

# THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

# DEC 2021

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



Christmas  
Camouflage?



9 TOP APPRENTICE

Thywillbedone Saofai took out the top prize in the KiwiRail Apprentice of the Year awards

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### Loyal Right Through

Commemorating the '51 Waterside Lockout

A special screening of a film about the 1951 Waterfront Lockout shown in Christchurch.

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Delegate Roy Hislop farewelled by Primeport by manager Kevin Beeby.

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** The result of an incident with a willow. While the two Tauranga-based LEs escaped with barely a scratch the tree was a write-off! See page 8.

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*Wishing all our Union members a very Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year. From the president, general secretary, NMC and staff.*



**Wayne Butson,  
General secretary  
RMTU**

## Members: single loud voice - YES!

**K**IA ORA – I don't think I have ever felt so invigorated at this time of the year for many a long while nor have I seen an occasion when a Union strategy has so paid off for workers in an organisation.

The current bargaining for the renewal of the KiwiRail MECA has seen the Union grow in numbers, unity and focus. We have also felt and heard the determination amongst members which has endorsed our democratically elected bargaining structure as being a true pathway to delivering power and influence to the wider membership.

Our delegates this time have spoken with a single loud voice that said 2021 is our year and the year of the essential worker and we are demanding a share of the increased revenues and volumes carted during Covid – and we want a real and meaningful wage increase of 8%. We are worth it.

We know the senior managers were getting big bonuses despite them being hidden in the annual report.

All eyes and attention now turn to settling the MECA, getting a new chair and an effective board for KiwiRail plus a chief executive officer who can alter the course of KiwiRail to bring it back on a heading of real and meaningful engagement and partnership with the unions.

Covid and employer vaccination mandating continues to pose challenges for the Union and members.

Unions are broad churches and we often have members with differing political, ►

religious and general outlook on life. This has posed challenges in inter-personal relationships between members and delegates and strained long standing relationships.

This, I observe, is also happening in the wider New Zealand community and among families. I hope we are able as a society to move on from the low trust, conspiracy theory-ridden mindset espoused by sectors of our community on a daily basis and from far right groups who should crawl back under the rocks from which they have come. These polarising opinions must stop.

Our new National Management Committee and the KiwiRail industrial councils for the next two years are up and running and I look forward to the next two years of effective governance of your Union and good guidance of things industrial in KiwiRail. 2021 has been a challenging but rewarding year and has re-proven the indomitable kiwi spirit to deal with situations by just getting on with life, even in lockdown. Who knew what that word meant two years ago? And by and large I think we Kiwis have done it well.

On behalf of the Union president, NMC members and staff, I hope and trust that you and yours will all see out the Christmas/New Year holiday period safe and sound. We are all told the home and our work places are dangerous locations but I reckon New Zealand's roads, rivers, lakes and sea are just as dangerous over the holiday season. So please make sure you stay safe at all times.

Wishing each and every one of you a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and joyous 2022.

Be RMTU proud and I know that 2022 will be a prosperous year for us all! 🌐

## Trains with wings

A team of Chinese scientists have found that adding five pairs of small wings on each train carriage would generate additional lift and reduce the weight of the train by nearly a third, taking the top speed to 450kph. Already the fastest network in the world at 350kph this project suggests they would run nearly 30 per cent faster. The proposal would see an array of smaller wings on top of a train but scientist say some extremely challenging engineering issues will need to be overcome.

## Retirements

Dear Editor,

I have recently retired from KiwiRail (Scenic, Christchurch) in my 46th year of continuous service.

There were also some spasmodic 'temp'

periods dating back to 1969. Over that period I had been a member of the ASRS, NUR, ROI, CURE and RMTU.

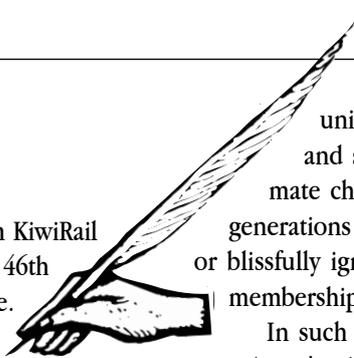
My father and grandfather had also worked for NZR dating back to 1923 so we covered the best part of a century in the service.

Like many of my father's generation, he retired at 56 after 40 years service. Myself, finishing at nearly 70 years old, I don't feel too guilty at being underdone.

All of us were adamant on the benefits of Union membership particularly in dealing with a large organisation where the regular shuffling around and moving on of people in all levels of the structure, whether in location, for promotion, resignation or retirement could lead to a somewhat impersonal relationship with decision makers at times. I could think of hundreds of people

in many locations who had a say in my career over half a century. The only way to keep such a diverse and malleable array of opinions, personalities, politics (particularly from the mid 1980s onwards), and occasional ignorance, on the straight and narrow, abiding by the agreed Consolidated Determination No.10, Collectives and MECAs was to have the backup of an experienced and reputable negotiating team - a union.

By the time of my retirement I was working with some staff who were 50 years younger than me. Most new employees these days have had no contact with a



union before joining KiwiRail and such has the political climate changed over two or three generations that many are suspicious or blissfully ignorant of the benefits of membership.

In such a safety critical industry, it doesn't take long for the benefits to become apparent particularly in a disciplinary, safety or pay dispute of having a Union delegate's backup.

Over the last 25 years I have been a train manager, on board service manager

and trainer and safety observer and have consequently run long distance passenger trains from Auckland to Invercargill and of course to the West Coast on the now world famous Tranz Alpine.

I attended my first ROI meeting in 1976 and have been an RMTU delegate since 2008 and have attended three wage rounds, a period of much education and satisfaction.

The Scenic portion of KiwiRail and the RMTU is small in number and we can be lost and unknown at times amongst the greater numbers but many of us, because we can run trains in any part of the country, can have a greater but underestimated knowledge

of the operational practices, the network and geography than most staff who are tied to depots.

I would like to thank all those who have been of help and those I have met in all the locations I have worked at throughout the country.

Having worked in workshops, depots, offices (including head office), stations and on board trains (even periodically on the footplate) throughout the network, it has been a privilege to learn how the whole railway works – and being a member of RMTU has been integral to that.

An appreciation also to the work the

## Graham Twist

Dear Editor,

The time has come to tender my resignation from the RMTU effective from 6 November 2021 after 46 years. I am proud of being part of a very strong and supportive Union alongside fellow rail travellers.

A big thank you to Wayne, Todd, Howard and Paul Corliss for helping out when I was unable to sort out different work related issues over the years. Being only a phone call away for much needed advice was wonderful.

What makes a happy workforce is having pretty good wages, safe working conditions and like-minded fellow workmates who push the important causes on a daily basis together with a very committed and supportive Union. Hence I am very proud to have been part of this Union organisation. Graeme Twist  
L/E Masterton.

# STRIKE BAL

## Rail workers vote for nation



Chelsea Nansett receives some ballots at RMTU HQ.

**A**nationwide ballot of members of New Zealand's rail union will see strike action against KiwiRail affecting both rail and ferry transport.

The strike action will affect all rail operations in New Zealand including rail ferries and Auckland and Wellington Metro systems.

The results of a nationwide postal ballot of KiwiRail workers saw an overwhelming majority vote for strike action to pursue a

general wage increase of 8%, after a zero increase in 2020.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union general secretary Wayne Butson says the decision was not taken lightly, but was a reflection of the strongly held views of rail workers.

"Rail workers have kept the country rolling throughout the pandemic, and as essential workers they want to see recognition of their service."

He says rising living costs are reflected in the latest inflation measures, and in the ongoing rise in housing and accommodation costs.

Butson says the 8% increase would provide a flat rate universal increase for all members, with an 8% increase being applied to the gross payroll of all members then distributed equally amongst all members.

He says this would provide a fair and equal universal increase to members pay.

Butson says the Union's relationship with KiwiRail has become difficult, with a very high turnover in senior management creating problems.

The results of the nationwide postal ballot were 1504 returned ballots: 1420 (94.41%) voted Yes; 81 (5.39%) voted No; and 3 (0.2%) were invalid.



Karen Fletcher holding up the RMTU's strike notices.

## LETTERS [CONT]

RMTU has undertaken in improving safety practices in the railway industry. Many oldies bemoan the so called safety industry these days and we all have funny/horror stories of "harum scarum" activities on the job in the past but I doubt we would return to them. The improvement in attitude, practice and knowledge particularly over

the last 20 years I have been out on the track has been dramatic and beneficial. I hope as a trainer I have played a part.

Everyone has to depart the job at some stage and I have been luckier than some in making it at a time of my choosing. When you sense the generations moving forward and your thinking runs the danger of being out of step with the future, it is time to move.

Luckily I was able to be involved with the development of new and improved

passenger trains in the last years including the second generation Tranz Alpine, Coastal Pacific, Northern Explorer, Capital Connection and as a last job working in Hamilton, training staff for the new Te Huia service.

All a positive note on which to end.

Best wishes to all staff with whom I worked and to all RMTU members and staff. Now the knowledge goes to the grandchildren who do think I am truly old.

Yours in farewell,  
Duncan Browne.

# LOT AGREED

## nwide strike and stoppage

◀ This will be the first full national stoppage of the rail system in New Zealand since 1994 and reflects the anger and distress of the membership, says Butson.

"We know how important rail transport is to the freight logistics supply chain and to Auckland and Wellington commuters, and have not taken this action lightly." 🇳🇿



Todd Valster, RMTU national organiser, seen here preparing to take the first batch of the KiwiRail strike ballots to NZ Post.

"This is an overwhelming cry from essential workers who have gone beyond their normal duties in the past two years to keep New Zealand moving," he said. "Eight percent is not a lot to ask in recognition of their sacrifices."

We tackled Auckland Metro rolling contact rail fatigue during lockdown



We came to work during all of the Covid levels



We kept the CT sites, RSAS, freight, ferries and track work operating all through Covid



We received a nil general increase last year



We're going to get a fair deal this year

# VOTE YES

and post your ballot back

Rail and Maritime Transport Union



Howard Philips national returning officer.

# COP26



**A**s *The Transport Worker* went to press the '26th Conference of the Parties' or COP26, was coming to a conclusion in Glasgow. What is the significance of COP26 and why does it matter to working people and their families?

As described in the last issue, COP26 is the 26th conference of the signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In 2015, at COP21 in Paris, 196 countries around the globe – including big carbon emitters like the US, China and India - signed up to legally binding commitments to hold global temperature rises to "well below" 2C above pre-industrial levels, while "pursuing efforts" to limit heating to 1.5C.

Why is limiting global warming to 1.5C so important?

The world's leading authority on climate science – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – has described what a 1.5C temperature rise would mean for the planet. They found a vast difference between the damage done by 1.5C and 2C of heating, and concluded that the lower temperature was much safer. An increase of 1.5C would still result in rising sea levels, the bleaching of coral reefs, and an increase in heatwaves, droughts, floods, fiercer storms and other forms of extreme weather, but these would be far less than the extremes associated with a rise of 2C.

In order to meet the goals of Paris

2015 countries also agreed on non-binding national targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions (or reduce their growth in the case of developing countries), by 2030 in most cases. These national targets are known as nationally determined contributions, or NDCs, which were inadequate to hold the world within the Paris temperature targets. If fulfilled, they would result in 3C or more of warming, which would be disastrous.

Because everyone knew at Paris that the NDCs were inadequate, the French built into the agreement a "ratchet mechanism" by which countries would have to return to the table every five years with fresh commitments. Those five years were up on 31 December 2020, but the pandemic

## PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

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



**Ports Retirement Plan**

Download a copy of the Product Disclosure Statement from our website:

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

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited

prevented many countries coming forward. Before Cop26 all countries were urged to revise their NDCs in line with a 1.5C target, the lower of the two Paris goals. It is estimated that emissions must be reduced by 45% by 2030, compared with 2010 levels, and from there to net zero emissions by 2050, if the world is to have a good chance of remaining within the 1.5C threshold.



*An electric bus and hydrogen-powered train were launched in Scotland during COP26*



At the time of writing, a draft text has been published at COP26. In amongst the legalese and jargon there is a clear warning we are not doing enough to reduce carbon emissions and must do better if we are to reach the 1.5C limit goal. The text cements a review of NDCs in the agenda of every future COP – in UN terms this is important as it means countries will be held accountable annually. Many will be disappointed the document only 'urges' the parties to set NDCs to meet the 1.5C limit, rather than mandating it, but this was probably the strongest language acceptable to the participants.

For the first time, the document also calls for phasing out of coal and ending subsidies for other fossil fuels. This may seem an incredible omission, given that fossil fuels are at the heart of the problem here, but this process moves by consensus and powerful vested interests for fossil fuels from oil-producing countries such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Australia have ensured that mention of fossil fuels has previously been kept out. This reference is likely to be fiercely fought over, but its presence in the text sends a strong message, and was welcomed by green campaigners and developing countries. If it stays in, it sets a new and important precedent at these talks

So what does this all mean for working people?

One critic of COP26 is Yanis Varoufakis, former Greek Finance Minister, and currently a member of the Greek Parliament.

In his view there are three reasons why Cop26 is flawed.

The first is a planet-wide collective

action problem over "free-riding". Big business and some countries are praying, like St Augustine, to be chaste but not just yet. We all prefer a planet on which no one emits carbon to one suffering from the effects of climate breakdown but everyone also prefers to delay paying the cost of transition if they can get away with it. If the rest of the planet does the right thing, the planet is saved, so what's the harm in you not doing your bit? And if the rest of the planet does not do the right thing, why be the one sucker who does?

The second reason is a global coordination failure. Private investment in, say, green hydrogen will only return profits if many other investors invest in it too. So the investors all sit around waiting for each other to be the first. Meanwhile, corporations, communities and states join this waiting game, unwilling to take the risk of committing to green hydrogen until big finance does. Tragically, there is no global coordinator to match the available money, technologies and needs.

The third reason is simply, capitalism. For two centuries immense wealth – and corresponding human misery – was produced by exploitative processes that used the planet as a tap for resources and a waste

pipe for pollutants. Working people around the world are now facing paying for that folly.

If we are to avoid climate system breakdown and rapidly move to a decarbonised economy it will be the biggest change in how our society is organised in 200 years. Unless working people have a voice in that change we risk losing our livelihoods and standards of living as many jobs that are generated by the use of fossil fuel disappear. If Varoufakis is correct and the planet sizzles then our children and grandchildren will suffer the consequences.

Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), a loose alliance of more than 30 unions across the globe, has published a programme for a public low carbon energy

future. The programme is an attempt to rally the international trade union movement behind a political effort to bring about a fundamental shift in climate and energy policy. This shift is needed both to correct the failures of the market model and to ensure that the energy transition is socially just, economically viable, and effective in terms of reaching climate goals.

In other words achieving decarbonisation and providing universal healthcare, education, and access to cheap or free transport and housing is its ambitious goal.

Unions remain the only bodies whose exclusive goal is to promote the interests of working people on the planet and if we don't address this issue we fail our members and their families. 🌍

The TEUD programme is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/TUProgrammeCOP26-EN>



# Tree versus train - no co

Quick action was required in the cab of the Tauranga-bound set to avoid se

**H**EADING towards Tauranga from Kinlieth with a 1500 tonne load of logs, the team in loco 9279 were expecting a clear run - that is, until they turned a corner not far out of the city and saw the massive willow tree across the track.

Minder LE Jeremy Mason caught a glimpse of huge branches at head height and immediately dived to the floor warning his trainee, LE Hayden Mason (no relation), to do the same.

"And cover your head!" he yelled as he hit the deck.

Hayden heard the warning a fraction of a second after he had discarded his first instinct - "to notch up and drive through it" - and applied full emergency brakes before following Jeremy.

Hayden recalls a huge BOOM followed immediately by a shower of glass shards.

"Then something heavy hit the back of my head," he said. "I later discovered it was the emergency brake button completely sheared off. I guess we would have stopped anyway."

The old willow, now a shattered mess, had been blasted to smithereens.

"It was obliterated into firewood alongside the track."

The train itself was covered with leaves and branches looking like it had been camouflaged for Christmas.

The crew, however, were unscathed and after taking stock of themselves and the cab took a walk around the train to check the load and for any damage. Finding only



(L to r) Jeremy Mason and Hayden Mason.

smashed head lights and a body-sized bole of trunk skewered through one window they decided to complete the journey as they had one good windscreen. The journey home was conducted at a leisurely pace.

Being Labour Day and a holiday there weren't many people at the depot to watch them slowly slide in with half a tree sticking out the front window and festooned with leaves, twigs and branches.

With time to reflect both drivers were delighted to emerge intact and to wonder a little about the circumstances.

"The track is well used," said Jeremy, "but being a holiday weekend there was less traffic. Had we come across it from the other direction or possibly unladen, we could have stopped short. But thank goodness it didn't topple over at night as there would have been very little warning."

Neither wanted to contemplate what damage might have been done had someone been sitting in front of the smashed window.

After their slow trip to home base they parked up and submitted a brief report to KiwiRail by phone as there were no senior staff on duty at the time. The following KiwiRail supervisors recognised the seriousness of the situation and interviewed both drivers. Both drivers report that KiwiRail showed intense concern for their welfare and offered them days off to recover. But they had both come through the experience



Thumbs up from Hayden in the cab.

# ntest!

erious injury



(l and above) The resulting window damage and debris from the protruding branch.

in remarkably good condition and were keen to carry on working.

Jeremy said their team leader was very supportive and, clearly, KiwiRail took the incident very seriously. However, he was a little concerned to note a gap in the system which left the yard devoid of senior staff on a holiday and said it is something we'll need to discuss.

Both said that had the tree's precarious state been noted a ground crew of gangers would have been despatched to deal with it. In this case, they agreed, there simply had been no warning or indication.

Trees lining railway lines is an internationally recognised hazard. In NZ KiwiRail

gangs are on a constant lookout.

About 6.3 million trees line the tracks in the UK plus an extra seven million on neighbouring properties. Unlike in NZ most of those trees are deciduous showering the lines with billions of leaves reducing grip and disrupting services. A single tree can have as many as 50,000 leaves.

RMTU general secretary, Wayne Butson, is gratified that union members took swift and safe measures. "I'm delighted that Jeremy and Hayden emerged safer and wiser from what could, potentially, have been considerably more serious."



## Safety screens

The standard for DL loco wind-screens (all generations) is UIC 651 (International Union of Railways or Union Internationale des Chemis de fer). This requires a minimum thickness of 18mm, semi-toughened, laminated, impact resistant glass.

The standard test for UIC 651 requires that the glass won't break up and will stay within the frame of the windscreen when a 1kg hemispherical projectile hits it at 260 km/hr.

The physics mean that an increasing mass of the object reduces the speed at which failure would occur.

## RAIL - TAKING STRESS OFF NORTHLAND ROADS

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

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



**Rail is the Strategic missing link to Northport.**

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



# RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

## Christie Yule

Rail operator, Mount Maunganui

### What does your job involve?

As a rail operator I am working outside with my work colleagues riding a remote controlled shunt engine which we attach to wagons and deliver around The Mount to different customers. Once emptied we return to collect the wagons and then we begin making up trains. Additionally, I check the safety of each wagon and the consist as a whole before it is allowed to safely depart our terminal.

### Tell us why did you decide to take on the role of Union branch secretary?

I have been a proud Union member since starting at KiwiRail in March 2019. I took on the role because I am hoping to positively contribute to my branch and our Union members through my involvement. I also love to learn and continue to develop as a person and I believe this role will help me to do this.



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

This seems to be a very common question. In my perspective I have a fantastic group of people I work with

who are very supportive, hard-working, and have great senses of humour. It just so happens that the majority of them are males. Working in this industry I welcome any opportunities or challenges that come along with having a strong male contingency. Ultimately I see this industry as one with room for growth, development and positive change and I am more than happy to help be part of this change.

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

COME JOIN! You won't regret that decision because I certainly haven't. There are plenty of different job opportunities within the rail so there is something for everyone. Come join an industry where you can be part of something special and break glass ceilings. 🌐

**\$10,000 ADB**

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

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

Reply online: [ailnz.co.nz/request](http://ailnz.co.nz/request)

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

*Please note:* To qualify for the \$10,000 of additional ADB coverage, an AIL representative must visit you, obtain an enrollment form, and collect premium for the first year. You may renew annually for \$5. A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A (Excellent) for overall Financial Strength (as of 7/20).



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



# Remembering the 1951 strike

70 years since the Waterfront Lockout shocked NZ workers

**T**HIS year is the 70th anniversary of the 1951 Waterfront Lockout. Whilst COVID19 restrictions have had an impact on many planned events recognising this landmark dispute, the Canterbury Socialist Society (CSS) managed to organise a showing of the documentary '1951' along with the RMTU Lyttelton Port branch and MUNZ Lyttelton.

Made to commemorate the 50th anniversary, the film shows how, in 1951, New Zealand temporarily became a police state. Civil liberties were curtailed, freedom of speech denied, and people could be imprisoned for providing food to those involved in the lockout of waterside workers, and the associated strikes.

There are interviews with many of those involved including workers, journalists and police.

This was the biggest industrial dispute in New Zealand's history. It lasted 151 days, from February to July 1951. At its



height 22,000 wharfies and other unionists were off the job - out of a countrywide population of just under two million.

The confrontation was the culmination of decades of unrest on the wharves; it polarised politics and split the union movement, families and friendships.



resented ever since.

The film is sympathetic to the workers on the waterfront – those who were on the 'losing' side of the dispute.

As is made clear, these people had their stories repressed at the time, and their experience has been ignored or misrep-

There was a good turnout for the showing at the Loons Club in Lyttelton, with members of the CSS, RMTU and MUNZ as well as many from the local community attending.

A couple of introductory speeches from Victor Billot, editor of the MUNZ publication *The Maritimes* and RMTU South Island organiser John Kerr were notable for their brevity as the documentary really speaks for itself.

A huge thank you to the CSS and in particular their chair Tom Roud, for putting on this event. 🌐

CSS, MUNZ & RMTU present

## Loyal Right Through

Commemorating the '51 Waterside Lockout

Friday 12 Nov 7:00pm  
**1951 Lockout: 70 Years On**  
 Film Screening and Talk from Local Historian

Sunday 14 Nov 2:00pm  
**BBQ with the Waterside Unions**  
 With Live Music from The Easterns

at the  
**LOONS**  
 16 Canterbury Street  
 Lyttelton

To view the film from home:  
<https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/1951-2001>

## New fatigue guidance for ports one step closer

**T**HE RMTU's campaign to improve fatigue management in the ports has taken another step forward.

The impairment caused by fatigue is likened to being over the drink driving limit: slower reaction time, inability to concentrate, poor judgement and decision making – these are all symptoms of excessive fatigue.

In a port environment (including driving home after a shift) the risk of harm is high.

Fatigue in the ports has finally been acknowledged by both the regulators – WorksafeNZ and Maritime NZ – who have convened a tripartite working group to develop guidance for the industry. The working group includes unions, the regulators, the Ports Industry Association, and support from Massey University's Sleep/Wake Research Centre. The guidance is called 'Building a fatigue risk management system - Good practice guidance for the ports'.

During consultation on the guidance the delegates said the unplanned nature of port work is the main reason port companies don't manage the risk well. Rotating shift work, early starts, inadequate rest periods between shifts, excessive hours, casual labour, on call work, secondary employment, lack of certainty over when staff will be called into work and a workplace culture that accepts fatigue as being part of the job are all contributing factors.

Delegates said port staff who are responsible for allocating staff to shifts are doing it at short notice, sometimes the night before a shift. They have no fatigue assessment tool to help them assess who may be too fatigued to work safely - based on previous work patterns.

They phone workers until they find someone to fill the roster. One delegate said some guys will always say "yes" to additional shifts. He knew of a stevedore who had worked 35 consecutive shifts, and was exhausted. He shouldn't have been there but there was no oversight by the company or monitoring systems to manage the fatigue risk said the delegate.

Next step? The working group will be reviewing the feedback from the port industry and unions and make any required changes before releasing the guidance in the new year. 🌐

# Right to flush at Hyundai Rotem

**H**OW long would our members expect to work in a permanently fixed building workplace with no fixed toilet but have to use a separate portaloos?

Six months? Two years? Imagine six years.

For Paul Harris and Martin Valais at the Hyundai Rotem, wheel lathe operators, these are the workplace conditions they are expected to endure purely because their employer and the building owners (Greater Wellington Regional Council) think it is not a necessity to fit a fixed toilet. Ultimately they don't want to take ownership to get it installed.

The closest available fixed toilet for them is at the EMU depot which is separated by a rail yard at a distance of 1500 meters. The access through the yard has no shelter and is rough underfoot. During bad Wellington weather they are exposed to unfavourable conditions.

Paul has spent 11 years as a wheel lathe operator. When working under KiwiRail he had access to the tunnel and Tranz Scenic buildings but when the contract was lost to Hyundai Rotem Wellington in 2016, so did the access to those facilities. Instead a portaloos was installed. Over the coming years, there have been many attempts by delegates and employees to raise the health and safety issues regarding the portaloos. These include: the portaloos is not fixed properly to a foundation and blows over in high winds; sometimes human faeces are found outside due to the portaloos being locked; and the portaloos vents potentially toxic fumes into the wheel lathe operations and adjacent areas.

Martin has been a wheel lathe operator for two years and is currently the chairperson for the health and safety action team (HSAT). Since his first day at the lathe, he has frequently raised the



issues through to the Hyundai Rotem Wellington management. Earlier this year they said they raised the issue to Greater Wellington Regional Council for consideration. Martin has pointed out to management that the cost of hiring the portaloos over a year would easily fund the installation of a fixed toilet. There is already access to sewage pipework on the side of the building. Since then there have been attempts by the HSAT to get updates but there has been no transparency of progression or a plan in addressing the health and safety concerns raised by Martin and Paul.

Use of a portaloos would be expected on a temporary or mobile worksite where obvious challenges make them practicable, but to say that a permanent building used as a workplace, does not require a fixed toilet facility is completely in breach of their duty of care of our members' health and safety conditions of work.

We collectively have had enough of empty promises, total disregard to our practicable solutions, and lack of consultation to resolve this issue. This has gone on for far too long and we make a united stand to ensure that our members' health and safety will always come first. 🌐

**James McKenzie**

**RMTU delegate and H&S rep**

## In support of MUA



**O**N behalf of the Napier Port members of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union NZ, we send our full support in your fight against Qube Ports Pty.

As the MUA did for us at Napier Port in 2007, we have never forgotten the support you gave, to both the RMTU and MUNZ members, in our quest against what is now, a subsidiary of Qube, called ISO.

There are plenty of expletives one could scribe around scab labour and the use there of, in a world where unions fight to

retain work, conditions and good paying jobs and now is more important than ever.

We trust whatever needs to be done for a successful outcome for all MUA members is achieved as soon as possible.

MUA, HERE TO STAY

I kotahitanga (in unity) 🇳🇿

Editor: The National Union contributed \$10,000 to the MUA strike fund.

# WHERE ARE YOU?

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

# Lyttelton Port and Waterfront Unions sign HPHE charter



**I**n a historic agreement, Lyttelton Port Company (LPC) and waterfront labour unions signed a Charter on 29 October introducing the high performance high engagement (HPHE) model to the Port.

The Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ), the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) and the Amalgamated Workers' Union of New Zealand (AWUNZ) represent 95% of LPC's collectivised workforce.

The Charter jointly commits LPC and the unions representing LPC employees to each other's success and the development and fostering of a safe, cooperative and inclusive culture. It lays out shared aims and outcomes for Lyttelton Port and its workers, and specifies decision-making and engagement protocols for HPHE processes.

Roger Gray, LPC's CEO, welcomed the agreement, saying: "LPC is committed to creating a more cooperative and positive

workplace, and to giving our unions a genuine voice. The history of the Port has been one of industrial conflict, but we want to move forward to create an environment of mutual respect and problem-solving based on an understanding of each other's interests."

"We entered into the process to discuss HPHE with some trepidation," said Gerard Loader, president of MUNZ Local 43 (Lyttelton branch). "However, as we learnt more about HPHE and what it involves, we can see that it is necessary for MUNZ to be involved to help deliver key priorities for our members and the Port.

"MUNZ Local 43's priorities include security of employment and superior conditions for our members, facilitating LPC's role as the crucial link in the Canterbury and wider South Island economy, better consultation enabling improved productivity and

leading safety standards, and helping to keep Lyttelton Port in the ownership of the ratepayers of Christchurch, which benefits everyone in the region."

Heiner Benecke, RMTU Lyttelton branch secretary called the Charter "a landmark in industrial relations" which "lays the foundation for a new way of doing things at Lyttelton that is based on cooperation and mutual respect. It is a marked departure from the very entrenched adversarial approach that has been the hallmark of the relationship between LPC and the waterfront unions for many years."

Errol Walker, LPC AWUNZ delegate, said: "We look forward to contributing to HPHE with the common aim in place of achieving a more profitable and sustainable company, a safer and healthier work environment, security of employment, and improved wages and conditions." 

## University study grants available

**T**HE RMTU's Ernest William File Scholarship, is now open and available for the sons and daughters of financial members of the Union.

The scholarship puts \$2000 towards their first year of study.

Established in 1978 by members of the New Zealand Locomotive Engineers' Association as a tribute to Ernest William File, the retiring general secretary of the Association at the time, the scholarship was adopted and expanded by the Rail and Maritime Transport Union and extended to all members.

The scholarship assists first year studying for a degree at any New Zealand university.

Eligibility is simple: Applicants must be the son or daughter of an RMTU member and they must be enrolled (or planning to be) in their first year of full time study for an undergraduate degree.

Prospective students are encouraged to apply to:

<https://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz/scholarships/ernest-william-file-scholarship>

Applications are open for four months (1 Dec - 1 April) 

# Apprentice of the year

**W**E are delighted to announce the KiwiRail apprentices who have been recognised as part of our inaugural Roy Sullivan Apprentice of the Year award.

A panel of five judges from KiwiRail and the RMTU independently reviewed 14 nominations for the award.

One overall winner and two highly commended awards were available for apprentices who showed excellence against the KiwiRail values and other award criteria.

This year's winner was Thywillbedone Saofai, Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship, Rolling Stock, Auckland.

Highly commended went to Toni Rhind, Mechanical Engineering Apprenticeship, Plant & Equipment, Auckland and Blair Rarere, Electrical Engineering Apprenticeship, Signals, Tauranga.

Apprenticeship delivery manager Lee Pennock said the awards have been a huge success. "We were blown away by the calibre of nominees. We really do have outstanding talent here at KiwiRail, and that shone through in the 14 nominations."

"The judging panel had a tough job separating the nominees, but Thywillbedone finished as a clear winner," he added. "The judges were impressed by his excellent technical knowledge and practical skills, as well as his demonstration of the KiwiRail values. He has introduced industry-best-practice to safety standards and practical works, and also coaches younger apprentices. He has an excellent work ethic and has received great feedback from both peers and Competenz."

The Apprentice of the Year Award will take place again in 2022. 🌐



*Thywillbedone Saofai*



*Toni Rhind*



*Blair Rarere*

## KiwiRail's Roy Sullivan

Our Apprentice of the Year award is named after Roy Sullivan – a life-long believer and living proof of the value of an apprenticeship. Roy started as one in 1979 with GEC in Birmingham in the UK, progressing through

many leadership roles and ultimately leading large business units in several rail companies around the world. He maintained a deep connection to the front line and always took the time to support and advocate for training and progression of shop floor personnel. During his time leading

the rolling stock business unit at KiwiRail, Roy reinvigorated KiwiRail's apprenticeship programme, laying the groundwork for the successful programme we see today.

Roy passed away in 2019 after a defiant battle with motor neuron disease. 🌐

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



## HOLIDAYS



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

**Phone:** 0800-806-444

**E-mail:** [info@nzwelfare.co.nz](mailto:info@nzwelfare.co.nz)

**Website:** [nzwelfare.co.nz](http://nzwelfare.co.nz)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/nzwelfare](https://facebook.com/nzwelfare)

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



# Safe & sustainable

**T**HE RMTU is 100% behind the ITF's latest campaign promoting rail as both safe and sustainable. In fact the Union has been encouraging this line of thinking for many years."

"We know that safe and sustainable rail will help New Zealand – and the world – out of the economic, climate and social crises faced today," said RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson. "We have long advocated public investment in rail knowing it can kickstart the recovery of our economy.

The ITF cites as an example India where rail is an essential mode of transport. For every \$1 invested in rail \$5 is added to GDP in the rest of its economy.

Additionally rail reduces carbon emissions and is the key to the radical green modal shift needed in transport. Per passenger kilometre, heavy rail emits 75% less emissions than cars and light rail emits 57% less.

"Investing in rail is a no brainer," says Butson. "On average, every job created in rail creates another job in manufacturing, food, trade or other sectors."

In essence the ITF campaign focusses on four factors: safety, public ownership, sustainability and social justice.

Under each of these headings it makes a series of key demands to to everyone living in a desperate world keen to leave a worthwhile inheritance for future generations.

Under **SAFETY** they demand:

1. Full staffing on trains, stations and all freight and

passenger rail operations, and an end to driver-only and driverless operations.

2. Decent work for all workers, through freedom of association, collective bargaining and respect for all ILO Conventions regarding employment and labour rights.

3. Occupational safety and health (OSH) standards, sanitation access, and negotiated and respected rest and leave systems, as fundamental rights for all rail workers.

4. OSH committees and elected representatives in every workplace, with full employer recognition and representation of women workers.

5. Tripartite investigations into OSH failures and rail accidents.

6. Protection of workers from violence and harassment at work, through ratification and enforcement of ILO Convention 190.

7. An end to gender-based occupational segregation, through training and the representation of women workers in decision-making amongst all stakeholders.

8. Equal pay and conditions for work of equal value for all rail workers, including outsourced and subcontracted services, and non-standard forms of employment.

Under **PUBLIC** they say:

Privatisation puts passengers, workers, and our communities at risk. As a result, they say, passenger miles travelled tend to fall in privatised rail and privatised rail is unsafe and unsustainable.

Rail, it says, is a public good and must be designed to meet the needs of workers, passengers and

communities, not the needs of shareholders and capital.

Public ownership is safe, secure, efficient, higher-quality, and more accountable, and is one of the best ways to build a better future.

The ITF demands:

1. Public ownership of rail, with an end to all rail privatisation.

2. Unitary rail systems with all rail stock and operations all owned and operated by the public.

3. Public financing of rail, with all rail back into rail, green public investment, and public investment to public funds.

4. Integration of rail with other transport to provide affordable, integrated services.

5. Negotiation and collective bargaining by rail unions to determine the terms and conditions of work for workers, passengers and communities.

6. All public investment in rail to guarantee freedom of association, collective bargaining and labour rights throughout the rail industry.

Under the heading of **SUSTAINABILITY** we are in a climate emergency and need an economic transformation to a green economy.

We demand:

1. A Green New Deal with stimulus spending of 5% of GDP to fund a modal shift to rail.

2. Recognition of rail as a key part of any environmental and climate policies and spending.

3. Investment in multi-modal systems, feeding into existing infrastructure for both passengers and cargo.

4. Massive and urgent investment in high-speed rail as green infrastructure for a modal shift for long-distance transport.

5. Decent work guaranteed for all workers and employers for all infrastructure operations, including a commitment to move from informal to formal work.

6. Public investment in renewable energy, solar- and hydrogen-fueled rail, and a green energy system.

7. Renewable energy for all rail operations – Bringing fossil fuel operations under public ownership.

– Public control of, and investment in, and sustainable energy sources.

And if true **SOCIAL JUSTICE** is to be achieved, the economy must be transformed.



# rail



INTERNATIONAL  
TRANSPORT  
WORKERS'  
FEDERATION

# NO MATTER WHO WE ARE, OR WHERE WE WORK WE ALL WANT SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE RAIL



It highlights the route through these demands:

1. Democratic accountability in the planning and development of rail through collective bargaining with, and worker representation in rail authorities and management.

2. A single, public entity responsible for planning, developing and managing the modal shift to rail and other modes of public transport, and the decarbonisation of transport.

3. Labour and gender impact assessments carried out in partnership with trade unions throughout rail and public transport systems and their supply chains.

4. Cooperation with the ITF and its affiliates to carry out effective human rights due diligence in

procurement, finance and the supply chain of public rail.

5. Worker control of their data and its uses, and public ownership, regulations and storage of the data.

6. No automation or technology introduced or changed without negotiation with trade unions.

7. Free education and (re)training for all workers, provided by employers and/or governments, including for the skills required to work with new technology.

"This all-encompassing campaign from the ITF is a blueprint for the future for our children and grand children and for generations to come," said Butson. "We must rectify the wrongs we have wrought on this world and everyone has a part to play." 

## NORTHLAND RAIL

### Challenging weather causes washouts and evacuations

**G**REETINGS from the winterless North. It's definitely starting to warm up nicely in the Greater Auckland region, emphasis on 'greater'.

It's been a minute since the last update from the Whangarei rail branch so I'll try to keep it short and sweet. But first I'll take the opportunity to introduce myself as the new branch secretary. My names Matt and I'm a signal tech and KR is railway number five for me. Starting in NSW with ARTC and then venturing to West Australia to join in on the construction with BHP and FMG and finally maintenance with Rio Tinto before moving to Whangarei with the family. I keep getting asked the same question, "how are you finding it over here?" and my typical reply is "All railways are the same, this one just happens to have nicer weather."

Back at the end of August during the height of the Delta outbreak, we had a bit of a significant weather event with some major flooding between Waitakere and Helensville, which saw one of our hi-rail trucks almost become an emergency response vehicle when a local family had to vacate their home in search of higher ground. This happened to be in the rail corridor and luckily the real emergency services showed up and were able to get the family to safety.

The flood itself caused a number of washouts which had the track crews attending at five main sites with many smaller sites in between. Due to flood waters taking time to subside and having to abide by level 4 COVID restrictions, it was a challenge, but as always the crews completed the works at a high standard.

It's been a long time coming but we're finally starting to see some movement at the operations yard with road markings, signage and maybe even a traffic management plan. It may not sound like much but it has been an ongoing issue for the membership, continually asking management for adequate safety and separation from freight trucks, light vehicles, pedestrians and in some cases the public.

Up until recently there hasn't been signage for visitor parking or pedestrian road markings showing where to walk to access

### WASHOUT DAMAGE



the operations building – both of which are on opposite sides of the only entry point for all road traffic.

There also wasn't any signage showing the route for freight truck drivers to enter the rail yard or where to stop and report to the office, with many of the freight trucks parking on the public road disrupting traffic. Managements reasoning for the lack of road markings or signage came down to: "the freight truck drivers just know where to drive".

After roughly a year of local engagement committee and HSAT meetings, management has started to accept that the yard also belongs to the membership and that we also have a say in our safety. In saying that we still have a long way to go on the consultation front with certain members of management not understanding that we all have a say on what happens on the rail corridor.

Stay safe out there. 🌍

## AUCKLAND RAIL

### CAF and Transdev workers trying hard to create a MECA

**G**REETINGS from the lockdown headquarters of New Zealand. One of the big issues up here concerns our CAF and Transdev Auckland (TDAK) workers. We are currently trying to bring these two companies together in a multi employment collective agreement (MECA) similar to that of Transdev Wellington and Hyundai Rotem. This will bring together the companies responsible

for the running of the Auckland metro network and the company responsible for the maintenance of the rolling stock.

Adding to the complexity of this situation is the fact that TDAK have lost the Auckland metro network franchise to One Auckland Rail (AOR). This replacement occurs on January 16, 2022. Unsurprisingly, this puts a lot of pressure on getting the new MECA signed off as quickly as possible.

Should it not be settled by the transfer of franchise date, we will then need to continue bargaining with AOR as TDAK disappear from the scene.

Interesting times await.

Wishing all of our RMTU whanau a great Christmas and may 2022 be a successful year for us all in our work and life balance.



## KING COUNTRY RAIL

### Welcome back to our central NI members

**K**IA ORA WHANAU. The members of the King Country branch are proud to announce its reformation with a special meeting held on April 29 to elect branch officials and delegates.

We would like to extend our thanks to Shane McNae for chairing the meeting and Dasha Van Silfhout for standing in as secretary. Many further thanks are due to Dasha from across our branch for all the support we've received from her. As acting chair I would like to personally thank everyone for their attendance and valuable input.

The elected team looks strong and diverse.

This was confirmed when we held our first meeting to discuss remits to be put forward.

Fortunately we haven't been impacted as heavily as other areas by the COVID situation and our thoughts are with those who

have done it rough for the last few months with very little certainty.

This quarter for the King Country branch and its network services staff has been eventful to say the least. We've hit the ground running with a battle over the Sunday rosters was implemented across the central North Island to keep up with the increased freight on the golden triangle. The new proposed roster was immensely unpopular and we were invited to give our feedback. We pointed out the reasons why this was not suitable for the teams south of Hamilton. Regardless, the roster was implemented to some teams and not others. We felt that negotiations were not fairly carried out. Nor do we believe the negotiations reflected our management dealing in good faith.

The mood and morale within the area has definitely soured as a result, with the

company losing a large amount of the good will from the staff.

One victory however was achieved by traction staff who stuck to their guns resulting in three of the teams being restored to their previous rosters.

Then along came this round of negotiations which has been an interesting ride. I'd like to encourage everyone to stand together to come out of this with something that's fair and which we are all happy with. We, the members, are the strength of the Union.

We've a number of new staff join us across the region. I'd like to welcome Greg McKenzie, Damian Barham, Joseph Cowley, Maddison Bristol, Chaz Hunapo, Garnett Rapano and Ebony Hansen with two more starting with the track teams shortly. Welcome to the KiwiRail whanau guys.

Finally, I'd like to wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and New Year. 

## WAIKATO RAIL

### Desperately seeking new staff - a national problem it seems

**C**COVID has infiltrated the Waikato and is causing many questions about vaccines, mandates and how to effectively wear PPE in trying conditions. We continue to try and apply the protocols as best as possible but lockdowns are beginning to wear people and families down. Hopefully we will be at level 2 shortly or its going to be a rather quiet Xmas. Covid is also having an impact on our

ability to have our branch AGM.

We've lost a few drivers of late with Bernie Snook, Dave Mathieson and Tony Batters electing to retire and Richard Norton who has chosen to return to Palmerston North. We wish them all the best.

Phil Dearlove and Hillman Humfreys have clocked up 50 years each – an excellent goal achieved – and Sonnie Witana has done 40 years also a huge milestone.

Our depot is currently understaffed in the yard and we don't seem to be able to get on top of our staffing numbers, try as we might. I'm sure this is felt across the country.

The branch has been very active in raising awareness of staffing numbers by focussing on training however there are only so many schools we can hold a year here in Te Rapa. 

The Mission Bush line is going well since it came under the care of our Hamilton based track guys. Well done, as this track had been seriously neglected and we look forward to some long suffering restrictions being lifted. It's good to see the many kilometres of heat restrictions that have been pulled down in our area, especially south of Te Rapa.

Heading into our peak season and the failure rate of DLs (let's not forget that our general secretary calls them the dog and lemon locos) will make for an interesting time.

De-stress teams have been smashing out big kilometres with new staff members added to the mix and signals are getting ready for major works at Ruakura due to the new inland port. However, morale has dropped amongst the troops because of poorly thought out master rosters which change almost fortnightly and the denial of leave at Xmas for essential workers. It is important to keep our minds on the task at hand.

The majority of staff across all Waikato

are also bemused by KiwiRail's insistence that they are a median market payer and the company's fudging of the numbers to prove this is a real sore point. Our traction and signals members beat the company over an extremely unwelcome roster change in the golden triangle outside of Auckland. By sticking to their guns and holding the course with Union backing and lawyers they were able to overturn a real sore point in the relationship between management and workers in the central North Island.

Now other designations such as track gangs and signals want the unpopular roster back on the table for consultation because the previous consultation definitely did not meet the standards expected from KiwiRail.

On the work front there is much to be done and some very big blocks of line (BOLs) at Christmas time on the horizon.

Servicing has finally gone down to the diesel depot however, it appears they are no better off as they are still required to work some single person shifts (ED: This should not be happening. It is manifestly unsafe and should be Red Carded or a

trained H&S rep should be issuing a PIN notice). This does not happen in any other depot so it's time to make changes in Te Rapa. It's all about health and safety of our members. I'm sure there will be another meeting regarding sand tower and roofing sooner or later so our people can work away from the weather.

Covid has been and continues to be blamed for a variety of issues and appears occasionally humanity is being thrown out the window with instances of management both abusing and threatening staff.

So let's all take a moment to take a deep breath and remember we are all on the same team here and that kind of behaviour is very disappointing and distressing. Please show some compassion and respect when you're dealing with each other and remember we are all working hard.

The strike ballots are another obvious hot topic and the results will be big news. A significant pay rise is long overdue.

That's it from the Waikato except to wish one and all a happy, healthy and safe Christmas and 2022! 🌍

## BAY OF PLENTY RAIL

### Low staff numbers beginning to tell

**K**IA ORA from Bay of Plenty paradise. Firstly, we would like to acknowledge and thank the amazing Allana Ranui who is stepping down as our branch treasurer, secretary and union delegate. Allana is someone who is conscientious as a matter of course, not expecting any praise or even mention of it. She is habitually dependable, like a parent or friend who is always there for you. Allana, thank you for being steadfast and quietly reliable for us here in the Bay of Plenty and across Aotearoa. We are here to support you in any way we can. Stay strong sister.

Operations in the Bay of Plenty has been feeling the pinch of low staff numbers as of late. This is particularly apparent for the locomotive engineers and rail operators across numerous terminals.

Well done to everyone for continuing to keep trains moving. As a result of this, we have been presented with the opportunity for new people to join us from around the country and from different backgrounds. We would like to extend a warm welcome to all those who have joined us in recent

months, we cannot wait to get to know you all and work positively together.

Some of these new people include Nicole Crump and Adele Liliva. Nicole is the first women track worker in the Bay of Plenty and what a marvellous addition to the team she is.

Congratulations Nicole, we look forward to working with you and supporting you on your new journey. Adele has just started as a new terminal operations manager in Mount Maunganui and Tauranga. Adele brings a fantastic work ethic, positive energy, and has very strong leadership capability.

Adele has previously worked as a HPHE facilitator and as a resource planning manager within the KiwiRail network. Welcome to paradise Adele, we anticipate achieving great things together for us here.

We have just held a successful branch AGM where we welcomed new blood to a range of roles, begun local industrial councils (LICs) across the region, and discussed the current negotiations between KiwiRail and RMTU.

We would like to congratulate and thank everyone who has been either elected or re-elected to roles across the Union, HSAT, rosters, and LIC. We anticipate great things for our region in the future thanks to your involvement and commitment.

It was very pleasing to hear that LIC meetings have started in BOP/WKO RSAS teams and that these are running bi-monthly. We now work to start and broaden the attendance of these meetings.

The general feeling from the branch regarding the current negotiations is that we must stick together to come out with an outcome we can all be happy with. Currently KiwiRail are not meeting our expectations. We have faith that if negotiations reach a point where action must be taken our branch will stand together and fight for what we believe is fair and deserved for us all.

From our branch to yours: Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini – My strength is not that of a single warrior but that of many. 🌍

## NAPIER PORT

### New wharf build and increasing logs putting pressure on space

**T**HE final edition of *The Transport Worker* for 2021. By the time it is placed on smoko room tables it will be Christmas and the end of what has been a year of significant change.

Will not dwell on the disease that started its life under the name of an international popular beer, Corona! I understand the company's profits took a substantial hiding as a consequence and no doubt caused much consternation. Pretty sure those same sentiments and dissatisfaction are now greater in light of what is happening to us all not to mention our personal concerns or choices around vaccination and what is now known about Covid 19.

Napier Port continues to grow its footprint with the new wharf heading toward a completion date at the latter end of 2022 – all going to plan. Though ironically, with the oncoming season, the challenges we faced in early 2021 of a shrunken work zone, will



Roz Muir and Trevor Miles shown some Union appreciation.



duplicate themselves into 2022 through the seasonal peak relative to this build – and coupled with increased log demands for space, ultimately will have the same impact again in terms of how much other prime real estate is sacrificed for all the container operational needs. A cascading effect of a 40% loss of container space. Multiple moves of container shifting and re-shifting will happen again.

The frustrations coming from the yard staff and planners is palpable especially with shipping timetables across the globe being so unpredictable.

We have just commenced negotiations for the general CEA with delegates primed and ready for what potentially may be a 'tough one' as we have had a bit of a shaky start in the view of the negotiating team!

Also thanks to Dasha van Silfhout, our local organiser, who is keeping us in check. It's great to have Dasha on board, this being her second RMT Union negotiation at NP. The crane operators CEA was the

first. The difference however, the general CEA covers many sections/groups of our membership and is therefore way more challenging. Watch this space.

We are also dealing with ongoing restructures particularly in the cargo/operational aspects of port life. In the last 12 months we have experienced several restructures with some members having to face redundancies and/or redeployment in order to retain employment or take a lesser-posted positions. Very hard for some of our older members. It has kept branch officials busy. From the scribes view point only, it would seem there is an ongoing attack on higher held positions by our members by way of the old "disestablishment/restructure" approach. Followed by the introduction of new people into non-union collectivised roles. We will continue to engage and unionise, even if it means getting people onto union-based IEAs.

I am sure this is common practise being experienced across the ports sector and beyond. Union bashing in my view!

Anyways, as we head into the festive period, all the best to you and yours, be safe. Stay away from Corona unless you can drink it!

I kotahitanga. 🌐



## NAPIER RAIL

### A lot of staff changes at Napier rail

**G**REETINGS all. Isn't 2021 going by fast? Since the last *Transport Worker* we have had lots of change in the Hawkes Bay including five staff members from networks who have left Napier! KiwiRail have advertised and tried to recruit new staff but to no avail – so far.

Teams have been working north and south of Napier with a lot of assistance from Palmerston North heavy machinery unit to actually keep the local track work in code. With the log train now running daily to Wairoa and back there is lots to do.

By all accounts, morale in general is at



an all time low, with the staff establishment levels and the on-going wage round.

With branch AGMs coming up make sure all RMTU members attend and support your local branches as unity is needed in

these times of struggle.

With Christmas holidays coming up, enjoy your break with family and friends.

Till next time. Be safe as always.

Unity going forward. 🌐

## WELLINGTON RAIL

### Rostering issues at fore as we approach summer vacations

**D**URING the last lock-down there were winners and losers. Despite the best efforts of delegates and Transdev management working together, some of our members felt short changed.

There were some staff due for rostered long weekends when the main roster was suspended and a special emergency one activated. Others were sent home because of their vulnerability or health risks.

It was a classic case of not being able to please all of the people all of the time.

The most important thing was that people were kept safe, everyone was paid and kept their jobs.

As the pandemic drags on the challenge of how to manage the risk of spread and infection will have to be met as circumstances change. Questions over the requirement to be vaccinated and the wearing of masks for customer facing staff are likely to become issues for the future.

Rosters are very near and dear to most members' hearts as they affect not only the members themselves but also members of

the house-hold they live in. There was some concern when the Christmas rosters were produced using the new (to us) Hastus and RoM computerised systems. It would be fair to say there were elements that had to be altered and a re-think of some aspects before work could begin on a new master roster. That work is in progress at the time of writing and full marks to the extra work put in by roster reps and company roster staff.

There was some disquiet after the first drafts of the new system were produced. Work has begun on a new master roster to be implemented in the new year. There is bound to more to come on this item.

Readers may recall that in the last edition we mentioned that lack of progress in negotiating changes to the Metlink branded uniform which has been issued for over five years since the TDW/Greater Wellington Regional Council rail contract began. To be fair, TDW management have tried valiantly to progress this. Despite those efforts staff face another summer wearing 'boil in a

bag' shirts and blouses and no light weight jackets for protection against the occasional windy days the Capital experiences.

There have been some minor changes to uniforms for TXOs and outer station staff mainly in the form of wet weather and protective clothing. However, a summary of changes agreed to can be summed up as "sweet f.. all!"

Our thoughts and support go to our brothers and sisters who are going through the uncertainty of a very difficult pay round in the run up to Christmas. We wish you a successful conclusion.

It is hoped that by the next edition we will have had a branch AGM so that members can have a face to face state of the nation and a democratic say in the running of OUR UNION.

Welcome to the new faces around Metro and to our colleagues at Rotem. From this humble scribe, stay well and stay united - it is our strength and our power!

And most of all, enjoy the Christmas/New Year festivities. 🇳🇿

## HUTT WORKSHOPS

### Apprentices applying in large numbers for increasing spaces

**A**S these notes were being compiled, the GenSec has put out Update #6 detailing the latest news on the MECA renegotiations. It would appear to be a slow and laborious process. However, the negotiating team remains firm in their resolve to negotiate an 8% pay-rise for a 12 month term (or better!) – and we are fully supportive of their endeavours!

#### Recruiting difficulties

Closer to home, we've been actively recruiting for new staff to fill the shortfall needed to service the work plan. Our new branch chair, Slade Pilcher, has been sitting-in on interviews to fill mechanical engineer and team leader vacancies to ensure both procedural fairness and a shop-floor perspective is applied to the process. We still need skilled tradespeople so if you're looking for a change and want the challenges and training that only a workshop can

give you, get in touch!

Another challenge presented to the branch is continuing to run things whilst restricted by limits on large meetings under Covid-19 rules. Fortunately, our branch and HSAT elections resulted in only minor changes to both HSAT and branch committees with only a couple of vacancies currently unfilled. We have not yet been able to hold our AGM as we are still operating within the Covid rules, and most importantly continuing to serve members' interests to the required standard.

#### Covid 19 remains a work issue

The Covid-19 vaccination issue remains a bit of a topic that interests us all. Whilst most of us are vaccinated, there remains a small pocket of those who are not. Whilst this does not appear to be causing any

friction within workgroups, we hope that KiwiRail's 'risk assessments' considering the ongoing Covid risks to staff and the business are worked through openly and with integrity; the process should have concluded by now so we should know what it means for us as a company.

The market reviews overhanging from the last MECA wage-round continues to generate some measure of frustration and of course the hourly rates and disparity between some levels are issues that the MCC (mechanical consultative committee) continue to beaver away at. It remains a big task but we must get on top of the issue and put it to bed. The progress in this regard has apparently been mentioned more than once during the current MECA talks! The MCC had a short meeting via MS-teams to ensure we didn't lose momentum of progress, and a further meeting is scheduled for late November with our Auckland/Northern-based

people staying put and the rest of us hopefully convening face to face at Hutt.

Our LCC (local consultative committee) meetings are now running quarterly thanks to our continuing efforts under the auspices of HPHE. This has allowed us to maintain proactive improvement in the functioning of the site with minimal flexing of industrial muscle.

## Management acknowledged

It is appropriate to acknowledge the efforts of the management team and the branch executive to advance the interests and desired outputs of forming a closer working relationship that drives common sense application of effort to day-to-day problem solving.

As has been said before, information sharing and open communication gets shit done without all the drama of the old days when everybody felt like they were beating heads against the proverbial brick wall and

achieving sweet FA.

The branch secretary was invited via audio-visual link to speak to attendees at Lyttleton Port Company earlier this year. RMTU South Island regional organiser John Kerr has been pursuing this for some time between LPC and other unions to get them all around the table working smarter, not harder. It is, of course, a bit of a hurdle to get factions to drop their defences and talk to people like human beings – not adversaries – and to work together for the common good. However, once everybody gets used to sharing information, showing mutual respect, obeying Chatham House Rules (where appropriate), the resulting consensus decision-making produces better decisions and results that everyone stands by because they actually leave their cultural baggage at the door and build better working relationships through genuine engagement.

It does take time but the benefits make it all the more worthwhile. Reading the last TTW, the editorial threw a bit of borax

towards KiwiRail over HPHE. A meeting of the corporate governance group was subsequently arranged but cancelled at the last minute to permit a MECA meeting to proceed, I believe. Perhaps we might resume that meeting prior to Xmas.

Covid prevented us from having a large meeting in our Memorial Garden to mark Armistice Day however we arranged for the Workshop siren to sound at 1100hrs to acknowledge those who made the ultimate sacrifice in the defence of our freedoms and democracy. The siren also scared the bejabbers out of the local wild life and probably a jittery neighbour or two!

Our Christmas closedown has been confirmed for the nominal two weeks however, with the ongoing upgrades to the site, there may well be some activity during this period.

Until next time seasons' greetings from Hutt Workshops and take care, stay safe, and come back in one piece in the New Year. 🌐

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## NELSON PORT

### Vaccination message not helped by anti-vax management team

IT has been a tumultuous year for the Nelson branch as I am sure it has been around the country with much going on in our Covid world.

Our year started with a good deal for our C3 members with a substantial increase in remuneration and improvement in conditions. This has created greater engagement with our C3 members and an increase in membership. There is still work to be done as the company is freely passing on the same rates to non-union members in clear breach of the agreement.

#### Negotiations begin

The branch then entered negotiations with Port Nelson for the renewal of the CA for the majority of our members. With negotiations proceeding through to an average deal which may have been OK if not for the fact the CPI (3.3%) was issued three days after we had finished negotiating. We took the deal to the members and at a well-attended meeting the company's offer was unanimously rejected. The solidarity and resolve in the room on that day was awesome to witness and be a part of.

It is worth noting that the disillusionment and resolve of a work force does not occur over night. This moment was born from two years previous when an average agreement was narrowly passed, not unanimously, only for the company a week later to announce record profits. This coupled with two years of attacks on conditions and undervaluing skilled workers created a perfect storm of discontent.

The branch then proceeded to take a strike ballot. This was unfortunately interrupted by a lock down. As we went into level four, we had completed just over 60% of the ballot with 93% of the members balloted at that time voting for strike action. We were unable to complete the ballot in time to effect industrial action but were able to present the results at mediation. The visual cue of having the ballots sitting on the table was not lost on the company's negotiating team.

#### Good outcome

After a day's mediation we were able to extract a better deal later accepted by another well attended meeting.

The highlights of the deal were a shortened term which will see us back around the table at the end of next year. A considerable increase for our line handlers who were not only the lowest paid employees at Port Nelson but the lowest paid employees of any line handlers in the country. We also managed to make gains in the gatehouse, another group who had lost ground in recent times. Solid gains for stevedores and a reasonable GWI above CPI.

We would hope in the next round to continue to push for recognition of skills and experience, something PNL has steadfastly rejected for a number of wage rounds. Given the current employment environment it seems absurd to devalue skilled workers as they are hard to find, expensive to train and difficult to hold on to. There are ongoing issues around availability,

workers life balance and application of the Holidays Act both for statutory holidays and annual leave.

#### Selfish management

Port Nelson has been negotiating the mandatory vaccination roller coaster with the majority of Tier 1 workers getting the jab. A hand full have chosen not to be vaccinated and have forgone their employment at the port, as is their right. It is unfortunate that some members of management have taken an anti-vax stance and have not been vaccinated, some of whom have been responsible for the termination of unvaccinated stevedores. An ethical approach to management should include a willingness to share experience with those who work for you. A glaring example of managers not feeling that are part of the same group as their employees.

Another example of us no longer being a single entity is that other groups who require vaccination have their work schedules rejigged so they do not need to be on the front line, a true slap in the face for those stevedores who have lost their jobs.

It has been a most trying year which has disrupted and threatened to destroy our solidarity and our ability to tolerate. The best thing about our port is its people, the amazing diversity of background and experience and the support they give to each other. We hope to build on that next year and go forward stronger than ever.

Kia kaha to all union brothers and sisters around the country. 

## CANTERBURY RAIL

### More security required to protect unused rolling stock

MEETINGS from the Garden City. Normally this is quite a social time of year, with the onset of spring, Canterbury Anniversary and Show Week. The COVID Delta outbreak has put a different angle on things this year and as this is written we have four active cases in our city. By the time you read it there will doubtless be more. We've also just

heard of the first case of a member of the RMTU working for KiwiRail, a protector in Auckland, contracting COVID. Once again we don't doubt there will be more of our brothers and sisters who will catch the virus in the months to come.

Which leads us nicely into one of the two hot topics in the lunchrooms around our branch: vaccinations for essential workers.

As your scribe drafts these notes the latest news is that KiwiRail has contacted the RMTU to work through a risk assessment with a view to examining the option of mandatory vaccinations for workers.

Many employers are pushing for this and we know our Union has experience of dealing with the in and outs of mandatory vaccination in the ports. Once again, by 

the time you read this events may have moved on, which demonstrates just how quickly the pandemic is having an impact. The branch is very aware of RMTU policy encouraging vaccination while providing appropriate representation and support to those members who either cannot or will not get the jobs.

The second hot topic at smoko is the KiwiRail wage round. Updates from our bargaining team are eagerly awaited after each meeting and as this is written the strike ballot is underway. All the indications are that turnout will be very high and your branch officials hope that the vote gives an unequivocal mandate to the negotiation team to keep pursuing a substantial increase in members' wages.

This view was reinforced at our AGM in October which had to be rescheduled from its August date after the Delta outbreak led to the whole country going into lockdown. The AGM was by far the best attended for years and we were able to hear first hand about the wage talks from six people who have been directly involved, including our branch chair and secretary, our South Island rail rep on the RMTU National Management Committee, two reps on the Mechanical Industrial Council and our South Island organiser.

The common view was that this is the year of the essential worker and the lead taken by our branch in backing a single claim has united rail workers in a way we haven't seen since the 1990s.

On to local matters, beginning with Scenic Journeys. Our members in this part of KiwiRail have been in limbo ever since New Zealand moved up from level 1, with all Christchurch based services suspended. To date no one has lost their job which is something we are grateful for. We are also mindful however that management will need our members once the green light is given to resume running, so keeping people on the payroll is not an entirely altruistic act, especially given how tight the labour market is.

In operations and mechanical (or RSAS as its called this week) the news of the decision to purchase new locomotives for the South Island was greeted with general approval. Members were very glad we have opted for Swiss designed, Spanish built rolling stock as they believe this indicates a decision based on whole of life efficiency



*Canterbury Rail branch show support for the KiwiRail strike ballot.*

rather than short term false economies.

The team at Waltham were dismayed it has been necessary to install more electronic surveillance after increased trespassing incidents. We speculate the latter is a symptom of the yard being less busy while the long distance passenger rolling stock is in mothballs due to COVID. That said, management did take the step of shifting some of the backlogged wagon work to Waltham which has kept the team very busy.

In operations our delegates have been busy as the wage round has unfolded and have fielded questions from members. We have a couple of potential medical retirements in the pipeline and the team leaders are engaging with management on the changes which have occurred in their roles over time.

Over in the container transfer terminal we have a new management regime running a ruler over the spreadsheets as they are wont to do. This is in marked contrast to the somewhat laissez faire attitude of our previous management who operated a live and let live approach. That said our new managers are very safety focussed and scrupulous about including delegates in communications and observing due process. A big thank you to Lester Brain, our delegate at the CT site, who has done very good work advocating for our members. This was recognised with a certificate of appreciation at our AGM.

In network services there is marked dissatisfaction with way the pay scale 2 re-

view ended. The lack of transparency in the mechanics of how KiwiRail undertook the review has disappointed a lot of our members and resolved them more towards an industrial remedy. Just how much, we will know at the conclusion of the strike ballot. In the meantime one of the biggest issues we face in this part of KiwiRail is the inability to recruit staff in a timely manner. Some of this can be put down to 'own goals' being scored by the bureaucracy which seems to move at a snail like pace and rival employers snapping up prospective workers before KiwiRail gets their signatures on the dotted line. Another factor we can't ignore however, is the fact that there is a very high demand for labour, perhaps the highest for a generation, and in such circumstances the price (viz wages) has to go up if KiwiRail are to be competitive in attracting new staff. Which leads us back to the inadequacy of the pay scale 2 review.

Finally, a shout out to our members in the service centre at Ensors Road, although many of them are scattered across the region working from home given the constraints imposed by COVID. This is no picnic as the pressure to get the job done is still there and not everyone's home environment is set up as a workplace. Our members are very good at keeping in touch with RMTU news however and just because some of you are out of sight it doesn't mean you're out of mind.

Until the new year, stay safe and stay united! 🇳🇿

## LYTTELTON PORT

### HPHE gets the go-ahead despite leaving one union behind

LET'S start with the good news. Our membership overwhelmingly endorsed the branch committee's resolution to sign the High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) charter with LPC and two of the other three unions at the port. As the joint press release (in itself a notable event) put it this was both a 'landmark' and a 'milestone' at Lyttelton Port when one considers how, just three years ago, we were embroiled in a prolonged and acrimonious industrial dispute.

Of course the hard work starts now as we have to deliver real and tangible benefits to our members if we are to retain their support for this initiative. In that regard we seem to have made a positive start as discussions have opened on changing the workshop roster and the preliminary exchanges suggest a much more enlightened approach by management and a genuine willingness to at least try and interest based problem solving approach which is the foundation of HPHE.

Another area where we've been doing an enormous amount of work is on the fatigue management project.

At times this feels onerous but we have to keep reminding ourselves that this is the price of peace and it can be just as hard winning the latter as it is fighting a war. The guidelines around fatigue management are being finalised and area work groups are about to commence as we try and sort out how to implement these around the various parts of the port. The container terminal in particular will doubtless be a hotbed of debate as we do this.

We held our postponed AGM on October 20 after a two month delay occasioned by the Delta COVID lockdown. It was a well-attended event and we have a full complement of delegates and officials. The HPHE charter was debated and approved by members as mentioned above. We also heard about the collapse of HPHE in KiwiRail and the strike ballot being held amongst members employed by that organisation. It was good to hear that the rail workers appear militant and united behind a clear claim. What was sobering is that HPHE did not survive the



*Lyttelton Port branch members support the KiwiRail strike.*

change in CEO in KiwiRail. If this is not to be the case in our port we need to embed it successfully and achieve continued and demonstrable benefits for all parties. The National Business Review's article about the current KiwiRail CEO has been widely read in our branch and our members remain on standby to support our comrades in KiwiRail in any way we can should it come down to industrial action.

As your scribe writes this the Canterbury Socialist Society, a small but growing and very active organisation, is holding a joint event at Show Weekend with our branch and the MUNZ Local to commemorate the 70th anniversary of '51 Lockout on the waterfront (see story page 11). This is a great initiative and hopefully the first of many such joint endeavours.

Finally COVID19 continues to dominate the news and everyday life for some of us. We have a very high vaccination rate at Lyttelton Port and our branch is very conscious of the RMTU policy of encouraging people to get the jab. As many of us are frontline border workers we are covered by the health order and are mandated to be vaccinated. The arrival of Delta in our region in late October has upped the ante somewhat and at the time of writing we

are working with management on a risk assessment while unvaccinated and/or non-essential staff have been instructed to stay at home. Our Union will represent and support those who either cannot – or will not – be vaccinated but the direction of government's thinking appears very clear and it is likely legislation will leave little room for manoeuvre for those who aren't jabbed.

The management regime at LPC is pressing on with what some call its 'cultural revolution'. The talk about 'values' and 'diversity' is very uplifting. This is something of a novelty at Lyttelton Port and while we are mindful that corporate-driven diversity efforts have clear limits of potential, particularly given that most begin and end with "we should see more diversity in our employee base and our leadership" we are keeping an open mind.

As the saying goes: diversity is taking a seat at the table, inclusion is being able to speak and belonging is being listened to. That implies a shift in the power dynamic between labour and management which we would welcome. Time will tell if this is a serious possibility.

As we head into our busiest time of year best wishes to all in the RMTU whanau and most importantly, stay safe and healthy!

## WEST COAST RAIL

### Positive outcomes from Provincial Growth Fund

**H**ELLO once again from the West Coast. Like all of us our branch is preoccupied with two matters: COVID19 and the KiwiRail wage round. The weather has dealt us a few challenges too, but that's nothing unusual. This time it was the roads that were closed and this has apparently led to some delays in the mail getting through which in turn has prompted some of our more technologically savvy members asking that the Union adopt an electronic balloting system [Ed: The Union continues to investigate electronic voting but at this stage it is still too expensive.].

The wage round has prompted a great deal of interest and has invigorated some of our members. Thanks to our branch officials for organising a meeting in late October to discuss the progress – or lack thereof – in negotiations. This was very useful and, combined with the posts and commentary on our closed branch Facebook group, has led to people being better informed. The reasons why our bargaining team is balloting the membership on industrial action are very clear, and by the time you read this hopefully a very strong message has been sent to management and been heeded by them.

Any controversy over our claim has been limited by the fact it is just one claim. The decision by our representatives to unite the whole of the membership covered by the bargaining behind a single claim was an unusual one but has certainly focused people's minds. If this is 'the year of the essential worker,' as we keep hearing, then as a fully unionised workforce in an essential industry, if we can't secure a decent pay hike what chance have the less organised and industrially weaker workers in other essential services got – such as supermarket workers?

Of course the fact we are essential workers has a bearing on the COVID19 issue. Since the Delta outbreak and the apparent abandonment of the elimination strategy by government it appears we are in a race to vaccinate as many people as possible in order to limit the impact of COVID on our health system. At the time of writing it is a rapidly changing situation but it looks very likely that KiwiRail will move to some form

of mandatory vaccination policy for frontline staff – in other words us! The branch is aware of RMTU policy on vaccination and the fact that our union is encouraging members to be vaccinated while at the same time saying it will offer appropriate support and representation for those that can't or won't have the jab seems a pragmatic approach. We understand that a risk assessment is underway and by the time you read this it will doubtless have concluded and we will know where we stand. Of course there is also the very strong likelihood that government may have amended and strengthened the Health Order, in which case the issue is somewhat academic.

On to more local matters. Thanks to one of our protector members for raising the issue of progression for him and his fellow members. This is a problem that needs resolving. When KiwiRail moved to bring more protection in-house it was something we welcomed for several reasons, one of which was it created jobs in KiwiRail. We now find that this part of the business is almost unique in that progression is a problem. Our members joined a nationwide videoconference with the RMTU and KiwiRail and the issue is not confined to the West Coast. Hopefully by the time you read this the matter will have been sorted out.

The suspension of the TranzAlpine service while the South Island is at COVID level 2 is having a continuing impact on our already depleted tourist industry over here on the Coast. While the service by itself does not make the Midland Line viable it certainly showcases what is a magnificent piece of engineering and a vital link for the movement of coal for export. Let's hope that the 'Tranz' will be running again soon.

On a positive note by the time the Provincial Growth Funding ended on 31 October we installed 20 new culverts and major drainage works were done in the



*Ian Walker and Sid Leary attend the Otira briefing*

Stillwater yard and on the mainlines in our area. Six positions directly related to the funding that were initially fixed term have been made permanent. Result!

We hear that KiwiRail has plans to upgrade facilities at Otira, Arthur's Pass and Westport with trackside toilets being installed at Sargent's Hill. It's great that the company is investing in the infrastructure over here despite the threats we keep hearing to the future of coal mining. Now how about investing in your staff KiwiRail and offering a decent wage increase?

In network services our members are very disappointed in the outcome of the pay scale 2 review. To us it seems that the process was as clear as visiting a psychic to get the tea leaves read. The facts are pretty clear over here: KiwiRail is struggling to recruit suitable staff and that's because it's not paying enough. When demand is high and supply is low prices tend to go up. Our wages are the price of our labour. It's not difficult and you don't need a master's degree in management to figure it out.

Until the new year, stay safe and stay united!✓

## TIMARU RAIL

### Reinvigorated by talk and proposed action for MECA

**H**ERE at the Timaru Rail branch many of our members have been invigorated by the KiwiRail MECA wage talks. We are grateful to our branch secretary who has led the branch into the 21st century and set up a Facebook group to assist in communications around this. As well as notice boards and e-mails, anyone in our branch can now access updates on the wage talks, or anything else for that matter, via Facebook.

The subject matter is what has grabbed members' attention however, regardless of the methods we use to discuss it. The branch held its AGM on 1 November, delayed due to COVID restrictions, and as well as electing our delegates and officials the hot topics were the negotiations and the strike ballot.

Once again further evidence of just how technologically savvy we are was provided as we enabled the RMTU South Island organiser to dial in via video link and to en-

gage with us in a discussion of these topics. By the time you read this the results of the strike ballot will be known and hopefully this will have made KiwiRail see sense and stump up with a decent pay increase.

Our members are all mindful that we swallowed the dead rat of a nil increase last year and that KiwiRail subsequently did better than forecast.

In our view now is the time for some recompense for that sacrifice.

COVID19 remains another issue that is front and centre of people's minds. At the time this is being written it looks like more and more employers will be seeking to mandate vaccination. As essential workers who frequently access other employers' premises we can all see the direction this is heading in and by the time you are reading this we fully expect KiwiRail to have worked with the RMTU to ensure any policy around vaccination is developed properly and implemented fairly. We know our Union's

position on vaccination – to encourage it but also to offer appropriate representation for those who cannot or would prefer not to be jabbed.

In other news we remain very busy keeping the freight moving and maintaining the track and infrastructure. Our container transfer terminal is under new management and members there will doubtless be looking to our delegates for advice and support as the new regime beds in. In operations we are keeping a keen eye on the Dunedin members' resistance to the axing of a job in Balclutha and its replacement with one in Dunedin.

Our members have traditionally agreed to work distant yards in Ashburton and Oamaru but doing something by agreement is very different from being compelled to do it and these so called 'satellite' depots were all established for a reason and in our view that reason hasn't gone away. Anyway, we await developments. 🌐

## TIMARU PORT

### Staff support MECA with enthusiasm

**H**ERE in Timaru we are, like all of you, dealing with the impact of COVID and, as essential workers keeping the supply chain working in our part of the world. As border-facing port workers the majority of us fall under the vaccine mandate and for some this has

#### In favour!

Members employed by Prime Port and Quality Marshalling in Timaru overwhelmingly voted on November 18 to support industrial action with 94% of votes cast in favour. The ballot gives the RMTU a mandate to issue notice of action in pursuit of a MECA with Prime Port and Quality Marshalling. Members are hopeful the vote will send a signal to their employers and act as a catalyst for meaningful negotiations.



*Primeport members vote for strike action.*

meant a difficult decision has to be taken. That said we have a very high rate of vaccination amongst our members and note our Union's policy of supporting vaccination while offering appropriate representation to those who cannot or who would prefer not to get the jab.

In late October Roy Hislop left the

employ of Prime Port in October after 26 years on the waterfront. He was an active RMTU member and delegate and has left to put his considerable skills to good use in an engineering venture he is establishing. It is a measure of the regard in which Roy was held by both the Union and the employer that his leaving function was very well attended and

both expressed their thanks for the hard work he has done over the years. Best of luck in your future endeavours Roy.

Another departure was that of our branch secretary Josh Ruwhiu-Watson who has taken advantage of the demand for labour and found a job in Christchurch. Well done Josh and best wishes. A big thank you for all the work you did supporting our members in the branch.

We have yet to hold our branch AGM due to the COVID19 restrictions and we'll be looking for replacement branch secretary. Rumour has it one of our younger and active members is interested so we look forward to filling the role soon.

As readers of *The Activist* and *The Transport Worker* will know our branch is trying to negotiate a multi employer collective agreement (MECA) with Prime Port and Quality Marshalling. This is proving a challenge with the COVID lockdown delaying talks and both employers expressing reluctance to be in a MECA. You have to ask the question why employers don't want workers to be united. Could it be that a MECA gives us more bargaining power? The



*Delegate Roy Hislop farewelled from Primeport by manager Kevin Beeby.*

fortunes of both employers are intertwined and their protestations that they are completely different have fallen on deaf ears amongst our members. The reality is they both exist to serve the shipping importers and exporters in our region.

Currently our members have recently supported a resolution to back a wage claim mirroring that of the KiwiRail employed RMTU members - an 8% general increase over a one year term. The employers can't

agree on what length of term they want with Prime Port expressing a preference for three years but saying they could live with two and Quality Marshalling offering a one year deal. Challenging times ahead we think although by the time you are reading this we sincerely hope the issues are resolved. After all, this is supposed to be the year of the essential worker and we're all essential workers – we even have to get vaccinated to do our job we are so essential. 🇳🇿

## OTAGO PORT

### Too much reliance on cruise boats affecting bottom line

**H**ERE at Port Chalmers we are grappling with the impact of COVID19 like everyone else. The mandating of vaccinations for border facing roles in the ports has not been as contentious in the South as elsewhere in the country but some people working here remain hesitant or resistant to being vaccinated. Our branch is mindful of the RMTU encouraging vaccination while offering appropriate representation to those who remain unvaccinated.

Volumes at the port remain relatively static, particularly compared to Lyttleton which appears to be experiencing significant growth. To some this will be a result of a mere accident of geography in that Lyttleton has a greater commercial hinterland, but other factors relating to decision taken over previous years are also in play. The impact of COVID has demonstrated the vulnerability of the cruise ship industry and arguably, our port was over reliant on this trade to boost the bottom line. The port's revenue has taken a \$20 million hit in the

last financial year due to this factor alone. Our board chair reported record profits for the last financial year to the shareholder, Otago Regional Council, but these were largely the result of the gain in value of property. You will have been reading about disruptions to the global supply chain and we've seen ample evidence of that here. Our container throughput was down 9% on the last financial year, as shipping delays led to last-minute schedule changes and cancellations. It seems management are better at real estate than doing the job they're actually here for.

Much was made in the media of the taxable one off \$750 payment to workers to say thanks for our efforts. In fact this was only paid to the shipboard workers who had Covid 19 nasal tests. A great exercise in divide and conquer! Members feel disappointed that the \$750 was only paid to a few when they came to work right through lockdown and were mixing daily with these same people. No RMTU members qualified.

Given inflation was reported at 4.9% for the year to September it remains to be seen what members will feel when we get into pay talks next year. The recent spike in inflation, and the forecast future economic uncertainty demonstrates how careful we should all be when signing up to three year wage deals. When we negotiated our last collective agreement in 2019 COVID was unheard of, the global supply chain appeared robust, the cruise ships were frequent and medium term inflation forecasts were 2%. We know our fellow members working for KiwiRail are negotiating their pay round as this is written so be very wary of signing up to a three year deal comrades, a lot can happen in that time.

On that note the branch supports the KiwiRail employed members and assures you that if the strike ballot results in industrial action we will be there supporting you all on the picket line.

Have a great Christmas and a safe and happy New Year. 🇳🇿

## OTAGO RAIL

### Burgeoning Balclutha dispute over replacement staffing

**H**ERE in Otago we've had a very eventful few months. As foreshadowed in the last issue of this magazine, we had our AGM in August and as we met little did we know that the country would go into a full lockdown only a day later. The AGM was well attended and as well as thanking our outgoing branch secretary Dave Kearns and welcoming new incumbent Keryn Cottier we elected a full slate of officials and delegates. In addition, we also heard from a guest speaker, Thaw Htin Oo, who is active in the struggle of the Myanmar people against the brutal military repression in that country. A timely reminder that many of the rights and freedoms we take for granted are very fragile and were once hard fought for.

As these notes are written the talk in the lunchrooms is focusing on a couple of topics: COVID19 and the MECA talks. Of course the two are related because, as essential workers like our comrades in the health sector we've worked through all the lockdowns and various levels as the pandemic has played out. News just in is that KiwiRail is looking at the prospect of mandating the vaccine for some staff and is about to sit down with the RMTU to discuss it. This is evidence of two things: the serious nature of the public health threat we all face and the fact that as essential workers who keep the flow of goods going we deserve to be rewarded commensurately. On the latter point, a COVID pin doesn't cut it Mr Miller, we want a decent pay rise.

Regarding the mandating of vaccines our branch is aware the RMTU has experience of this as our Union represents border facing workers in our ports and we are mindful of our policy to encourage vaccination while at the same time offering appropriate representation to those who cannot or prefer not to get the jab.

As far as the MECA talks go, at the time of writing the strike ballot is in full swing with a couple of weeks to go before it closes. Let's hope members back their negotiation team and we have a high rate of return voting 'yes'. In our branch we have good representation on the negotiation team with reps from the operations, mechanical and networks industrial councils. We held a



Otago rail members support strike.

very well attended branch meeting in October to discuss the talks and thanks to those reps and our South Island organiser for explaining the issues and why the bargaining team decided to ballot for industrial action.

On to more local issues. Since mid-September we've been embroiled in a burgeoning dispute with management over a restructure of the Balclutha shunt operation which was triggered by one of our two members there transferring to Picton. Management are proposing to recruit a replacement staff member in Dunedin and to work the Balclutha shunt by transporting staff down either by train or car. There are a plethora of issues raised by this, both in terms of health and safety but also around whether the employer can unilaterally compel Dunedin-based staff to work in a depot some 80 km distant. We say they can't and our legal advice says the same thing. As this is written management are denying this is a disestablishment of a position (albeit with creation of another in Dunedin) so it's fair to say there is a bit of work to do.

Our union has initiated bargaining for the renewal of the collective agreement with Dunedin Railways which remains in limbo for now. Let's hope there is progress by the time you read this.

Over at Hillside the members are very busy and greeted the announcement of the purchase of dozens of new locomotives for the South Island with approval. We were a little disappointed, but not entirely surprised, to hear from the project manager that the recent escalation in construction costs, particularly the spike in the price of Chinese steel, has put pressure on the development budget. This will mean another look at the plans to try and find ways to trim

costs as well as some delays in completion. Anyone who has experience in construction will tell you that this is not unusual but it remains disappointing nevertheless. Staff amenities and car parks are apparently under scrutiny and we have to keep reminding ourselves that although this is unwelcome news, it is a far cry from the dark days of the National led government's agenda of closing down the workshops altogether.

In network services our members continue to work hard to maintain and improve the infrastructure that we all depend upon. At the branch AGM we had the opportunity to thank Gareth Bachop for his hard work on the Networks Industrial Council. Gareth did sterling work on behalf of members across the country representing gangers and track inspectors for two terms of office and it was fitting that Boaz Lovelock, who is also an industrial council representative, handed him his certificate of appreciation in recognition of this.

The monthly consultation meetings held between the regional infrastructure manager, local managers and RMTU infrastructure delegates is proving to be a useful and beneficial tool for all involved. These meetings cover a large variety of items including staffing, vehicles, and, when necessary, the use of contractors. This is far better than the bad old days when contractors just arrived with no notice and proceeded to do core KiwiRail work. While there may be some managers within KiwiRail that would rather take the easy way out and just use contractors we have, by using these consultation meetings, ensured that this does not happen. Also when it is necessary to use contractors for work that is neither core KiwiRail work or

work that is beyond our ability to complete we can come to an agreement on a case by case basis. These meetings have been also attended by RMTU representatives from

other departments within our branch and the general consensus is that they would like to try and replicate similar meetings within their respective work areas. It seems

to work for infrastructure and it seems that communication is the key. Who would have thought it? 



## SOUTHLAND RAIL

### Local DHB preparing for worse case scenario

**G**REETINGS from the deep South. As your scribe writes this the news is full of our local DHB's planning for a COVID19 so-called 'worst case scenario' overwhelming our health service. Let's hope it doesn't come to that but it is a sober reminder that to date we've been spared the worst of the global pandemic here in our corner of the world.

Vaccinations are a talking point in the lunchrooms, mainly around the possibility of KR mandating vaccinations, which is

seen by some as a removal of choice. We as a branch are conscious of RMTU policy encouraging vaccination while supporting and representing those who cannot be vaccinated on medical grounds or choose not to be.

Of course, as essential workers most of our members have worked through all lockdowns and levels and this has fuelled the raised expectations of members in this years MECA wage round. We had a well-attended branch meeting at the end of October as

national office put out the strike ballot and thanks to National Management Committee South Island rail rep Dave Kearns for coming down and sharing his views on the negotiations. It's certainly helpful to hear from someone who has been at the table. The branch passed a resolution supporting the claim of an increase to wages to the value of 8%. By the time you read this the ballot will have been well and truly counted and we may be embroiled in the first national rail strike since the 1990s.

The branch held our AGM in August, and thanks to RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson and former South Island organiser and life member Paul Corliss for visiting us. As well as electing our officials and delegates it was an opportunity to thank Stacy Chandler for the work he did as branch secretary and also to recognise Evan Lewis who retired to Australia a few years ago but is now back in New Zealand. Evan was a stalwart amongst our membership at the port in Bluff and it was great to have the opportunity to recognise this and present him with a certificate of appreciation.

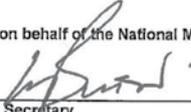
We also heard of the struggles of our fellow trade unionists in Myanmar who are fighting for basic democratic rights in the face of a brutal military regime that seized power in a coup last year. The RMTU was pivotal in setting up the Myanmar rail workers' union and it was a timely reminder that many of the rights that we take for granted – such as the right to strike – are not universally enjoyed and have often been paid for with workers' blood.

On to more local matters and congratulations to newly signed off rail operator Hunter Barlow for getting the tick of approval. Welcome to the rail family Hunter. You'll be a busy boy as milk production for Fonterra is at full capacity, with Southland producing over 13.3 million litres a week. We're here keeping the white gold moving. Something management need to be mindful of when considering our pay talks. 

#### Rail & Maritime Transport Union Inc Statement of Financial Position As At 30/06/2021

CURRENT ASSETS	Note	2021	2020
Current Bank Accounts	5	704,359	691,152
Accounts Receivable	3	24,877	86,174
Interest Accrued	4	18,789	39,875
Investments	7	4,128,790	3,646,101
Accrued RWT		5,860	-
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>4,882,676</b>	<b>4,463,301</b>
NON CURRENT ASSETS			
Fixed Assets	6	132,100	151,237
Investments	7	1,467,715	1,587,570
<b>Total Non Current Assets</b>		<b>1,599,815</b>	<b>1,738,808</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>6,482,491</b>	<b>6,202,109</b>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Accounts Payable	8	102,050	76,053
GST Payable		36,479	28,361
Konemu Provision		6,452	6,452
Income Tax Payable	2	(3,924)	(6,263)
Provision for Leave		131,855	131,448
Veteran's Reunion Fund		6,850	6,850
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>279,561</b>	<b>242,901</b>
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Non Current Liabilities		-	-
<b>Total Non Current Liabilities</b>		<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>\$ 6,202,930</b>	<b>\$ 5,959,207</b>
Represented by:			
<b>MEMBERS' FUNDS</b>		<b>\$ 6,202,930</b>	<b>\$ 5,959,207</b>

Signed on behalf of the National Management Committee

  
General Secretary

6 October 2021  
Date

  
National President

6 October 2021  
Date

# Myanmar train driver killed after defying dictators

**W**IN KO OO gave up his career because he couldn't bear to see his country fall under military rule again. He later lost his life in suspicious circumstances.

He was a train driver with 25 years' experience, but when the army seized power he knew he had to resist. He had lived through the aftermath of a similar coup in 1988. The return of military rule was utterly unacceptable to him.

A month after the civilian government was overthrown, Win Ko Oo joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) sweeping the country and thus put himself in harm's way.

He told Myanmar Now last August: "I hesitated at first because I had to think about my family. We had nowhere else to go. But in the end, my hatred for the regime outweighed my concerns about the hardships we would have to face, so I quit."

Mandalay's railway workers were among the first to join the movement in large numbers. In the department Win Ko Oo belonged to, 285 of 319 staff members walked off the job in an effort to deny the regime control over state mechanisms.

This resulted in hundreds of railway employees and their families being forced to leave the housing compound where most of the striking workers lived.

For Win Ko Oo the stakes were higher: a warrant was issued for his arrest on charges of incitement.

He couldn't afford to take any chances so he slipped under the junta's radar. A relative gave him a place to stay and started selling noodles in a market. He was used to being the family's provider, but now that their only income was from his wife's work as a seamstress, he had to swallow his pride. He was well known in that Mandalay market in the industrial suburbs and was well-known for his friendliness.

He said: "I was so ashamed at first that I wanted to cry. I was new to this business, so it was also pretty challenging for me to get the hang of it. But once I started earning money again, I came to like it."

At around 5am on September 9, as he was making an early-morning delivery, Win Ko Oo was savagely beaten by a group of eight men who also stole his motorcycle. Ten days later, he died of a cerebral haemorrhage.

There was no investigation into the attack partly because the family didn't trust the police but also their suspicions that Win Ko Oo wasn't simply the victim of a robbery that went horribly wrong.

"It couldn't have been because they wanted his motorcycle. There was no need to beat him like that just to take his motorcycle. It's more likely that he died because he was a leader of the railway workers who joined the CDM," a friend said.

"He always said that he wanted this revolution to succeed, that he wanted to operate trains again, and that he wanted to send his grandchildren to school," said a family member. 🇲🇲



*After joining the Civil Disobedience Movement, Win Ko Oo supported his family by selling noodles at a market in Mandalay.*



*Win Ko Oo addresses fellow railway workers in front of Mandalay Station.*

The RMTU has long supported the the struggle of the people of Myanmar supporting the work of UnionAID in actively opposing the Junta and supporting democracy and freedom from persecution. This Union has especially supported the nascent railway union as it became established again in recent years through donations, conferences and personal visits.