.

I will remember my career with fondness and will of course have lots of stories to tell about the interesting people I have had the privilege to work with over the years.

I thank the RMTU for the conditions and remuneration that have been fought for over the years and wish the Union and fellow members all the best going forward.

My parting message for the greater membership is to stay United and stand as one.

In Unity – and now retirement  
Brian Duke  
Waltham, Christchurch.

Dear Editor,  
Friday 24 February 2017 was my last day with KiwiRail.

What can I say? Over 38 years there have been many changes some good and some that could have had a bit more thought put into them.

Over all it's been great, a lot of marvelous people and a heap of great memories.

I wish the RMTU and KiwiRail the best going forward.  
Danny Greene  
Hamilton, Taumarunui, Wellington, Kawerau, now retired to Gisborne.

Dear Editor,  
I wish to inform you that as of the 21/04/2017 I have resigned my job at Port Taranaki and the RMTU.

I have appreciated the work that the Union has done for me over the last 30 years and wish you all the best in the future as I know it's not an easy job these days.

Thank you and good luck.  
Denis Leighton.

Dear Editor,  
I wish to advise that I officially retired on 24 March 2017 as a station assistant with Transdev Auckland.

I would like to thank the Union for the support I have received over the years for myself and family.  
Graham D Lintonbon.

Dear Editor,  
I retired on Friday May 5 and wish to resign from the RMTU.

My Union membership started with the RTA when I joined railways in 1969 and has been continuous ever since.

I thank you all for the fellowship and support you have given me over the last 48 years.

Malcolm Teasdale  
Signals technician  
Christchurch West.

Dear Editor,  
Just a short note to let you know that I had my last day at Transdev Wellington on the 19 May 2017.

Thank you for the Union's support over the time I have been in rail – just over 40 years.

Pat Barrow,  
Train manager,  
Upper Hutt.

Dear Editor,  
On taking up KiwiRail's offer of redundancy I tender my resignation from the Union on 24/02/2017 after 45 years. I wish everybody and the Union the best for the Future.

R J Thomson  
Christchurch.

Dear Editor,  
I wish to tender my resignation from the RMTU after 39 years and a few months, my membership number is 15357.

I have recently been made redundant

by KiwiRail and no longer work in the rail industry.

Thank you for everything over the years and I wish everyone the best for the future.  
William Batten  
New Plymouth.

## Sick leave outrage

Dear Editor,  
Transdev Auckland seems to believe that the world is flat. They are now naming and shaming employees by sending out a letter to those employees who have not taken a sick day in the last three months.

This is outrageous and is placing their employees at risk of going to work when unwell and not fit for duty. Out of the 283 staff who received this letter one wonders how many of them were unwell and should not have been at work.

We know that 95% of all sickness is by chance and it is a total lottery who gets sick and who doesn't.

Does a fair and reasonable employer target and victimise employees who maybe sick or have dependants that are sick and need caring for?

Get Real Transdev Auckland.

Six and a half days sick leave per year is all that Transdev employees get, which is not excessive for a work force that works 24/7.

Stop being so mean spirited and care for all workers as you should.  
(Name withheld).

## Exemplary noticeboards



This month's stand out notice board was found in Invercargill.

# Alt unionism may prompt significant changes

**T**HE international media has started to report on a new development in the workplace: "alt unionism".

A recent piece published by the University of Technology in Sydney (UTS) described it thus:

"Alt-unionism is a catch-all term that can refer to spontaneous actions by workers that don't conform to the traditional pattern of strike behaviour or other industrial action. An example of this is the numerous protests by Uber drivers in Australia and around the world.

"It's also characterised by the fluid campaigns (often digital) launched outside of regular channels of representation.

"Take, for example, the online petition signed by Starbucks workers and individual supporters last year that resulted in an increase of up to 15% for Starbucks US employees.

"Alt-unionism can also refer to relatively stable associations of workers that aren't registered organisations in the way traditional unions are and consequently are not

constrained by the institutional history and rules of formal unions. These organisations are also not subject to the specific provisions of labour law aimed at regulating union activity.

"These organisations in Australia include those representing rideshare drivers, such as the Rideshare Drivers Association and Rideshare Drivers United and others like the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union, an unregistered body. In the US, the Freelancers Union and the Independent Drivers Guild each have thousands of members but are not allowed to represent these members in the same way as other unions, because their members are notionally independent contractors."

In the UK and France there have been cases where couriers working for firms like Deliveroo have begun to organise as the company is using loopholes in the law to deny employment status to workers. In Brighton a so called "pop up" union appeared to fight redundancies at the University of Sussex and balloted for industrial action.

## Union the target

This phenomenon is a result of decades of attacks on traditional unions' rights. In New Zealand three successive pieces of legislation:

- the 1987 Labour Relations Act;
- the 1991 Employment Contracts Act 1991; and
- the Employment Relations Act in 2000 first, completely dismantled the national award system that supported industry wide terms and conditions and belatedly attempted to repair the damage. The authors of much of the work that went into the last of these acts now freely admit that it did not work. Unions remained relatively weak.

The fact that the current National government watered down much of the provisions of the Employment Relations Act in its first two terms only made the situation worse.

The fact is that any worker trying to organise in a non-union workplace faces an almost impossible task given the barriers the legislation allows the employers to put up. As the late Helen Kelly said: "It's by design" ▶

## 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 five fund managers.



Ports  
Retirement  
Plan

Download a copy of the  
Investment Statement and Application Form at:

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

that unionism is restricted to around a fifth of the workforce.

## Employer hostility

Plenty of workers want to be members of unions and enjoy all the benefits which that brings but a combination of employer hostility and legal restrictions make it very hard to organise them.

The traditional unions, and the RMTU is one, have enough on their plate fighting to protect their current members without taking on a fight to organise those in the wilderness.

UNITE! is a union in New Zealand that has successfully organised in those companies that the system is designed to keep unions out of.

The turnover of membership is huge and organisers and activists spend large amounts of their time refilling the bath as members drain out of the other end.

That said, we can learn much from their model and the success UNITE! has had in forcing the employers to the negotiation table and the government to amend legislation through high profile industrial campaigns like the anti-zero hours fight.

What is worrying the bosses however, is alt-unionism.

The more educated amongst them look back to the late 19th and early 20th century when some unions embraced 'syndicalism', an approach that envisaged revolutionary change through organisation on the job.

## Alt-unions worry the bosses

The International Workers of the World (IWW) were one such union. They were less about making capitalism bearable for workers through improvements to wages and terms and conditions – although they fought hard on these fronts – and more about scrapping the system and replacing it with one based on meeting people's needs instead of generating profits.

In New Zealand the 'Red Feds' exhibited aspects of this approach, and in 1913 took this country to the brink of revolution as 'Massey's Cossacks' squared off against strikers.



Rising inequality and the screw of austerity that many have experienced since the global financial crisis has seen a lurch to the extremes in the politics of many countries.

In Greece self-proclaimed Nazis have seats in parliament whilst a left wing government led by avowedly Marxist ministers is financially carpet bombed by the European Union; in Spain the Indigado movement has given rise to a new left wing political party, Podemos, that has eclipsed the mainstream socialists; in Britain the Brexit vote was seen largely as a protest against a system that isn't working for many; in the US Trump similarly profited from the anger of the disenfranchised; and the French, confronted with the choice of electing the advocate of a broken neo-liberalism or a neo-fascist, held their collective noses and went for the former, thereby kicking the metaphorical can down the road until 2022.

One fear the ruling class has is that victims of neo-liberalism will fight back, not through legally hamstrung traditional unions, but via movements like alt-unionism.

How best to head off that challenge? The UTS piece cited above was titled 'Better the devil you know'. In other words, better to have to sit round the table and collectively bargain wages and conditions with relatively conservative traditional unions that want to get a bigger slice of the pie for their members than face the consequences of workers joining outfits that aren't interested in negotiating a better deal within capitalism but want to tear down the whole system.

That's why former National premier

Jim Bolger is now publicly saying unions should have more power, and he's echoed by former party president Michelle Boag, who is something of a weather vane for thinking in one wing of the National Party.

That's also why this government has done the first deal that sets national standards in an industry since 1991 with the caregivers' settlement.

The risk to them is that a generation of managers that have never had to deal with organised labour, and see us as akin to the Taliban, look at this as a betrayal.

## Pitchforks are coming!

The more enlightened amongst the ruling class know the pitch-forks are coming and that unions, properly integrated into the system, can deliver benefits to working people that will pacify them.

For many years the RMTU and others have been aware that the fall in union membership puts us at risk of being a unionised elite in a labour market of unorganised workers.

It may be that a combination of alt-unionism and revolutionary social movements prompt reforms that allow traditional negotiating unions like ours to grow stronger.

It may be therefore, that an incoming Labour-Green government will face less resistance than anticipated in reforming the labour market and readjusting the balance of power more towards working people, at least from the more thinking members of the ruling class. 🇺🇸

By John Kerr

# Protection equipment scrutinised



*Hutt Shops mechanical engineer Marty Greener, trying out the new kit*

**S**TAGE 1 of the Mechanical Industrial Council High Performance High Engagement (MIC HPHE) Hotworks working group has been rolled out to all Kiwirail mechanical depots. RMTU delegates Peter Buckley (Hillside), Bernie Hunt (Hutt Workshops), Tere Kamo (Westfield) and John Evans (Westfield) all participated in visiting some or all of the depots and Hutt Workshops.

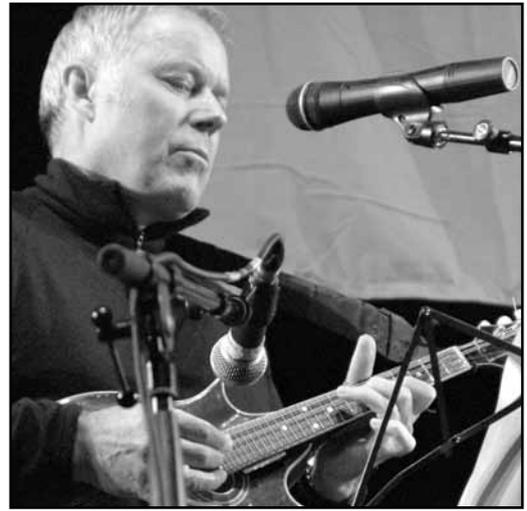
On display were all the personal protection equipment (PPE) items that are now available. The risk assessment was completed and then used to build the minimum PPE requirements, charts with photographs showing the PPE being worn and the Hotworks job safety sheet that was developed.

After a short presentation members were free to move around the room viewing the display and engaging in one-to-one conversations and to ask questions.

We then met with different site groups including the local HSAT, the certified welders and all those who do other hot work tasks. New first aid boards were also installed which now includes a burns station.

We received very positive feedback on this format from our members.

The work this group has done was nominated and selected as a finalist for this year's Safeguard NZ Workplace Health and Safety Awards with the winners announced at a dinner on May 31. Good luck team. 🇳🇿



*Peter Conway on mandolin and (below) his wife, Liz Riddiford, speaking at the launch of the CD.*

## For Pete's sake

**P**ETER CONWAY was a totally committed trade unionist – and a passionate and talented musician and songwriter. He was a keen and respected figure in the NZ folk scene.

He played regularly in the band 'Not the Day Job' at union gigs, home concerts and the right sort of political parties.

The 'For Pete's Sake' project brings together a full album of Peter's songs to his family.

A PledgeMe crowd-sourcing campaign was established to pay for the project and received great support.

Peter plays solo on the final track of the album singing his song Are You Alright? This was an iPhone recording he sent to Ross Teppett in late 2013 with the idea it could form part of the Not The Day Job repertoire in the future. Peter never got to play the song with the band.

"If I have any regrets about the CD it is we didn't get to make it with Peter playing with us," said Ross.



"This project has been a privilege to be involved with. With Peter's passing, his songs are a now an even more precious taonga – gifts that he has left us to preserve, protect and promote. I'm grateful to Peter's partner Liz and the entire Conway whanau that they let us do this."

Copies of the CD are available to purchase from the Facebook page (For Pete's Sake) or email [admin@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:admin@rmtunion.org.nz)

First in first served - limited copies available.

## Vale Royce Broderick 5 January 1947 – 27 February 2017

I write with a very heavy heart to inform you that my friend and very well known Union stalwart in the Railway Trades Association, Royce Broderick, passed away on Monday night, February 27.

Royce played a significant part in the RTA and was very active in the Addington Workshop in various positions in the branch eventually becoming the national president.

Royce served his appren-



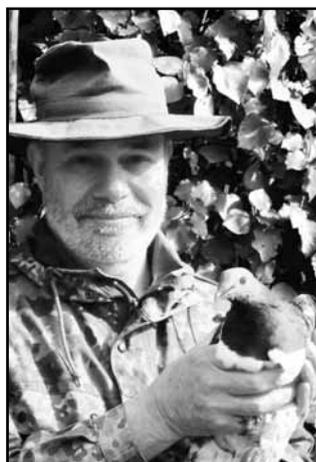
ticeship as a fitter and was also a volunteer fireman at the Addington Workshop and also played for the workshop rugby team. But it was as national president that he will be remembered by the membership of the RTA. He fought hard to change the antiquated conditions and pay rates for tradesmen and succeeded to the benefit of all tradesmen and apprentices.

After his term as national

president he took up a newly created position in the workshops as an industrial health and safety manager and, as was Royce's nature, he continued to make changes in the health and safety of workers in the railways.

Royce was a very good man and friend to lots of people from various walks of life who cared and supported his fellow man. He will be greatly missed by his friends and family and as a very good friend of mine. I offer to his wife Lyn and his wider family our condolences. 🇳🇿

- Jim Kelly



## Goodbye Scott Wilson

WHEN Scott was diagnosed with a terminal condition last year, ever the pragmatist, he chose to keep the matter private and focus on living. He had excellent care from his equally pragmatic (and dry-witted) oncologist but he does not want people to focus on the cancer that killed him.

He is/was more than that.

A loyal friend, loving father, skilled tradesman, committed unionist, real babe, avid reader, greenie, cowboy, pagan pilgrim, intrepid adventurer, superb cook and, lately, he added

knowledgable nut farmer/swine herd to his list of accomplishments.

He chose to spend his final days at the farm with the people he loved and who loved him. He died as he lived – on his terms. In accordance with his wishes there was no funeral. Rather his ashes will be carried to Cape Finisterre to be scattered to the end of the world.

Goodbye Scott, we miss you.

Love

Matt, Kate, Fran and Hel. 🇳🇿

## Farewell to a Flyer - Russell Glendinning Died 20 February 2017.

FORMER Kingston Flyer driver and general manager Russell Glendinning has cut his ties with the historic steam train after 40 wonderful years.

A railway preservationist, locomotive engineer and long-time St John supporter Russell, of Kingston, died in February aged 79.

He not only worked on the Kingston Flyer tourist steam train for over 40 of his 50 years in rail – but was also one of its firmest fans and ardent supporters.

Apart from his years with the Kingston Flyer Russell gave more than 150,000 hours of his time to the Order of St Johns which was recognised at his funeral by a guard of



honour of St John's staff following his memorial service.

Friends, family and Lumsden residents packed the hall for the service of the man who turned the Flyer into a worldwide attraction.

Such was his renown that letters of condolences came from around the world.

His 49-year-long career in the railway industry started when he was just 14, scrubbing toilets and other lesser tasks until he earned his engine driver's ticket at the age of 22 and launched him into a career that would take him around Otago and Southland.

He started his journey with the Kingston

Flyer in 1971 when it became a tourist attraction, and in 1975 he was made a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to tourism and railways.

He struggled with officialdom – and paperwork – and fought tooth and nail for his dearly beloved Flyer steering it through many battles.

It was announced last month that the steam train had been bought by a consortium of local investors, a fact which would have pleased Russell immensely - especially to see it remain in New Zealand and local hands.

Many friends said he had always had an interest in trains and he had done what he wanted to do since he was five years old – drive trains.

Russell retired from the Flyer on April 29, 2002. 🇳🇿

# RMTU to the rescue

**Two recent cases rejected by ACC for compensation and later, reviewed by Hazel Armstrong Law (HAL) with the support of the RMTU have clawed their way to success. If ever you needed a good reason to belong to the RMTU these two cases provide them. RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson says that the extent to which the Union backs its members is extraordinary. "We go well beyond the extra kilometre by making sure you are supported in every aspect of your claim reviews by caring Union organisers who have your interests at heart."**

**O**NE of the two cases, that of Eric (Goldie) Olsen, was described at length in *The Transport Worker* (page 19, June 2016). Goldie suffered post traumatic stress disorder after having been involved in three serious rail crossing accidents involving deaths and injury and also after watching incidents of children playing 'chicken' in front of oncoming trains. The first accident was 1992 and it wasn't until June 2015 that his condition was recognised and compensated for. He was eventually medically retired in November 2015.

"I couldn't have asked for more help," said Olsen. "Without them the company would have left me for vulture bait. They did extremely well by me and were super helpful to the family. Being in Kawerau being so small and far away many of us wondered how helpful the Union might be to us. But the way the RMTU rallied around me has certainly changed my mind about their value and being a member."

The latest case being supported by the RMTU is for Allan Rolton from Christchurch.

Allan was a remote control operator (RCO) in Christchurch. His work required some pretty heavy lifting which eventually 'buggered up' his elbow. His own medical enquiries suggested that he had a torn tendon. He applied to KiwiRail for ACC recognition and to cover treatment costs but was turned down by KiwiRail's third party administrator – WorkAon. At this point the RMTU stepped in to help.

"We referred his case immediately

to Hazel Armstrong Law who, through further medical enquiries, confirmed Allan's doctor's diagnosis of a torn tendon and added that it required surgical treatment," said Wayne.

Subsequently, KiwiRail accepted the confirmed condition and Allan received the required surgery.

"It beats me why someone like Allan had to suffer the pain and indignity of a work accident for so long when it was so obvious in the first place. What a waste of time and resources!" said Butson.

Allan's surgery was a success and he felt considerably relieved though he still had some residual pain. The report from the surgeons stated that underlying the torn tendon was a serious case of tendinosis (see box).

He now had to decide: pursue ACC for compensation for tendinosis or accept his current level of pain and battle on? He chose to fight – and the RMTU chose to support him.

Aon ["With unreasonable haste," said Butson] turned down Allan's new claim and he together with HAL and the RMTU, are pursuing his case to the next level.

This month Allan will travel to Wellington to get an assessment of his condition from an occupational physician. Further action will depend on the subsequent report. This magazine will keep readers informed of progress following this examination. Meanwhile, Allan is on lighter duties.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Allan would have stopped pursuing this long ago if the RMTU hadn't been there to support him," said HAL partner Ben Thompson.

"Having a work injury declined

creates a huge amount of stress in your life and makes you question how valued you are by the company," said Allen. "The RMTU were there for me right from the start, providing advice and support plus legal representation. I certainly would not be where I am now without their help. Well done guys - you have been amazing."

"Curiously, in both cases their own GPs expected the conditions to be covered by ACC as they were so obviously work-related," said Butson. "And in both cases ACC – or its accredited agents – delayed treatment and caused continued suffering and pain. Pathetic!" 🇳🇿

## Forgotten Victim

The drivers in their tintops  
On a basis regular  
Forget that we're a loco  
And they are but a car.

We give them all of thirty seconds  
To allay them of their fright  
Yet still they want to have a go  
Any given day or night.

Their attitude's astounding  
Of derision and contempt  
For the impact that has left them  
All blood and guts and bent.

Recrimination and self doubt  
Our tears unbidden flow  
For souls that go before us  
Souls we didn't even know.

Shrinks mutter understanding  
Hypocrisy at it's best  
Give them one day at the helm  
See if they can pass the test.

For in my dreams nightmares persist  
Of the carnage and the slain  
And tomorrow's fools that I must face  
Aboard my unforgiving train.

Goldie  
1998

Tendinosis is damage to a tendon at a cellular level. It is thought to be caused by micro tears in the connective tissue in and around the tendon, leading to an increase in tendon repair cells. This may lead to reduced tensile strength, thus increasing the chance of tendon rupture.

# The insidious affects of whole body vibration

**Are we seeing isolated cases or are they the tip of a vast iceberg?**

**F**ROM dancing coffee cups to the court rooms - whole body vibration (WBV) is a real and serious concern and one that locomotive engineers should take heed of.

It's a nasty and insidious condition that may take most of your working life to reveal itself. The odd pain, stiffness and discomfort may have you heading to the physio or doctor for quick relief but as WBV gets a grip you'll find those visits become more frequent and the relief less likely.

ACC specialist lawyer Hazel Armstrong, of Hazel Armstrong Law, Wellington, is currently pursuing the case of ex-RMTU member George Whyte who, for most of his working life drove trains out of Grey-mouth and Christchurch - mainly DJ, DC and DX class.

He said it was "like driving a car with flat tires".

"The cab, where the driver sits, is located so that it absorbs all the shock," he said in his affidavit. "The locomotive engineer therefore suffers a lot of jolting and jarring in the cab known as 'rough riding'. I found out that the strong jolting and jarring in the locomotive's cab was due to the rubber mounts being buggered.

"There was nothing protecting me in the cab from the rough conditions of the

track because the rubber mounts which were supposed to bear the brunt of the impact had turned to custard."

Subsequently the RMTU became involved and some of the fleet was withdrawn due to the unsafe conditions caused by the worn rubber mounts.

The rough riding problem was compounded by the poor rail track condition due to inadequate maintenance.

George drove his locos over these badly maintained tracks for years in engines which shook and jarred his body excessively.

"About 10 to 12 years ago," he said, "while I was still driving locomotives, I developed a sore neck. I went to the chiropractor, had massages, acupuncture and an x-ray, however my neck did not get better."

In 2016 the pain got worse – especially at night. By this time he had retired from the industry but his doctor lodged an ACC claiming for a gradual

process work related neck injury.

"My doctor said that many years of rough riding in the cabs caused my neck injury."

ACC declined his claim on 27 April 2016 stating that the pain was caused by multiple level degenerative changes in his neck and not the rough riding conditions in locomotives.

"I told the lady at ACC she ought to have a ride in the cab to feel what it is like, but I bet she didn't," he said.

He is now reviewing that decision from ACC with Hazel Armstrong's advocacy and with RMTU support.

Daniel Kent of Bluff supports George's



*A Dc class loco cab floor exposing the rust beneath.*



claim saying he suffered a serious injury from rough riding which stopped him working. The train hit a bad track joint and the lateral sideways jolt and jarring in the cab caused the injury. As a result he required a discectomy (removal of part of the intervertebral disc).

Both men say conditions have improved as tracks are upgraded and air suspension added to seats.

It was Daniel who filmed his coffee cup dancing across the dashboard of his cab and popped the video online. He said this clearly showed the vibrations emanating through the driving cab while it was idling and stationary - the problem is significantly worse on the run.

He has since been instrumental in helping KiwiRail upgrade its substandard locos and match them to the best in their fleet.

"The combination of accurate measurements against the baseline, identifying the cause of the jarring, jolting and vibration, and then training the mechanical staff to correctly remediate the problems, means that the locomotives should be safer for the locomotive engineers," he said in his affidavit supporting George. "The track will also need to be maintained as this is another factor in causing WBV."

Daniel has had to work closely with KiwiRail and mechanical staff to isolate and remedy the problems.

He was told recently by a chief engineer that mechanical staff had not set up the suspension on locomotives properly.

"The suspension should be set up to include sideways, or lateral movement, as well as for the up and down movement," he said.

Since then, this information has been

disseminated among some mechanical staff in KiwiRail.

"I fear George and Daniel's experiences are just the tip of a much wider problem which has been years gestating," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "Often issues arising from WBV are not recognisable in the early stages. It is easily confused with life's mishaps and accidents - many of which may pass with time and treatment. It's the ongoing nature and intensified pain that speaks of WBV - plus the time it takes to develop. The RMTU has recognised the condition for (some) years and has actively advocated and campaigned for better rail maintenance and improved driving conditions - and we're pleased to report considerable success. Meanwhile, there are members - and now ex-members - who need their condition recognised and compensated for and we are doing all we can to support them. Meanwhile, we don't know how many more of our members are subjecting their bodies to intolerable levels of WBV nor when the symptoms will emerge. That's why George Whyte's case is so important. A good result for George will make it easier to claim for future cases."

Hazel Armstrong believes their case covers all the elements for a gradual process injury exist including proof of a personal



Danny Kent receiving the award of a Judge's Commendation to the Southland branch for their red card action on the *De locos in the South Island*. Pictured here with his daughter, Eilish, Wayne Butson and Stuart Johnstone.

injury caused by a work related gradual process. The case also describes the employment task and the properties of that employment task and how they caused the personal injury.

She also provides evidence from studies by Mr Eckardt of North American Locomotive Engineers which shows the risk of suffering the personal injury is significantly greater for persons who perform the employment task than for persons who do not perform it.

"George and Daniel have suffered significantly from whole body vibration and it's high time ACC recognised the condition and worked with KiwiRail and RMTU to rectify it," said Hazel. "Meanwhile, they are obliged, in my opinion, to apply compensation to both men - and open the doors to possible future cases."

If you suspect that whole body vibration is affecting your health and quality of life please contact your H&R rep or RMTU head office. 🌐

# Political donations



(l) GS Wayne Butson hands a donation of \$20k to Green Party president Sarah Holm and (r) a donation of \$30k to Labour Party president Nigel Harworth.



# Trust head retiring

**T**HIRTEEN years after taking the helm of the NZR Staff Welfare Trust, Chris Ball (pictured) is claiming a well earned retirement.

Originally he was brought in to check a review questioning the Trust's future and he quickly realised that it not only did but was rapidly becoming a unique and very valuable asset.

"Once I had established that the Trust had a future I was offered the opportunity to run it," he said. He proudly leaves the organisation better in every way with "more members, improved dollar benefit of payments and more, and improved quality, holiday homes. We have built two new complexes since I began at Mount Maunganui and Napier, and bought units in Wellington, Whitianga and Christchurch. However, the main benefit for members is the refund of medical expenses. We pay out over a million dollars a year in benefits."

This basic medical cover comes as part of the membership of the Trust and has a maximum of \$1575 a year.

"The Trust offers other products for people wanting more extensive health cover," said Chris. Currently about 500 of these policies have been taken out - about one in every ten members.

"That's pretty good penetration for extended health care."

He says he has enjoyed managing the



assets for the benefit of the members. "It has been a success and the comments from members we've been able to help has verified that. The positive feedback is very gratifying. This is what the Trust is about and why it was set up. It makes it all worthwhile.

"I have also very much appreciated the assistance, guidance, leadership and friendship of Wayne Butson and the RMTU-appointed Trustees who have been a vital part of the Trust's success."

He said the job has suited him perfectly.

"Whether it be providing a family with a reasonably priced holiday they couldn't otherwise have afforded or refunding medi-

cal expenses or giving refunds for medical treatments that wouldn't have happened without us."

He says the old heritage trusts such as this one are so rare and keeping them going is critical.

"I doubt you could set up something similar today, especially with all the aspects that this Trust covers."

Chris is a keen cyclist and it comes as no surprise that he is planning more two-wheeled excursion. Last year he featured in this magazine in a photograph on top of a European mountain pass following in the tracks of the Tour de France. Though his plans are a little less ambitious now, he and his cycling companions will again hire bikes in France and do a combination of car and bike touring.

"We loved it last time," he said. "Cyclists are so appreciated there. We were waved on, clapped and even given soft drinks by people we passed."

We'll look out for his next photo atop the Alpe d'Huez - at the end of the famous 22 switchback bends all named after previous race winners.

He expects his grandchildren plus karate training will keep him well occupied.

Chris plans to hand over before the end of August including a few weeks orientation for the new person. 🌐



*The Transdev Wellington/Hyundai Rotem wider bargaining team for the renewal of the MECA are invigorated after two days of intensive delegate training and pledge "that the forthcoming bargaining round will not involve any loss of terms and conditions for our membership". United we demand - divided we beg!*

# Tangiwai memorial for brave railwaymen



Charles Parker and Lance Redman.

Incorporating words from Tim Kirwin and from a speech by Wayne Butson.

**S**IXTY-FOUR years after desperately trying to stop their train at Tangiwai a special memorial was unveiled last month to honour the two railwaymen who died at their controls.

Their brave actions saved 134 people who might otherwise have perished.

Although locomotive engineer first class Charles Parker and locomotive fireman Lance Redman urgently applied the brakes, poured sand beneath the locos wheels and did all they could slow and stop the train the first six carriages and the loco toppled into the raging river leaving just three carriages and two vans behind the shattered bridge.

"Parker, at the pinnacle of his career as an express engine driver and Redman close to realising his aspirations of also becoming one, represented a tradition of service and excellence and were amongst the locomotive running elite," said LE Tim Kirwin who, with Les Perrin, comprised the RMTU memorial team.

The weather that Christmas day was terrible causing the crater lake atop Mt Ruapehu to overflow sending an enormous lahar (mud and volcanic debris) down the Whangaehu River destroying four of the eight piles (or piers) supporting the rail bridge just a few minutes before the train's arrival.

"The raging torrent weakened bridge #136 and the impact of the 146 ton locomotive caused supporting piers to give way, resulting in the locomotive and the first five carriages plunging into the river, followed shortly after by the sixth," said Kirwin. "The vigilance and prompt actions of the engine men undoubtedly prevented the remainder of the train from entering the river."

At the unveiling of the memorial to the two men there was no doubt expressed that their brave actions saved the lives of 134 out of 285 passengers and crew.

Charles Parker's granddaughter, Denise Stanney, told Radio New Zealand news:



"They applied the brakes so the wheels were not going so fast and at the same time the fireman was applying sand to the rails to create lots of friction."

An estimated 500 people were present at the unveiling some having arrived on two special steam trains from Palmerston North and Glenbrook and Pukekohe.

The unveiling marked the completion of a large scale 18 month project led by LEs Tim Kerwin and Les Perrin on behalf of the RMTU.

"The RMTU have had a proud history of remembering those who have tragically

been lost at work and has fought and campaigned tirelessly for all workers to have the right to return home safe at the end of their working day," said Kirwin.

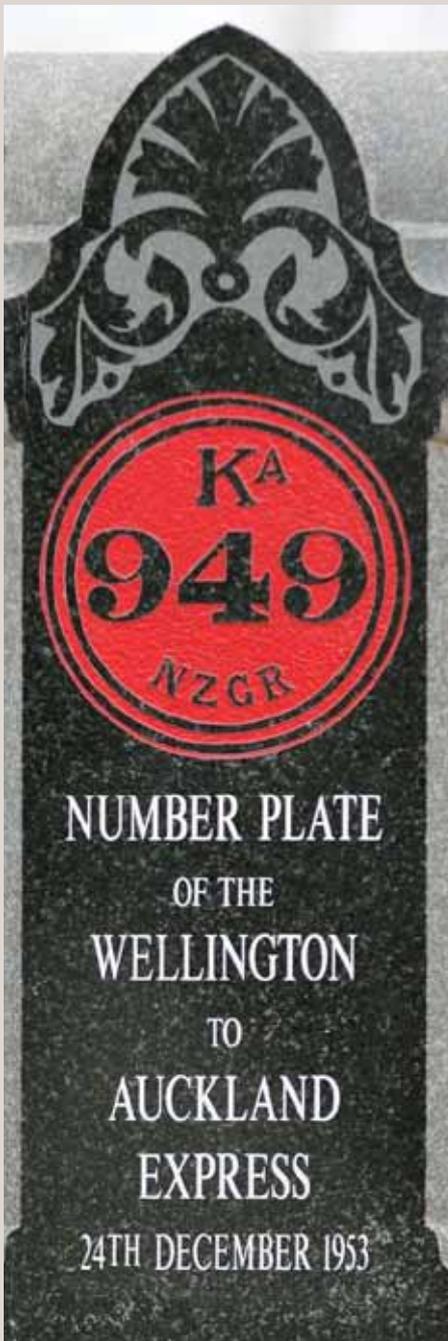
RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson agreed and added: "The RMTU is proud to be one of the organisations that first took positive steps to educate workers, employers and the public of the need to positively address and change health and safety standards in the rail industry workplace.

"I think we all now accept that the health and safety consequences of working in the rail industry then were beyond atrocious. ▶

◀ We would well prefer not have any more dead heroes on the job, we want them alive and well and with their families. No one should ever have to sacrifice their life for their livelihood."

He urged those assembled to play an active role in preventing workplace fatalities pointing out that in 2016 over 24,000 people were absent from work for over a week due to work place injuries.

"In the last two weeks of April this year, seven New Zealanders went to work and never came home," he said. "The RMTU is proud to be associated with the combined efforts to honour these two brave workers who acted with such selfless courage and professionalism to help save some 134 lives. They rightly hold an important place in New Zealand's history." 🌐



PHOTOGRAPHS: Darin Campbell

Part of stage 1 of the Tangiwai memorial - 2003



Charles Parker's daughters (above) and below unveiling the memorial headstone. (r) Ngati Rangī warrior welcomes guests with a haka. (l) Percy Williams responding



# Redman family tribute

From the speech by Paul Merwood, Lancelot Redman's grandson.

**T**ODAY is a day of mixed emotion for our family. We reflect on what life must have been like for Dorothy and her young family in the aftermath of Lance's death. Events of this magnitude can take on a life of their own, and the loss to communities and the nation can overshadow that of individuals and their families.

In our grandmother's case, the loss of her husband at age 33 and the circumstances of his death had an impact that was profound and enduring for her, Val and Beryl. Lance's body was never found, there was no final resting place, no headstone, and nowhere for a family to grieve. Our grandmother did what many women of her generation had only recently done in the aftermath of World War II – they picked up the pieces and did their best to move on. In nana's case, she got by with the support of her family and the kindness of the Taihape community. She remarried and rebuilt a life for her family and

she rarely spoke of the events at Tangiwai.

Today is also a day to celebrate.

The recognition for bravery after all these years brings closure to the events that happened 64 years ago. It says a lot about the character of a man who put at risk his own life to save others. Lance and Charles did what they knew had to be done in those final moments. They did the right thing then, and honouring those actions today is the right thing to do now – and we're grateful to all those who have helped to bring about this formal recognition.

But today means more to us than closure. Lance died here and Dorothy never gave up hope of finding him. This memorial, for us, will also represent his final resting place and a focal point for us and future generations.

We hope, that in the years to come, the people who come to this place will not only reflect on the tragedy that unfolded here, but

will know the story of these two brave men who made the ultimate sacrifice all those years ago. 🇳🇿



with

# ANZAC DAY- PE



ANZAC Day at New Zealand's oldest memorial site - the flagpole at Petone Railway Station.



THIS FLAGSTAFF WAS ERECTED TO SYMBOLISE THE UNITY OF AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYMEN IN PEACE AND WAR. MADE OF AUSTRALIAN HARDWOOD AND NEW ZEALAND KAURI, IT WAS FIRST USED ON ANZAC DAY, 1916, WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. W. F. MASSEY, UNFURLED AN AUSTRALIAN FLAG PRESENTED TO THE RAILWAYMEN OF NEW ZEALAND BY THE RAILWAYMEN OF NEW SOUTH WALES.



# WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY



(above) Kawerau members turn out for the memorial and (below, l to r) Kawerau mayor, Malcolm Campbell, daughter Navio Tai and Rev Tom Tupe unveil the memorial.

## KAWERAU

On a fine sunny day Workers Memorial Day was held in conjunction with the whanau of Hairama Peter Jones Tai, who did not return home from work on 7 June 1989.

The Rev Tom Tupe opened the ceremony with a karakia, with Kiwirail depot manager Tua Clarke as the MC.

Guest speakers were RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson, KiwiRail group general manager operations Rob Mcalpine, and the Kawerau mayor Malcolm Campbell.

The unveiling and blessing of the kohatu and plaques was conducted by the Rev Tupe, the Mayor and Navio Tai after which Henry Tai spoke on behalf of the Tai whanau and passed on great stories about

Hairama which were much appreciated by all.

Butson said he hoped the memorial site would become an important beacon for folk at the yard.

"There is no denying that decades of struggle by workers and their unions have resulted in improvements in basic working conditions today," he said. "However, every year more people are killed globally at work than in wars. They die because an employer decided their safety just wasn't that important."

He said that despite the best intentions of management, managers and regulators they cannot do the job on their own.

"We can only do it by us all working actively together. It is time to stop being silent about the death and tragedy being



wrought in our workplaces. Instead let us all clench our fists and shout out 'safety first'."

Rev Tupe then conducted the closing prayer and everyone retired to the KiwiRail depot rooms for lunch.

Many thanks to Allana Ranui, Kelvin Collings and Tua Clarke for their hard work in organising the event and to Norm Lee for the photos. 🌐

## CHRISTCHURCH



Canterbury RMTU members pledge to stand up and fight for 'Safety first'.



## AUCKLAND

**R**MTU members and KiwiRail managers were joined by the NZNO, Etu, Unite and First Unions at Westfield Railway Depot. Roy Sullivan acknowledged Thomas Blair, Bernie Drader and Terry Panji who all sadly lost their lives while working at Westfield. Roy spoke of the improvements that KiwiRail have made and the role of the RMTU in this achievement and used the example of the All Blacks as a challenge for constant improvement.

Rachel Mackintosh (Etu and CTU vice president) remembered the tireless work

of Helen Kelly who was a champion not just for union members but for all workers of New Zealand across all industries but particularly bringing regulations and improvements to forestry workers.

The ceremony concluded with a reminder of the importance to continually look out for your mates, to be prepared to ask questions before an incident happens and to say "NO" to unsafe work – because we are all in this together. We all have a responsibility to ensure we go home to our loved one at the end of the working day.

Honour the dead – we will continue to fight for the living. 🌍

## INVERCARGILL



*Southland branch chair Gavin Mortimore with the memorial plaque unveiled at their memorial event. The plaque is an engraved granite slab set into a dressed piece of Australian hardwood sleeper.*



## HUTT WORKSHOPS



*Hazel Armstrong addressing the Hutt Workshop members.*

### Eastwood Fatality

by Frank Brown

Read by NZNO organiser, Danielle Davies the poem was written in 1940 and describes events around Australian train driver George Dixon who lost his life when his engine ran over an embankment.

Another comrade departed,  
On a day we will always  
remember,  
In that fatal smash at East-  
wood  
On Friday, 13th of September.

Train out of control leaving  
Epping,  
Gathering speed on the  
slippery rail,  
The whistle frantically blowing  
And the brakes of no avail.

Knowing the road before him,

As death in front seemed to loom,  
In moments of awful anguish  
He watched the approach of  
his doom.

With a quivering hand on the  
throttle,  
His engine in full back gear;  
Bravely he stuck to his post,  
With thoughts of loved ones  
dear.

As his engine toppled over,  
In a crumpled mass she lay,  
And beneath that awful  
wreckage,  
An old mate passed away.

In the midst of life we are in  
death,  
Be as careful as one can,  
It's just the lot of everyone,  
But more so the railwayman.

And after years of service,  
When we've given of our best,  
Our name is just a memory  
Of another mate gone "West."

## NAPIER

It was a fine day in Napier on April 28 and the service was well attended with some 80 plus people assembled at the southern end of the port behind the Seamen's Mission by the Corben Frickleton memorial tree.

Unions present were: RMTU, ETU and MUNZ were noted.

Many port-associated business workers and reps were present including our local rail branch members and C3. The Napier Port board were also in attendance and health and safety managers from both Lyttleton and Ports of Auckland were present.

Ted Frickleton and his whanau joined this year's memorial. Ted lost his son Corben in a mooring incident in 2005.

Our local industrial chaplain, Marty Rochfort, ran the proceedings.

Napier Port CEO (retiring) Garth Cowie gave an impassioned speech in remembrance to those who have passed away as a consequence of work place accidents. This scribe also spoke a few words.

In summary, it was a great turnout. Parts of the ports operation stopped in remembrance including the vessel exchange.

It is good to see the message of Workers' Memorial Day is growing. 🌍

Dave Marden.



## DUNEDIN

In his speech to the gathering at Dunedin's memorial Dave Kearns said WMD: "was taken up by Unions in Canada in 1984 and is now commemorated around the world. Our own former general secretary, Ross Wilson, introduced it to Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1987. Despite being recognised as an official day by government in some countries, including the US and Australia, and having supposedly robust health and safety legislation in countries like ours, the number of workplace deaths is still very high and seems to be accepted as a cost of doing business.

"Why is this allowed to continue? I think, in a word, the answer is 'profits'. . . capitalism is hard wired to produce ever-increasing profits and ever higher rates of return for corporates, shareholders and other assorted parasites. These are the people, who through influential positions or as government lobby groups, write the

legislation."

He gave two examples:

- the H&S legislation introduced after 29 miners died at Pike River which classified farming and agriculture as a low risk industry, even though almost half of the workplace deaths in New Zealand in the last seven years, 117 out of 310, happened in farming.
- a rail industry agreement which states: Should a suggested alternative . . . increase company costs, it will not be proceeded with thus demonstrating

management's disregard to H&S legislation and the worker's inability to render changes for their own health and safety.

He concluded that worker's cannot rely on their bosses or government to have their interests at heart.

"(We must) demand safe practices regardless of cost. Even though we are up against it when it comes to fighting for good pay, conditions and a safe place to work, we can out number and out organise those who do not share our interests." 🌍



## WAIKATO RAIL

**W**E have been battling through a number of issues with the Toll manager Declan Freeman, including alternative (lieu) days, promotions, agreements not being honoured and what sort of beast is an 'invite to investigation/disciplinary meeting'? Declan is taking advice from Tolls head office, which means we may have an answer before Xmas!

The high performance high engagement (HPHE) roll outs for the Hotworks group were held in Te Rapa, Mt Maunganui and Kawerau, and were well received.

Gary Rudd a team leader at the gatehouse, had quite a tussle to get his prescription safety glasses despite complying with the requirements of the KiwiRail/RMTU jointly agreed policy on prescription safety glasses. The dispute lasted about four weeks before Gary succeeded in getting his glasses.

There is some concern by the Kamai Tunnel focus group about the money being spent on improvements there and whether the money is being spent wisely. This issue will be raised at their next meeting.

One of our rail operators was nominated to be part of the pay scale 7 review and it is reported that some good work is being done and the rail operators and RCOs in Te Rapa are looking forward to what comes from it. It is this branch's belief that a review of this pay scale has been a long time coming. Thanks Hamish for your time and effort spent on this – especially with a new born baby! With winter coming on, yard conditions are a big subject. Recent rains

have seen our yard flooded and the poor shunt crews have been wading around through house-sized puddles to get their job done. Let's hope one day we will get underfoot conditions improved.

Our track and signals guys and gals have been extremely busy. Not only have concerted efforts been put in to reduce TSRs and track/signal upgrades but these crews have been put through the wringer with all these rain storms. They have carried out their professions above and beyond. Being called out in torrential weather to fix signals, to clear trees and slips or fix tracks just proves how much our people are dedicated to their job and just how valuable they are to KiwiRail. Why would you want to contract this work out to companies that don't care when we have such committed people working for rail? Anyway, a heartfelt thank you from your branch for the amazing work that you have achieved through this weather induced busy period.

Our servicing delegates have been working hard (and being stonewalled) to get a new locomotive sanding facility built at Te Rapa. Currently they carry around 25 to 30KG bags of sand to fill locomotive sand boxes. This can reach up to 20 or 30 bags in a shift. We see this as no different to the issues around the handling of transition heads (or bull hooks). The mitigation being done around handling them needs to have the same focus on our servicing lads. It's about time they installed a sand tower. Concern has also been raised about diesel fumes in the servicing bay. This needs to be

looked into further.

LEs are currently having their roster reviewed. We are pleased to say we initiated discussion with KR over how we would like to see this review carried out. Subsequently, a working party has been formed, full disclosure of information given to our reps on the working party and a loco sector meeting was recently held to discuss the rostering issues raised by KR. This has all been done prior to any roster proposal on the wall and we must say, is a great example of our Union branch negotiation abilities to be able to set this type of working party up to ensure no surprises on any proposed roster. The LEs present at the meeting were given questionnaires and mandates will be given to the reps to push through onto a new proposed roster. We have been assured that this roster is also not set in stone and that alterations and changes can be made if aspects are not working. A really good approach by our delegates and a job well done Clint and Mike.

We say hello to a number of new staff joining us and wish you all the best in your new careers! Please remember, get in touch with your delegates if you are unsure of anything or are in need of some help or advice. We also welcome three new transfers to the operations depot: Chris Babbington, an RCO from Palmerston North, David Rodavu a train manager (guard) from the Northern Explorer and Bill Apperley an LE from Palmerston North. We hope you all settle in here and enjoy our great depot.

Until next time, stay safe and remember that YOU are the union! 🇳🇿

## PORT TAURANGA

**T**HE Port of Tauranga Limited/RMTU collective agreement negotiations have commenced and we are moving through the Union and Port of Tauranga company claims. We have had two full meetings plus three working group meetings to get clarity on the claims. Both parties have committed to obtaining a resolution.

With C3 we seem to have hit a road block with a number of issues like back pay from last year's negotiations and the setting

up of working parties and so we are not sure whether C3 are being deliberate in not dealing with the issues or they do not know how to with the managerial changes that have taken place. Time will tell!

C3 have been given notice to exit from the POTL straddle workshop with Quality Marshalling [QM] taking over the maintenance. This leaves our members' futures up in the air! In our view this is another example of POTL's complete disregard toward workers at Sulphur Point – workers who

have tirelessly over the years kept POTL's straddles well maintained and operating. Members tell us they feel as if they are just numbers. This from a company that markets itself as 'the port of the future' but is all the while stabbing its workers in the back. Shame on you Port of Tauranga!

On a more positive note, Chris Miller one of our members from Champion Flour Mill has won the branch's monthly draw for the second time, the first member to ever having done so. Tinny Chris!

Best wishes to you all until next issue. 🇳🇿

## PORT NAPIER

**S**UMMER has come to a shuddering halt. The fishing rods are packed away, the boat has been winterised and daylight saving has finished. It's pleasing to note that it is only 167 days until fishing season kicks in again. Thermals, wet weather gear and beanies for the follically challenged are now making daily appearances around the port. Winter is just around the corner.

The increase in through put has really tested everyone's resolve. Longer shifts and extra work days have been required. I am pleased to report the team operations group kept their composure under immense pressure and operated as a large team. The brothers and sisters of the RMTU really looked out for each other and any signs of fatigue were addressed with support and RDOs to allow time to recharge the batteries.

To assist, the Company have also been providing bottled water and Powerade

along with extra apples and bananas. The onsite clinical nurse and neck massages available weekly, provided the extra

support required.

However on top of this mayhem, safety still maintained the number one priority. Safety awareness has been higher than normal. Reported incidents were still investigated in a timely manner and no shortcuts were taken.

The Napier KiwiRail team have also stepped up to the mark and there has been a noticeable increase in rail traffic. Their extra efforts have not gone unnoticed.

The great pieces of news of late is that the Company has paid an extra tidy bonus, which was well received by all. The rumour mill has it that the operations staff received more than other work groups that have not been effected by the non-stop deluge of containers for the past six months.

A nice piece of acknowledgement as many of the team sacrificed valuable family time and worked rostered days off and longer shifts to ensure the through put was

maintained and customers were serviced.

On a more serious note, there has been a lot of media coverage and political comment over recent times to reduce - or not to reduce - the number of immigrants entering New Zealand.

Tradies, truck drivers and chefs are skill sets that we are told are in hot demand and vacancies cannot be filled. Is this really the case? The pro-immigration lobby tend to wheel out the tried and true excuses that they can't find anyone. I wonder if this really true, or is it that simply some employers do not, and will not, pay for the skills required?

Take truck drivers as an example. The list of skills required are:

- Self-supervise and operate virtually solo;
- Be a skilled operator;
- Maintain multiple license classes;
- To drive a \$400K piece of equipment;
- Operate for up to 70 hours a week; and
- At times, stay away from home overnight.

Pay rate – mostly under \$20 per hour. No wonder there is an alleged shortage of 1,000 truck drivers.

I suggest that if the transport industry

## \$1,500 AD&D

All members of RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the RMTU.

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please reply on line at [ailnz.co.nz/request](http://ailnz.co.nz/request) to have an AIL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain the additional insurance coverage available. This is very important to you and your family.

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



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compared the skill set to pay rates required to other industries they would be in for a rude shock. Start paying more and your problem may go away.

Many employers are using immigration

as a substitute for staff training. They find it easier to employ a migrant under current policy than to train an unemployed Kiwi. This is not acceptable and needs to change.

What happened to the old apprentice-

ship scheme? I think educational resources would be better directed towards more apprentice tradies.

Take care out there. 🌐

## HUTT WORKSHOP

**T**HIS last period has started with a few departures. Our former branch secretary, Terry (Sheriff) Duffy, moved on to join the ambulance service with the St John's organisation. Hot on his heels were long-serving member Ron Best and retiring branch chairman Phil (Bozzy) Bosworth. Also within this time other departures have occurred to staff seeking greener pastures or being released through medical incapacity. As if that wasn't enough, some temp staff have not had their contracts renewed nor been taken on as staff as part of the company's cost-containment strategy resulting

discussions were had that have resulted in two of our temp staff having their situations reviewed despite the loooooonnnnnng overdue arrival of the updated asset management plan (AMP) which should confirm the actual and projected workload for the next decade and permit us to fully employ these high calibre workers.

This year's ANZAC service at Petone was well attended (as always) with wreaths laid at the memorial flagpole by many organisations including KiwiRail, the RMTU, the local RSA and a local childcare centre. There

continues to be a growing awareness of those people from all walks of life who lost their lives defending our freedoms and democracy.

Another act of remembrance in April was of course

Workers' Memorial Day commemorating workers around the world who never came home from work due to some fatal incident. For the Hutt Workshops, our service coincided with a rally in Wellington held by our sister-union Etu to raise the awareness of the lift industry's appalling safety record following the tragic death of their member Brendon Scheib who was working alone in a Wellington lift shaft on 14 January 2016. Our guest speakers were Peter Reidy (CEO KiwiRail), Andrew Little (Leader NZLP), Danielle Davies (Organiser NZNO and convenor for Unions Wellington) and Hazel Armstrong (ACC/HSE specialist lawyer representing the RMTU). Some speakers were accompanied by their administrative and media support teams. It's amazing who turns up when you say there's a sausage sizzle after the service!

The speech from Danielle included the poem reprinted on page 19.

Recent committee changes have seen Manu Barclay appointed to vice-chairman and Brett Sullivan appointed as the non-sectorial delegate (new position). We congratulate both who bring knowledge, experience and passion to the committee.

The staff engagement survey results are out with the Hutt Workshops scoring a '+2' which shows one of the many benefits of improved communications, continued fostering of the company values and tangible progress of HPHE-related projects; whilst there's still room for continued improvement it clearly demonstrates that tenacious application delivers results!

We are still awaiting the asset management plan (now seven months behind). Rumour and innuendo imply that good news is on the way however, being technical people, we prefer to see the 'hot oil' in writing.

As these notes were being compiled the MCC was due to be hosted in May at the Hutt Shops. This forum continues to be a progressive one with the meetings being held 'in-the-field' which allows a hands-



Above (l to r) Howard Phillips, Myles Carter, Todd Valster, Ron Best and Phil Bosworth at Ron and Bozzy's retirement function.

Below - Visible HPHE progress at Hutt on the auxiliary components project.



◀ on feel to the meetings but also allows direct visits to worksites to reinforce the topics under discussion.

Industrial Council elections are in hand for June so prospective candidates should get their hats ready to throw into the ring. On an allied note, if you did not receive any voting papers for the recent national president or NMC elections, perhaps your current address is not on the RMTU's database. Act now and update your details via either the RMTU's website or see your branch secretary.

Until next time, be safe and work safe. 🌐



*Above - Todd Valster (l) presenting Phil Bosworth his RMTU Loyalty Certificate.*



*(l to r) Manu Barclay, Myles Carter, Terry Duffy with his certificate and branch chair Matthew Cordell-Bain.*

## WELLINGTON RAIL

**A**VID readers of branch notes must have been wondering if the Wellington branch had gone to sleep. Well it certainly hasn't. Especially passenger, or the old Metro branch.

Instead we have been going through a 'divorce' from KiwiRail and a 'marriage' to the new Wellington suburban rail contrac-

tor to Greater Wellington Regional Council, Trans Dev.

During the change we lost a number of long serving members who elected to retire rather than make the transition. We wish Bill Isted, Bob Hammond, Tony Pouao, Bob Hammond, Nigel Mullis and Ian Robertson a happy retirement. A number of other members remained with KR in different roles. Recently

retired too is Pat Barrow. We wish Pat all the best for your retirement and thank him for his years as a roster rep.

There has been a big influx of new faces, especially as passenger operators and train-ee locomotive engineers. Welcome aboard!

Negotiations for the transition from the old employer to the new were ably led by general secretary Wayne Butson and branch delegates. An agreement on the over 500 pages of documents which constituted

# WHERE ARE YOU?

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"the same or more favourable" conditions was reached.

The proof of the pudding has not been so straightforward however as many delegates will attest. An area of concern was identified immediately about uniforms. These, while looking smart for the public have many shortcomings for the users. Designed for a corporate look they may be suitable for working in an air-conditioned office but leave much to be desired for the vagaries of Wellington's weather. The lack of wet weather gear for on board staff in particular is a constant source of annoyance.

Many members have needed assistance to deal with many rostering issues. Allegations have been made that 'the old rules don't apply, we can roster how we like' and part annual leave days at weekends not being granted, have been some of the more common complaints. When approached the company has denied all these allegations. There have been so many it is difficult to

believe that this has not been orchestrated.

There have been a number of changes as to be expected. The general feeling amongst members is a determination to maintain our working conditions. The branch has become revitalised and united as we move towards MECA negotiations and new rosters.

The general feeling, fuelled by comments from one or two managers, is that contract talks will be more 'take' than 'give'. We are up for it. Watch this space!

Weather events are always on the cards in Wellington. Recently we had two major disruptions in three days. Staff have been put through courses on the need to plan to evacuate unit sets when power for air conditioning carriages is off. Sounds good in theory but unfortunately, in practice, the plans fail because no one would make a decision. On board staff reported having their phone calls unanswered or were hung up on. A Custer-Dunkirk award to the TDW

control centre!

Recently celebrated was Bruce (Bing) Crosby's 50 years in rail. One of the characters of the place, it was great to see a large turn out of past and present work mates at the special morning tea. Bing has been doing a great job behind the scenes chairing the roster committee.

Meanwhile our brothers at the EMU depot have had another change of overalls. They are now branded Hyundai Rotem, the new maintenance contractors for the Wellington suburban rail fleet.

During and since the transition there have been a number of changes. A number of old hands retired. We wish Ray Kai, Terry Upjohn and John Ludlow a happy retirement. Welcome to the many new faces around the depot.

Reports are that morale has taken a bit of a battering. Recently extra overtime was cancelled by decree from Korea. All a bit foreign to our way of doing things! 🌐

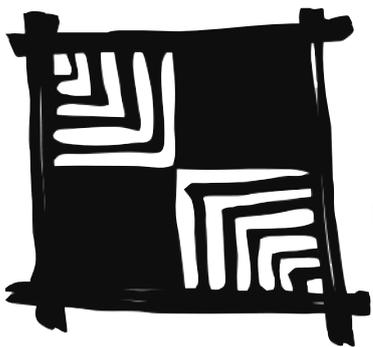
## CANTERBURY RAIL

LET'S start on a positive note: the repair of the Midland Line after the Waitangi weekend fire is a testimony to the dedication and hard work of our members, from Canterbury and

the rest of New Zealand. To have the line operational before the end of March was an outstanding achievement. Our South Island organiser had the privilege of travelling on the TranzAlpine a week or so after the line re-opened and reports that the devastation wreaked by

the fire had to be seen to be believed. The professionalism of everyone involved in the rebuild, and of the train crews on the resumed services have been exemplary and we can be proud of them all.

Now to a job that never ends – health and safety. Our H&S representatives, and in particular Ian Dixon, have been doing a



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# UnionAID

## Better Work, Better World



*Gas training at Middleton yard, an image eerily reminiscent of the First World War.*

◀ great deal of work on breathing apparatus for use in the Otira Tunnel. KiwiRail appears to have scored an own goal by ordering equipment that is not fit for purpose and, under the shadow of a bunch of improvement notices issued by Worksafe, Ian and other reps have been working with management and our national health and safety organiser, Karen Fletcher, to reach agreement on what type of equipment will be used. The issue is a complex one and involves a great deal of hard work and persistence, so well done to all involved for maintaining the pressure.

Another health and safety issue is that of

whole body vibration in locomotives. Since our brothers in Southland and Otago red carded several locos there has been a great deal of activity in this area.

KiwiRail have purchased equipment to measure vibration and have been conducting tests to establish baselines. Locomotive engineers and mechanical delegates across the South Island have been involved with the mechanical and operations management to ensure that the matter is being dealt with. Once again, persistence coupled with a willingness to "just say no" if asked to operate unsafe machinery is paying dividends.

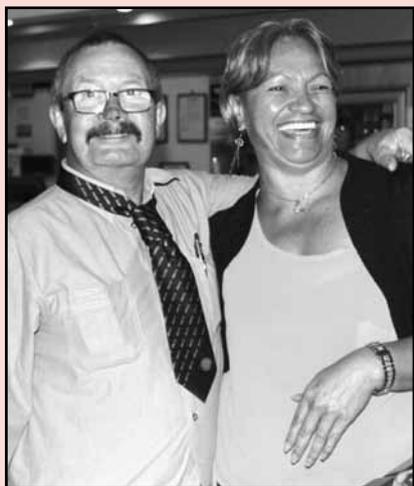
We have had a number of battles on other fronts. The first has been the Christchurch Service Centre, responsible for train builds and customer liaison. Readers will remember that an ill-considered restructure last year decimated the staff at the Centre and shifted a good chunk of their work to Auckland. Since then there have been a

number of retirements and resignations and a failure to replace these staff with permanent positions created a health and safety issue as the stress of covering the gaps was leading to some of the remaining members falling ill. After some fairly testy exchanges, including a threat to picket the Centre,

management finally did the right thing and started to fill the vacancies with permanent appointees. Not our preferred way of doing business and testimony to the poor state of relations between the RMTU and management in this area.

Over in networks the hardy annual of contracting out has risen its head once again. This isn't just a local issue, but it is complicated by the fact we have a major rebuild underway north of Christchurch as KiwiRail seeks to re-open the Main North Line. Nobody, least of all us, wants to stand in the way of the railway re-opening, and we understand that much of that work will be contracted out. However, our pragmatism around this should not be taken as a willingness to accept contracting out of core work. At the time of writing our networks' delegates have put all engagement in HPHE on hold pending a resolution of what we see as a failure to properly consult over ▶

## Life member



*Lyttelton port assistant secretary Polly Bysterveld with Mike Tasker at his RMTU life membership presentation at the Top Club, Lyttelton on 15 March 2017.*



*Gary Uren (centre) on the day he retired with apprentices Will Stringer and Andrew Petrie.*

contracting out.

Workers' Memorial Day in Canterbury was bigger than it has been for many years as we joined in a stop work meeting with our fellow members from the Lyttelton Port branch. One of the resolutions from last year's National Conference was that port and rail branches would stand together on this day and we're proud of having followed through in Canterbury. The ceremony was

particularly poignant as a number of representatives from the Pike River families were present and spoke very eloquently. No-one could fail to be moved by their words, which brought home the theme of fighting for the living while mourning the dead.

Finally, we have had a host of retirements of late: Peter Roberts, Matt Baker, Bryn McCaw, Russell Baker, Gary Uren, Guy Millar, Lindsay Cameron, Denis Mulholland,

Paul Swainson, Brian Duke, Russell Thompson, Peter Barlow and Malcolm Teasdale. Together you have clocked up hundreds of years of loyal service to the railway through some very tough times. The next generation coming through will enjoy the benefits and terms and conditions that you fought for by being union members and in turn will pass on the baton you have given us. 🇳🇿

## NELSON PORT

*Port Nelson's Peter Moore and Steven Erskine keeping it safe in the lashing cage*



## Sickness, accident & death



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

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

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## LYTTELTON PORT

**F**OLLOWING on from the last issue, MUNZ and LPC resolved their dispute and a new collective agreement has been ratified. We're now in the situation where the 40% of cargo handlers who are RMTU members are not obliged to work so-called 'sliding shifts' where the 60% who are MUNZ members are. At a membership meeting in March our members signalled very strongly they had no appetite for sliding shifts as per the MUNZ arrangement. This was reinforced by our delegates who attended a seminar in their own time in April and resolved that there would be no reduction in terms and conditions as part of the forthcoming RMTU bargaining set to kick off in early July. It remains to be seen if our members will be swayed by the prospect of a pay increase linked to a change in the hours of work clause in the agreement.

Elsewhere in the port, where the overwhelming majority of workers are RMTU, we are busy calling for remits which will be assessed by the delegates as to whether they are sufficiently deeply and widely felt to forward to the negotiation table as claims. These claims will have to be endorsed by the wider membership and our aim is to be in a position to have this done by the time we initiate bargaining in July. The culture of bargaining at Lyttelton Port is that it is a long drawn out and fractious process; it doesn't need to be and the work we've done on developing the relationship with management since the 2014 bar-

gaining round means that the process should be smoother this time round. However, there are number of indications that LPC is still wedded to the old way of doing things. For example, we received notice that the container terminal management didn't see our consultative body, the

self-managing team.

The paradox is that there are people in LPC management who recognise the need for a more constructive relationship while there are others who appear to prefer the old antagonistic way of doing business. Marine and security remain areas of concern with a manager who persists in needlessly antagonising our members. Engagement



*Lyttelton Port branch delegates pledge there will be no employer clawbacks in this years bargaining round*

area operational forum, as being "efficient" and was looking to wind it up. Then we were told that a "review" of security was being undertaken and "all options were on the table" – management speak for 'we're considering contracting out'. We've asked to be involved in the review at the front end but our offer has, to date, been unanswered. Finally, we have had a refusal to engage with our planners – logistics officers – as a group, despite their collective agreement enshrining their status as a

and dialogue or command and control? It takes both parties to participate in the former.

On a more positive note we've successfully agreed a variation to the collective agreement to accommodate workshop staffing changes and we've successfully advocated for permanent positions remaining that way instead of being replaced with shonky fixed term roles.

Our members were out in force on Workers' Memorial Day at the ceremony in Christchurch where we heard from representatives of the families of the 29 miners killed at Pike River. This was a joint stop-work meeting with our brothers and sisters in the Canterbury rail branch and there was a very good turn out from both branches. We also noted that representatives from both LPC and KiwiRail management came to pay their respects as well.

This is a very important day in our calendar and it was good to see so many of our members as well as other Canterbury unions observing the occasion.

And while we're on the subject of significant dates we note the retirement of dockmaster and RMTU stalwart Hal Upton. Hal was a pillar



*(l to r) Andy Swanney, Brian Olsen and Peter Hodgson receive Loyalty Awards from Wayne Butson on behalf of the RMTU.*

of our Union in Lyttelton, never afraid to pitch in and do the hard work and with a wisdom that many years experience gave him. We'll miss you Hal – don't be a stranger and all the best for a happy and healthy retirement.

Finally, there is some talk in the cargo-handlers' mess about amalgamation talks between ourselves and MUNZ. In a country our size the case for one union on the waterfront is certainly compelling and now that some older hands have moved on perhaps this time it is more than just a pipe dream? 🇺🇸



*Lyttelton Port Company workshop crew support the Spanish dockers.*

## WEST COAST RAIL

In the Greymouth operations office our hazard board is full of un-actioned items, some of which have been there over eight months. This is not good enough. A lot of these issues have been tabled at the health and safety meetings. The issue get talked about and the usual results are a flurry of emails between managers – and then it gets talked about at the next health and safety meeting. And around in circles it goes.

Some of these issues are clear health and safety issues like some of the underfoot conditions in various locations. But while the bosses are flat out doing nothing about addressing them our members are working in substandard conditions.

Some are easy to fix and we are at a loss to explain why it takes so long to get things done.

It is ironic that the access road and car park for the Greymouth depot had pot

holes developing and once they were identified they were fixed up smartly. Why can't this be the case in other areas?

We read with interest the piece in the last issue of *The Transport Worker* with regard to the Dongwha siding in Southland. We need to take further advice, but by the time you read this, and if we are sure the issues are sufficiently serious and pose an imminent risk of serious harm, then we will use the Red Card.

Our loco delegate Bob Broadhurst has been very active dealing with the fiasco of the DC locos, together with other representatives from around the South Island. Our Otira delegate,



*Frank O'Donnell with his gold card, Westport.*



*Senior comm tech Graeme Nichol at Otira with his invention of a gas monitor station.*



*Grey bridge gang at Arthurs Pass on bridge 48.*

Mike Morgan, has also been very active on the Southern Tunnels Focus Group working alongside Ian Dixon and others on the self-rescue equipment for workers in the Otira tunnel.

The networks guys have been flat out of late assisting with the rebuild of the Midland Line after the Waitangi Day fire and also on the Main North Line after the earthquakes last year. This has involved some long hours, not just at the trackside, but getting to and from the worksites.

For example, on the Midland Line the lads worked day and night to rebuild bridge 87. Up on the MNL we take great pride in the

◀ good work these members are doing. There hasn't been a job this big on the railway since the 1970s.

We had a stop-work meeting on Workers' Memorial Day and a guest speaker from the families of those killed at Pike River came along to our gathering at the Union Hotel. This was very interesting especially in light of the disclosure a couple of days later of the footage of men and machines working in the drift. The branch put on some food and this was enjoyed by all. We hope to make the event bigger and better next year. 🌐

*RMTU West Coast track delegate Ron Nijssen with Brad Beddoes.*



## TIMARU RAIL

**W**E'VE had a busy time of late with members chalking up significant anniversaries of service in rail.

On 6 May Jim Sheridan, Bill Hand, Grant Palmer and Jim Bartlett celebrated 40 years service with us at a well-attended function in town.

Although we're told that jobs for life are a thing of the past, and many of our former workmates found this out the hard way through redundancies over the years,

the loyal service of lads like these demonstrates there is another story out there – that of the survivors who have kept the railway operating through the ups and downs of the last four decades.

Well done lads – we hope you enjoy the next 40 years as much as the first!

A big thank you to our excellent track gang members who have worked hard on making improvements to the yard. As our Southland brothers have shown, yard conditions are a serious issue and we are fortunate in Timaru in having such a dedi-

cated and professional group of members looking after our infrastructure.

Commiserations to one of our members in the CT site who sustained painful injuries to his elbow after falling from his forklift. We've seen the so called Serious Occurrence Report which seems to focus exclusively on the individual involved and ignores the systemic issues underlying the incident. It seems the bad old habit of blaming the worker is still alive and well.

On that note – be careful and be safe. We want to celebrate many more anniversaries! 🌐

## TIMARU PORT

**H**ERE in Timaru our members directly employed by Prime Port are looking forward to bargaining our new collective agreement, which expires in late July.

The port is doing well, there has been an increase in staff and some dredging work is being done as we go to press, and as far as we are aware, the future looks positive. This augers well for a successful wage round and we look forward to getting round the table with management.

Quality Marshalling members remain busy. There is certainly no shortage of work and our hours of work clauses mean that we have to be very vigilant about fatigue.

There was one incident in the last three months where, because of repeated changes to shipping, members were awake for far too long before beginning their shift. To their credit management treated this as a near miss and conducted a very thorough investigation. It does illustrate however, that when everyone is under pressure, so called "flexible" working arrangements can pose a health and safety risk. We are working with management to develop and improve access to meaningful time off. An example of this being weekend rosters and one or two consecutive rostered days off.

It is becoming even more apparent that work is having real impact on family and social wellbeing.

We are looking forward to the forthcoming Ports Forum and the advertised session on fatigue management. This will hopefully arm us with the knowledge not just to 'just say no' to unsafe work but to be able sit down and sort out the underlying issues with management.

Our branch executive has been talking with the local rail branch about how we can work better together.

It's still early days but there is talk of a joint social event. By the time you read this we may have opened the branch coffers and made the time to get together to know one another a little better.

In the meantime, to all our fellow members, stay safe – health and safety starts with us and looking after one another. 🌐

## PORT CHALMERS

**W**E are almost at the end of yet another very busy season and fatigue is starting to set in and everyone is looking a bit jaded so we are looking forward to a bit of a break from long days and big exchanges.

The cruise ship season finished in the middle of April, it also was the busiest season so far. This season didn't go without incident unfortunately; on February 10 a young crew member was killed on board the Emerald Princess whilst changing a gas bottle on one of the life rafts. He was 33, on his first voyage and married with young kids. Yet another family that has lost a son, husband and father. Another name to add to the long and growing list of people that went to work and never returned home safely! That bang will be remembered by some at this port forever. Our sympathies go out to his family back in the Philippines.

Workers' Memorial Day was well supported with a big presence of RMTU members. John Kerr came up with the idea to hold Section 26 meetings and that worked really well getting people engaged in such an important issue. Well done John. It was very confronting to hear so many names read out of people killed at work in the Otago region and to see so many white

crosses placed in the ground. It was great to see life members Jim Kelly and Tim Spence at the service. Unions Otago also asked Rob Haultain to organise an art show of her work about the Pike River Mines titled 'A canary did not sing' and the forestry deaths titled 'A tree is heavy, falling'. This was attended by lots of people and raised around \$500 for the Pike River families.

### Negotiation time

It's almost time to go into negotiations again. We have initiated bargaining jointly with MUNZ, our current three year deal expires in July. Time will tell how that goes. Watch this space!

Port Otago is going through a change at the top. Geoff Plunket our current CEO is leaving us at the end of August. Geoff is retiring and we wish him all the best.

We welcomed new CEO Kevin Winders a couple of months ago. Kevin is ex Silver Fern Farms, a keen yachtsman, a petrol head (this explains him driving a different car to work most days), the author of the Kotahi Deal and someone who is very competitive and doesn't like to lose. This could prove to be very interesting in a highly unionised environment! Kevin has been holding meet and greet staff meetings and workshops

where he has been going through the results of our staff survey last year. The results weren't great in lots of areas so he has asked about what we can do better and has taken away lots of butcher's paper full of ideas. He assures us that he will collate the top five ideas and will come back to us with ideas about how they will be addressed. One hopes this will happen because past history has seen things like this disappear from the radar and placed in the too-hard basket. Time will also answer this!

### Get ready for the elections

Yay its election year. We must all strive to change this right winged government. We have from now to September to talk to our mates about being on the electoral roll, making them aware of all the anti-worker legislation and, most importantly, getting them to vote. If only 21 percent of RMTU members vote, change will never happen! Voting as a privilege. There are still places in the world where people are not allowed to vote – especially women. Exercise your rights and get to the polling booths – that's the only way we will make change!

That's it from us. Be safe out there and remember if it's not safe "Just say NO!" 🌐

## SOUTHLAND RAIL

**T**HE big news down here is that recently the branch was been awarded a Judges' Special Commendation as part of the Safeguard Magazine National Health and Safety Awards for our handling of the Dongwha siding and DC loco issues late last year. Daniel Kent, our branch secretary, will collect the award on behalf of the branch at the awards ceremony in Auckland. In fact, by the time you read this, he may well have already done so.

Like many of you we took the time to observe Workers' Memorial Day with a brief ceremony. Our branch chair Gavin Mortimore, unveiled a plaque in our networks depot. The plaque was made by

Mark Burton, our very capable networks delegate and H&S representative. This is now permanently displayed in a prominent place in the foyer at Network Services. The commemoration was attended by 10 staff from freight operations, mechanical and network services. One minute's silence was observed at midday by those in attendance in memory of workmates killed at work. The memorial is an engraved granite slab set into a dressed piece of (Australian) hardwood sleeper – a fitting reminder that we should fight for the living as we mourn the dead.

The two above items are, of course, related. It is only by being vigilant around health and safety that we can maintain our fight for the living, and it is (sometimes) a fight that involves making a stand and back-

ing one another in refusing unsafe work. It doesn't end there though because the issue of loco safety has required us to get around the table with operations and mechanical management and thrash things out. And therein is the message: be ready to take a stand, ask for advice, have faith that your Union will support you and don't take your foot off the gas.

The hard work starts when the boss acknowledges we have a point because then we have to nail things down so it doesn't happen again.

Which brings us neatly to the question of yard rosters. We have a roster down here that is demonstrably unsafe and which breaches all sorts of accepted guidelines around safe rostering. By the time you read this we may well have reached for that Red Card. 🌐

# Supporting fellow unionists

The union movement is as strong as its members and they show that strength when supporting their brothers and sisters in strife. The RTBU is no stranger to solidarity and you will frequently find members flying the RTBU banner at pickets and strike front lines.



**T**HE RTBU joined with other unions supporting Unite Union members striking from KFC, Carls Jnr, Pizza Hut and Starbucks in Auckland on Saturday April 22.

Lucy, the six year old daughter of our RTBU Auckland-based organiser, wrote “It is sad you need to be on strike today. But it is kind of good that you are going on strike to get away from your boss because he was being mean to you. My name is Lucy so this card is from me.”

She gave the message, written on a card, to the striking workers.

Unite members participated in rolling stopages over the weekend forcing many stores to close their doors. Some stores reportedly locked employees inside to stop them being able to participate in the strikes with customers stranded both inside and out.

Unite organiser Joe Carolan thanked the RTBU and other unions for their support. This show of solidarity of multiple union involvement would not have gone unnoticed by the employer.

