

# THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

## **JUN 2025**

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

## **Hillside Rail Workshops are Back on Track!**

**A Momentous Occasion for NZ's Rail Future**





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# Celebration and Battles

**W**elcome to our June edition of *The Transport Worker*. Winter has certainly kicked in!

**Hillside Rebuilt!**

On May 16th, the new Hillside Workshop was formally opened. It was planned for an earlier date but had to be postponed due to weather. It was certainly a day of celebration. The opening was well attended by past and present workers, MP's, Local and Regional Councillors, KiwiRail customers and many that had supported our campaign to not close Hillside which shifted to a campaign to rebuild these workshops. I had the opportunity to speak at this event. Hillside has a rich 150-year history. As Ian Dougherty titled his book on Hillside it is "More than just a place of Work" I recalled that when I grew up in Dunedin, Hillside was one of many industries in the region including Shacklocks, the whiteware manufacturer, Cadbury Chocolate factory, a large soap factory and Mosgiel Woolen Mill which made uniform and woolen blankets. Hopefully Hillside is the start of bringing back manufacturing to the region.

**NZ First Meeting**

Early April, representatives from the Maritime Union NZ, Merchant Service Guild and RMTU met with the Honorable Winston Peters now that he is the Minister of Rail. Primarily the discussion was about the Rail enabled Ferries and Rail in general.

It was clear that the Minister was very pro Rail and he wanted growth of both the freight carried and growth of the Network. We were made welcome and we were invited to meet in the future when required.

**National Management Committee (NMC)**

Ballot results—as reported in the June Activist newsletter, the ballot results are in. We now have a full NMC. Welcome to the new NMC members, Leighton Mosese, Josh Goodwin and Pierce Smith. Thanks to Andy Kelly for all his hard mahi as the South Island Port Reps and thanks to Shane McNae for all his hard work as the North Island Rail Rep.

**Industrial Council Ballots**

By the time this magazine is distributed, we will have the ballots out for the contested positions on the KiwiRail/RMTU Industrial Council. These ballots will be electronic. There has been some teething problems with some members unsure how to vote electronically and some members unsure about clicking on a link from an Australian e-mail address. Hopefully after a few ballots, members will be used to voting that way.

**KiwiRail MECA**

We have met twice now, for two days, May 20 & 21, in person and a meeting both in person and online June 12. The June meeting was short notice, less than 24 hours, but most of the RMTU bargaining team joined



*L to R: Capt. Kevin Judkins (MSG), Carl Findlay (MUNZ), the Honourable Winston Peters, and Todd Valster (RMTU).*

## Scan me!



For electronic voting to work well the RMTU needs your current email address to send you voting information. Please update your contact details by scanning the QR code above

the call. A real sign of solidarity within the team – well done. There is still a gap between what on offer and what the RMTU team is prepared to recommend for ratification. Watch this space.

### Port Napier

Bargaining has stalled with the parties unable to agree. A strike ballot has been undertaken with partial strike action to take place late June. Hopefully by the time that action is to take place, there is an acceptable offer to take back to the membership for ratification.

### Qube

Negotiations for the renewed Collective Agreement are down to a few unresolved issues but we are hoping to be in a position for report back meetings and ratification in the near future.

### Ports and Women's Forum 2025

Planning is well under way for our

Ports and Women's Forums, 29–31 July at the James Cook Hotel on the Terrace, Wellington. There is a full and interesting agenda

### Auckland SPADS

Waka Kotahi (NZTA) has issued KiwiRail with a Section 23 notice due to concerns around Signals Passed at Danger (SPAD's) in the Auckland Metro Network. After the first SPAD this year in February, KiwiRail started what they called a “deep dive” into why SPAD's are occurring and what can be done to prevent SPAD's. They used as former rail manager with extensive rail experience and a Human Factors expert to participate in the “deep dive”. RMTU members and staff participated in workshops with these contractors and I am informed that there was real engagement. Plans are well underway to fit the European Train Control System (ETCS) to the Locomotive hauled services on the Auckland Metro Network. Four locomotives have ETCS fitted with the plan to have the reminder

fitted by August 2026. ETCS is an engineering control which won't prevent a SPAD but will lessen the consequences of a SPAD to avoid collisions. Of note is this will be the first time ETCS has been fitted to a freight locomotive in Australasia.

### Rules and Standing Orders, Constitution and Policy Manual

We are having our Rules and Standing Orders (required in our Constitution) overhauled so we comply with the new Incorporated Societies Act to be introduced in April 2026. This very important as if we are not compliant then we would no longer be a registered union. Our legal expert has identified a number of clauses that are not required in our Constitution and would be better placed in our Policy Manual. We will be sending out drafts for feedback prior to an online Special Meeting of our Conference Delegates in October this year.

Take Care and Be Safe.

—Todd Valster 🇳🇿

# KiwiRail and the RMTU talking health and safety at annual forum

**I**n May, KiwiRail and RMTU hosted our annual 2-day Health and Safety Action (HSAT) conference in Wellington. Worker Reps, HSAT Chairpersons, KiwiRail Managers and health and safety staff talked all things health and safety as well as recognizing and celebrating the successes of the HSAT committees. This year the theme was 'Workplace health', in particular mental health risk otherwise known as psychosocial risk. The keynote speaker Adele Saunders from St John's Ambulance service spoke about their system for helping staff with their mental health particularly first responders such as ambulance staff. She said they try and use language to bring down the stigma and awkwardness of talking about mental health. She said it is common to hear the euphemism "*how's the cheese on your cracker?*" Meaning "*how is your mental health today?*" Sounds funny, but talking about cheese and crackers probably helps to start a conversation with a workmate you're worried about that would otherwise be hard to have.

KiwiRail's Patrick Maney discussed

the results of KR's psycho-social survey taken by staff last year, which found psychosocial risk to staff at KiwiRail was in the 'high' and the 'very high' category. The survey was conducted at approximately the same time as the restructuring last year which could be reflected in the results. He explained the next step is to identify the causal factors so they can be addressed. The RMTU looks forward to working with KiwiRail on this important initiative to support better mental health and wellbeing.

HSAT Excellence Certificates and prezzy cards were awarded to the Invercargill Container terminal HSAT for their success managing the exposure to airborne silica dust at the unsealed container terminal. Excellence Awards also went Greater Journeys HSAT for inventive ways to remind staff of safety information, Hutt Mechanical workshops for dealing with dust and noise from the wheel lathe.

RMTU H&S Organiser Karen Fletcher and lawyer Hazel Armstrong delivered a session for Delegates and Managers on the ACC process for accessing cover following an

injury (whether it is by ACC or a third-party provider such as Work Aon). Including tips and tools for navigating the system when cover or entitlement is delayed or declined.

Hazel warned against workers accepting termination for medical incapacity too quickly because the employer has a duty to help you return to work. It's set out in the RMTU and KiwiRail agreement called the Illness Injury Management Programme (find it on the RMTU website). The agreement stresses the commitment to workplace-based rehabilitation and safe alternative duties. Hazel warned members to look out for certain words that indicate an injured worker is likely to need help from the RMTU with their ACC claim and employment. The following words and phrases are a trigger to contact the RMTU. They are "*vocational independence*", "*suspension of entitlement*", "*denial of claim*", "*pre-existing condition*" and lastly "*the injury should have been resolved by now.*" If in doubt, speak up, ask for help. 🇳🇿





# Callous Disregard for Workers' Lives

**T**he Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety shows a callous disregard for the health and safety of workers as she panders to the business interests which she represents. Her proposals to weaken the Health and Safety at Work Act signal that the Coalition Government has forgotten the lessons of the Pike River Disaster, and is intent on putting votes from poorly performing employers ahead of workers' lives.

In particular, her stated intention to weaken the purpose of the Act, and soften the duties of company directors, will send exactly the wrong message to business. So will the absurd proposal to require Worksafe to waste money and staff time on a hotline for the public to report excessive road cone use.

A key recommendation of the 2012 Pike River Royal Commission was that directors should be under a legal duty to ensure that an effective health and safety management system is in place, and the recent Maritime New Zealand prosecution of the former Chief Executive of Ports of Auckland Tony Gibson demonstrates the power of that duty in the HSWA.

RMTU members in the ports and rail industry know, from bitter experience and the unnecessary deaths of workmates, what a difference it can make if there is a genuine commitment to health and safety from the top. Weakening that law would be a backward step.

And there is a contradiction in the Minister's complaint that there is a need for more guidance to employers when one of her first actions after becoming Minister was to "shelve" the Plant and Structures Regulations, which have been more than 5 years

in development and would, if implemented, have provided comprehensive guidance across a range of industries.

She has also announced she will allow industries to develop their own codes of practice. Approved Codes of Practice can be very helpful health and safety protection, and the new ACOP for Loading and Unloading Cargo in ports has been a joint effort by unions, employers and Maritime New Zealand. Our own RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson, and Health and Safety Organiser Karen Fletcher, played a key role in the ACOP development.

But history shows that that allowing industry to develop codes of practice can result in exclusion of unions from the development process, and weaker protection.


And it is not just the proposed weakening of legal protections which are a worry. It is also that political parties are turning their back on the post Pike River consensus to improve New Zealand's appalling workplace fatality record.

Worksafe New Zealand was established in 2013 with the challenging task of leading this "step change" in workplace health and safety performance. It steadily built its capacity, including a much stronger focus on the health hazards which claim more than 900 lives a year. It achieved its target of reducing work-related fatalities by 25% by 2020 and developed an outcomes-based strategy to reflect the intent and key levers identified by the Task Force and the new Act.

An important feature of the new Act and strategy was to augment the usual Worksafe role of education, engagement, compliance and enforcement with new initiatives which examine the root causes of accidents

and incidents, rather than just blame the most proximate cause or person. A modern regulator needs to understand upstream accountabilities, business models, supply chains and contracting arrangements. Forestry is one area where this approach was being developed by Worksafe.

We are now faced with a disturbingly similar situation to that which the Pike River Royal Commission was so critical of more than 10 years ago. Both governments (Labour and the Coalition) appear to have abandoned the modern pro-active approach of the Health and Safety at Work Act. They have made redundant the specialist staff in Worksafe who were committed to implementing the strategy, leaving an under-resourced inspectorate (ratio of 6 per 100,000 workers compared with 11 in Australia) to pursue a reactive enforcement approach.

All of this dismal disregard for workers interest from Government emphasises the vital importance of the worker participation and representation rights which the HSWA still provides and which the RMTU has utilised so well. Some excellent health and safety work has been done in both ports and rail, often collaborative work with employers, over recent years. It helps when advocating to politicians for workers' rights to be able to point to examples of exemplary best practice. 

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■ Ross Wilson—RMTU Life member and former RMTU General Secretary, CTU President, director of Centreport, Kiwirail, and Maritime New Zealand, and director and Chair of ACC and Worksafe New Zealand



# ASLEF

## Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen

**A**SLEF is a UK trade union representing train drivers. They also represent workers in passenger and freight train operating companies, as well as in the London Underground and some light rail services.

The ASLEF Conference was held in Durham, England from May 19-22nd 2025. I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to attend this well-run fantastic conference. From day 1 we were treated like whanau. ASLEF are big fans of showing off their country as well as their commuter services. Wow does London know how to do Public Transportation!! Howard Phillips and I were lucky enough to get cab rides with our Aussie brothers on the way to Scotland and York. Deborah Reay (ASLEF Women's Network Chair) and I were thrilled to have a female driver for our cab ride...how good!! These long-haul passenger trains are absolutely superior to what we have in New Zealand. Cruising along at speeds up to 150mph, gliding through the air.

On conference days the General Secretary Mick Wheelan took roll call at the beginning and after every break. He is very firm on time management. The list of remits, what they refer to as agenda items was incredible to see. Some of the items were debated on for over an hour. An item can either be adopted (passed) or noted. Noting an item is better than rejecting

it. So basically, no item is rejected at this level, it remains noted until the next conference. The voting system at the conference was excellent. Each delegate from their "district", we say branch, has a label in front of where they sit of their branch name along with a voting gadget. The item to vote on comes up on the screen with all the districts listed and everyone gets to see how each district voted, and it's recorded. Outstanding!! The General Secretary spoke passionately of delegates getting bullied and harassed by members on their union devices. A solution was put forward for delegates to change out the SIM cards on a regular basis. Mick's view on this is correcting the behaviour of bullying and harassment, not changing out sim cards. Social media (twitter, Instagram, Facebook etc.) are a big issue with over 22,000 members listening to rubbish on social media platforms. We need to be choosing social media platforms that portray our beliefs. Finding safer spaces on social media platforms for the members and the union movement.

Jim Baxter, Executive Committee Member of ASLEF and from Scotland presented a topic that definitely hit home. Continuous Driving and Toxic Shock Syndrome. It's 2025 and we are still talking about toilets. It's not just in New Zealand but this is a global issue. Jim spoke of his own personal experiences of just about fainting because he had held on too

long and wasn't able to get to a toilet due to driving. He spoke of finishing late after his shift one night, to find all the toilets that were available were all locked. He made it to his car, defecated as he couldn't hold on any longer, found something in his car and cleaned himself up. Other instances that drivers have experienced was to defecate on the cab floor due to IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) and clean it up and throw it out the window. There is a constant rise in prostate cancer, kidney stones, and toxic shock syndrome in men in the UK. Jim spoke of how humiliating, degrading, and embarrassing this has been for him and his workmates, men and women. He fights and advocates for a better driver's diagram, as it will benefit all drivers. I could sympathise and know all too well what Jim and his workmates are going through. I referred to our 2019 World Toilet Day Campaign that RMTU did and now KiwiRail have and are continuing to put trackside toilets up and down Aotearoa for all workers.

This ASLEF Conference has certainly been an eye opener to me on a union solidarity level, learning and especially a personal growth level. The connections are real and the union solidarity with ASLEF only grows stronger each day.

I Kotahitanga  
In Unity 

**Across:**

**Rebecca Hauck, Aslef National Secretary Mick Whelan, and Howard Phillips**



# What has happened Pay Equity for Women in New Zealand?

**P**ay equity—ensuring that women and men receive equal pay for work of equal value—has long been a cornerstone of gender equality efforts in New Zealand. While the country has made significant strides, including landmark settlements and legislative reforms, the journey toward full pay equity remains ongoing. Recently the issue is once again in the spotlight as the government introduces new amendments to the Equal Pay Act to refine the process of addressing pay disparities.

## The Current Landscape

As of 2025, women in New Zealand earn approximately 92 cents for every dollar earned by men.

This persistent gender pay gap reflects a complex mix of factors, including occupational segregation, undervaluation of female-dominated roles, and systemic biases.

Whilst the agreements that the RMTU hold with our employers do not differentiate rates as gender specific we know the industries we represent have traditionally been male dominated. Often the pay gap is due to reduced opportunity for women and their ability to have clear career progression.

The Equal Pay Act 1972, significantly amended in 2020, laid the groundwork for employees and unions to raise pay equity claims without needing to go through the courts. This led to several high-profile settlements, particularly in the public sector, such as those involving

care and support workers, teachers, and mental health assistants.

## Recent Legislative Changes

In May 2025, the government announced a series of amendments to the Equal Pay Act allegedly aimed at making the pay equity process more robust, workable, and sustainable.

Key changes include:

- **Raising the threshold** for what qualifies as work “predominantly performed by female employees” from 60% to 70%, sustained over 10 years.
- **Stricter evidence requirements** to demonstrate historical and current undervaluation.
- **Clearer guidance on comparators**, ensuring that comparisons are made with male-dominated roles requiring similar skills and responsibilities.
- **Employer flexibility**, allowing phased settlements and the ability to opt out of multi-employer claims.

## Criticism and Concerns

These changes are intended to reduce the financial burden on the Crown—currently estimated at \$1.78 billion annually from existing settlements—and to ensure that only well-substantiated claims proceed. This clear attack on the female work force can only be about saving money, from a government that is slashing money out of the countries budget. They are showing that they are an

equal opportunity government in that they are prepared to attack all sectors equally, just piece by piece, we can only wonder what comes next.

We would argue that the new thresholds and evidentiary requirements may make it harder for women to bring forward legitimate claims, potentially stalling progress on closing the gender pay gap. Opposition parties and advocacy groups have voiced concerns that the reforms could disproportionately affect women in lower-paid, female-dominated sectors who already face barriers to equity.

## Looking Ahead

New Zealand remains a global leader in gender equality, but the evolving pay equity framework highlights the delicate balance between fairness, feasibility, and fiscal responsibility. As the new legislation is implemented, its impact on both employers and employees will be closely watched.

The path to true pay equity is not just about legislation—it also requires cultural change, transparency, and a commitment from all sectors of society to value work fairly, regardless of who performs it.

## Union Push Back: Defending Pay Equity for Women in Aotearoa

In 2025, the fight for pay equity in New Zealand has reached a critical juncture. While the government has introduced amendments to the Equal Pay Act aimed at streamlining the claims process, unions across the





country are sounding the alarm. They argue that these changes threaten to undo decades of progress in the struggle for gender equality in the workplace.

### Union Concerns Over Legislative Changes

The Rail & Maritime Transport Union condemns the government's proposed amendments as a direct assault on the rights and economic well-being of women and all working New Zealanders.

We argue that raising the threshold for what constitutes a female-dominated occupation and requiring more stringent evidence of undervaluation will make it significantly harder for women to bring forward legitimate claims.

Fiona Mansell, National Assistant Secretary of MUNZ, stated:

"The proposals completely undermine the principle that women deserve equal pay for work of equal value. Weakening pay equity laws will entrench poverty and make it harder

for working families to get by."

### Solidarity Across the Union Movement

Unions across sectors—from health-care to education—have expressed solidarity and are mobilizing to resist what they see as a rollback of hard-won rights. They argue that the government's framing of the changes as "sustainable" and "workable" masks a deeper agenda of cost-cutting at the expense of equity.

Unions emphasize that pay equity is not just a women's issue—it's a workers' rights issue. Many of the roles affected by pay inequity, such as caregiving, cleaning, and support work, are undervalued precisely because they have historically been performed by women.

### The Broader Impact

The union warns that these changes could widen the gender pay gap, which still sees women earning less than men on average. There is always the fear that new rules will discourage

collective bargaining and weaken the ability of unions to negotiate on behalf of large groups of workers. We see progressively that an anti-worker government seeks to weaken unions systematically through staged attacks on smaller parts of society, effectively death by a thousand cuts, it is important to resist any moves which devalue working people.

### Call to Action

In response, unions are organising campaigns, engaging in public advocacy, and calling for the resignation of Workplace Relations Minister Brooke van Velden, who is spearheading the reforms

They are urging the public to stand with women workers and demand a fairer, more inclusive approach to pay equity.

We urge our members to not standby while the rights of any workers are undermined. We urge all our members to get behind protests, marches and to write letters to editors and MP's across the country. 🌐

# The Bullshit Budget

**N**icola Willis named her Budget this Year the "no bullshit budget"

This is ironic at best, given the amount of complete and utter reeking bullshit in this years' budget under the guise of "growth". Here are just a few examples of why this budget 2025 is in fact "The Bullshit Budget" for NZ workers:

■ Christopher Luxon trying to convince New Zealanders (and possibly himself) that the knee jerk scrapping of 33 pay equity claims affecting 180,000+ low paid, women workers was not about saving money. This is

despite David Seymour crowing that it's exactly what it's all about. How stupid does Luxon think we are?

■ Christopher Luxon, Brook Van Velden and Nicola Willis all trying to convince the NZ public that without any due democratic process at all—no warning, no consultation, no select committee, no public feedback, and no opportunity for the workers involved to speak for themselves the pay equity claims process they have scrapped was flawed and their new process is so much better and will be better for women. It's

not and it definitely won't. They are replacing a pay equity process with a pay equity regime—does this sound a bit dictatory to anyone else?

■ That finally the economic recovery is here and that we are all going to see job growth and incomes rising faster than the cost of living. It's difficult to figure out how this will happen. Nicola Willis seems to still believe in trickle-down economics (an idea which is SO last century but clearly remains a go-to theory for anyone seeking to maintain status quo master/ servant relationships). She is adamant that

depreciation cuts for businesses will have a direct impact on wage growth. Apparently, she believes that if businesses have more cash in hand, workers' wages will grow faster. Tell her she's dreaming! Our union members know very well how much time and energy it takes to get employers to increase wages that just cover CPI increases, let alone the "meaningful" increases Nicola assures us we can expect.

- Nicola says that equity issues are dealt with through the normal collective bargaining process!!! Even if that were true, this statement would only apply to the 15% of NZ workers who are unionised (except of course for the ones who represent workers in low paid, female dominated industries, some of whom now have to wait until 2033 to have their claims reviewed) but she doesn't mention the 85% who are not members of a union. It would be nice to think that Nicola is considering

how to increase union coverage of NZ workers, but we all know that a central (ridiculous) belief of right-wing politics is that individual employees have the power to negotiate their own pay increases. Maybe for a very few but for the vast majority—it's a lovely theory but yeah nah.

- The Bullshit Budget will supposedly create 240,000 jobs over the next few years. Again, how? All we have seen so far is cuts and job losses and workers heading to Oz for better pay and conditions. Maybe Nicola is getting her job creation figures confused with her job cuts?

- Nicola tells us that the most meaningful thing is a job that pays better. Well, no shit Sherlock. Just not for your own government employees though, right? Just not for workers who not so very long ago were considered "essential".

The Bullshit Budget seeks to justify decisions that will not improve pay

or conditions for NZ workers. The scrapping of pay equity claims (\$3.2 billion per year for 4 years) while at the same time allocating funds to pay for tax cuts for landlords (\$2.9 billion per year for ? years) and tobacco companies (\$216 million per year for ? years) is despicable. Worse is the government's attempts to convince us it's all what's best for you dear, don't worry your pretty little head about it, our ideas are perfect, and we don't need to hear any opinions about you from you.

Christopher, Brooke, David, Nicola, you just don't seem to have the imagination or lived experience or empathy or ability to come up with new ideas for contemporary problems to represent NZ workers. We can smell the bullshit on your breath. 🌐

*Across: Clockwise from top left*  
*Dunedin rail workers flying the flag for International Womens Day*  
*Union Women wearing Accelerate Action shirts at the International Womens Day Event in Taranaki*  
*NMC Women's Rep Rebecca Hauck and Kim Sutherland*  
*Below: RMTU women supporting pay equity rally at Parliament on 9 May 2025*







## Workers' Memorial Day

### Napier

**I**t was a fine warm day on Monday for the opening of the new Napier Port memorial buoy.

Historically, WMD was held at the southern end of Napier Port adjacent to the Seamen's mission.

Just inside the southern security gates stood the memorial Apperley wall, which held the plaques of those who had passed, some passing while in service to the Port company or the old Harbour Board, others, sadly, passing due the consequence of workplace incidents. Accessibility to the wall became limited due to traffic flows and security requirements, in essence, due to the Port progressive operational requirements changing over the years, making the wall

inaccessible to the public.

This year, the new memorial is a retired buoy, placed adjacent to the beach in a treed grassy area with full public access, at the Napier Port's northern end.

To the infrastructure department, a job well done, in terms of removing the plaques, from the wall, cleaning and affixing to the new memorial buoy, a big 'nga mihi'.

A guestimate of around a 100 plus turned out for this special remembrance. Karakia were held; the MC was acting Branch Secretary Chris Vaughan. Speakers included the CEO, Managers and a couple from the public.

Board members, the public, ETU, MUNZ and a large turnout of RMT

Union members and Napier Port staff were also in attendance.

The buoy was fittingly unveiled by RMT Union member Ryan Baker whose father died in 1993 and member Phil Tanna whose brother passed in 2006, both were consequences of workplace incidents at Napier Port.

It is with great thanks to the Napier Port Company, Board and infrastructure department for making this new whakamaharatanga pou and space, a place where whanau, friends, workmates and public, now have the liberty to go and pay their respects, tributes, in honour to those who we have lost from workplace incidents—via the new memorials accessibility.

I Kotahitanga,  
Dave Marden. 

### Wellington

**L**abour's Spokesperson for Workplace Relations and Safety, Jan Tinetti spoke to the crowd at the Wellington waterfront, organised by the NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi. The CTU launched a campaign to ban the import, supply and use of engineered stone. Engineered stone is an unnecessary product that is killing workers. It has been banned in Australia because of the risk it poses. You can add your name to the petition at [www.together.org.nz/ban\\_engineered\\_stone](http://www.together.org.nz/ban_engineered_stone)



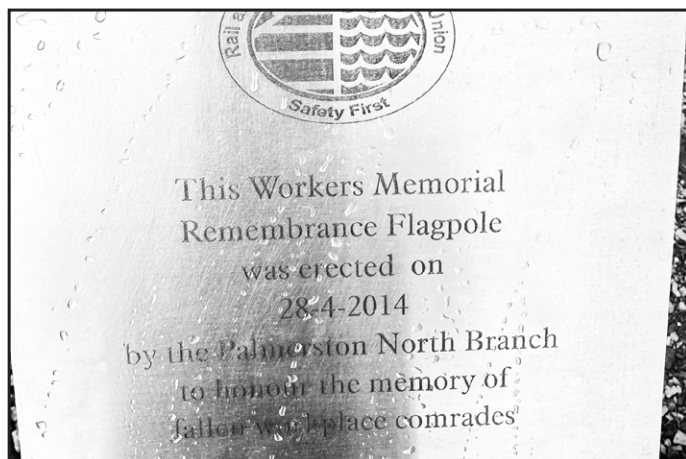
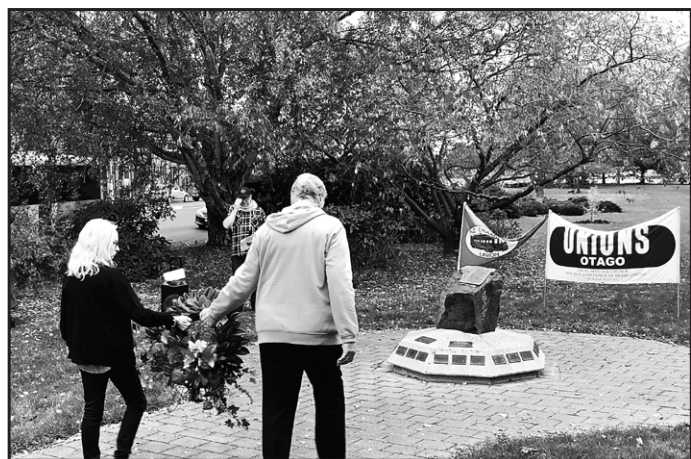
### Palmerston North

**N**ew memorial at Palmy  
A good turnout at Palmerston North for Memorial Day, we were all treated to the newly refurbished memorial. Thanks to all those who contributed and all the hard work involved.

The weather held long enough for a touching service. Families and work mates attended the service and we hosted the family of Tupinia Hill who tragically lost his life in the log siding last year.

*Across—Clockwise from top left: ■ Napier workers gather at the workers memorial ■ Hutt Workshop staff gather on Workers' Memorial Day ■ Team Leader Mike Kyle & daughter Lily lay a wreath on Anzac Day at Petone Railway Station ■ Plaque for fallen comrades in Palmerston North branch ■ Jan Tinetti, Labour Party Spokesperson for Workplace Health & Safety speaking at the Workers' Memorial Day event ■ A wreath being laid at the Workers' Memorial at the Market Reserve in Dunedin*







# Hillside back on track

## A Great Day for Dunedin, A Great Day for Rail

**A**fter years of uncertainty, struggle, and dedicated campaigning, the revitalised Hillside Rail Workshops were officially declared open on Friday 16 May 2025.

KiwiRail workers and managers, union reps, politicians, councillors and locals gathered at the workshops in the heart of South Dunedin for the event.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Todd Valster says the event is a momentous occasion for New Zealand's rail future.

"This is a big day for Dunedin, our rail workers, and the entire South Island. The RMTU fought hard for the revitalization of Hillside, and its reopening is a testament to our members' expertise and resilience, demonstrating what can be achieved when we invest in our people and vital infrastructure."

Mr Valster says the new facility has already been boosting high-skill, unionised jobs, strengthening economic resilience, and enhancing South Island rail maintenance capability.

The RMTU acknowledges the support of the Minister of Rail, Winston Peters, for the project, and acknowledges the previous Labour government's crucial initial investment and groundwork, as well as the work by local MPs past and present, including Clare Curran and Ingrid Leary.

The new Hillside is testament to many union members and officials, including former General Secretary Wayne Butson, and none more so than the late Jim Kelly, long serving National President of the RMTU. This achievement is due in no small way to his commitment and leadership.

The upgraded Hillside Workshop will be a centre of excellence for rail maintenance, overhaul, and potential future manufacturing.

Mr Valster says Hillside will enable KiwiRail to maintain and repair rolling stock here, reducing turnaround times, minimising costs, and ensuring more reliable rail service.

He noted the strategic alignment between the Hillside reopening and the recent announcement of a new inland port at Milburn, South Otago.

"A thriving rail network requires both efficient freight hubs and a world-class maintenance backbone. In alignment, these developments will drive economic growth and strengthen the South Island's transport infrastructure for generations to come."

Mr Valster says the reduction of congestion and reduction of emissions from increased use of rail will be a major advance towards a modern, low-carbon supply chain.

The RMTU congratulates all those who worked tirelessly to bring the project to fruition and looks forward to a strong and productive future for the Hillside Rail Workshop.

2025 marks the 150th anniversary of Hillside being on this site.

The celebrations of May 2025 stand in stark contrast to the grim realities of just over a decade ago.

Hillside, which at one time pulsed with the energy of 1200 workers at its peak, had become "a shadow of its former self."

A significant blow came in 2012 when KiwiRail awarded an estimated \$29 million manufacturing contract to a Chinese company, a decision seen at the time as potentially terminal for the workshops. This led to painful redundancies and a drain of

vital engineering skills from Dunedin.

But the RMTU and the Dunedin community refused to let Hillside die. This meant the union fighting back on both economic and social grounds. The battle began in July 2011 with an RMTU organized "Save Hillside Rally," which saw around 850 people, including then-Mayor the late Dave Cull and local MPs, protest against proposed job losses.

The campaign was a marathon, not a sprint, involving years of persistent lobbying and advocacy. Central to this long struggle was former RMTU National President (1990-2011), Jim Kelly. A true Hillside man, Jim started at Hillside in 1982 after emigrating from Scotland, and became a key union delegate.

Jim was instrumental in rallying workers, urging them to unite and get behind the campaign to save their jobs and their workshop. His immense contribution to the union is recognised by the naming of "the Kelly room" at the RMTU national office.

Sustained pressure from the union, workers, and the community eventually began to shift the political landscape, leading to investment decisions that breathed new life into Hillside.

An initial breakthrough came in 2019 with a \$19.97 million injection from the Provincial Growth Fund (PGF). Momentum built with the announcement of a massive \$85 million in Budget 2021, specifically allocated to upgrade facilities and, significantly, to fund wagon assembly at Hillside.

This was followed by a further \$23 million from a wider Government investment in replacing KiwiRail's ageing locomotive and wagon fleet.







*Todd Valster, Andy Woolhouse, Lisa Kelly with past and present politicians and local body representatives*

The revitalised Hillside Workshop is a truly impressive sight, a testament to modern engineering and a commitment to quality.

The centrepiece is a multi-purpose 5,500 square metre workshop boasting 21 workstations, capable of handling numerous locomotives, wagons, and other rail vehicles simultaneously.

The facility is equipped with powerful workshop cranes and jacks that can lift 120 tonnes, and a massive traverser capable of moving 130 tonnes, allowing for efficient movement of rolling stock in and out of the workshop.

In a nod to its rich past, one of the original buildings from the 1870s has been meticulously preserved, earthquake-strengthened, and is now used for parts storage.

The site also features an improved rail yard layout and utilises fully

electric shunt engines, contributing to KiwiRail's net carbon-zero by 2050 strategy. The new Hillside brings together various KiwiRail teams – mechanical, wagon assembly, and for the first time, the Dunedin track teams – under one roof.

With these teams now moved in, around 100 people are working at the site, a dramatic increase from the dark days of 2012.

A cornerstone of Hillside's new era is wagon assembly. This work began in March 2024, and by the end of April 2025, an impressive 401 new wagons had already been assembled on site. Hillside is now capable of assembling two wagons daily, with a target of up to 1500 wagons by 2027.

The regeneration of Hillside has had a profound impact on the wider Dunedin community. Hillside shows what can be achieved when workers, their union, pro-worker political

parties, and the community stand shoulder to shoulder.

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union has been at the forefront of the battle for Hillside, and the reopening is a moment of immense pride for our Union, and a model for how New Zealand should approach economic and infrastructure development.

The journey of Hillside, from the brink of closure to a bustling hub of modern industry, demonstrates what is possible when there is vision, political will, and the determination of working people fighting for their livelihoods, their communities, and their industries.

The fight was long, the odds often seemed stacked against a positive outcome, but persistence, solidarity, and a belief in the value of rail and local skills triumphed. Hillside is not just back, it's powering the future.







*Above: The very old days  
Below: Grim working conditions back then*





*Above: The newly built workshop  
Below: Wheels ready for wagon assembly*



# Union History: Collective Courage and a Fight

Wellington waterfront 1913





**T**he Great Strike of 1913 was the largest and most disruptive in New Zealand's history, involving over 13,000 workers, massive demonstrations and a wave of violence that arguably, has yet to be matched. It was triggered in October 1913 by a miners' strike at Huntly, over the sacking of unionists, and a separate dispute in Wellington, over shipwrights' conditions.

Watersiders and miners throughout the country went on strike in support, and were later joined by the seamen. Ports and mining towns around the country came to a standstill and there was a brief general strike in Auckland. Yet the real issue at stake was an industrial power struggle.

The militant unions were confronted by organised employers and farmers determined to break their power. Backed by the forces of the conservative Reform government of William Massey, the struggle for industrial power erupted into class war. Wellington was the scene of the most violent events of the strike. The government organised large numbers of mounted special constables, recruited from farmers and other rural volunteers. They came into town to 'restore order', and were joined by 'foot specials'—middle class volunteers from Wellington. A series of street battles took place in Wellington, with mounted specials wielding batons.

The strike was finally defeated in December 1913, with strikers generally forced to join pro-employer 'arbitration unions'. However the employers' victory was not complete, as the militant workers eventually regained control of many unions, while employers failed in their goal of destroying the UFL.

The strike also turned many 'militants' towards political solutions, rather relying largely on industrial action to change society. They went on to form the Labour Party in 1916.

### Collective courage and stamina

For the next 20 years the labour party was built up getting a few labour members but not winning the majority until 1935.

### Collective courage and a fight with a plan

- Kurow 1930s unemployment, poverty, no public health care,
- Families trudged to Kurow for work on the Waitaki dam -those who were lucky enough to get work had housing, if not so lucky, you camped in tents up the valley in the willows living off rabbits, and anything else you could glean.
- In the nearby town of Kurow were a doctor, teacher and a parson who came together and with the union delegate at the dam, Gerry Skinner, collected contributions and purchased an ambulance, set up a maternity hospital and provided health care. Working on the dam was dangerous work.
- The teacher worked with the railways and the children at the willows were brought to Kurow for school; the parson collected clothing through the church.
- They sat together and formed a plan.
- They decided to get involved in the labour party
- They wrote up their policies on health and social security – from collective contributions across all NZers we can set up a state wide system for all
- They contested the 1935 election for the labour party and got in—the three of them- Arnold Nordmeyer, Gerry Skinner, Gervan McMillan entered parliament as labour members.
- They attended countless meetings and influenced the other labour members—who did not need much convincing—and got their policies adopted by the party and these were taken through parliament

- Their collective courage formed the basis for NZs social security system and state funded health service.

### Collective courage with a fight and a plan and just keep going

The waterfront dispute of 1951 lasted—151 days, from February to July—and involved more workers. At its peak, 22,000 waterside workers (wharfies) and other unionists were off the job, out of the country's population of just under two million.

The 1951 confrontation was the culmination of decades of unrest on the wharves. The waterfront occupied a strategic place in New Zealand's export economy and had long been a flashpoint of industrial conflict.

The Waterside Workers' Union protested a low wage offer by refusing to work overtime from 13 February. The shipping companies in turn refused to hire them unless they agreed to work extra hours. When no agreement could be reached, union members were locked out. The nation's wharves soon came to a complete standstill.

Many watersiders were black-listed (banned from working on the wharves) for years afterwards. Holland immediately called a snap election, which took place on 1 September 1951. The electorate delivered the government a resounding victory, with National winning 54% of the vote and four more seats than in 1949. 🌐

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■ This article was part of a speech made by Hazel Armstrong at the International Women's Day Union event in Taranaki on 7–9th March '25. The speech generated debate about the barriers workers have to participate in Labour Party meetings due to working shift work and not being able to use union leave for Labour Party meetings

# Northland Branch

**T**here's movement in Northland. Project managers and some infrastructure staff are completing a general inspection of the "not mothballed" line between Kauri and Otiria. Hopefully gauging how much work needs to be done to reopen the line north of Whangarei as this line is part of

the Marsden Spur Line business proposal which is planned to connect Northport to the NAL. This project is foreseen to shift freight out of the Ports of Auckland to Whangarei and in turn grow the Northland region.

Questions have been raised around the use of an external consultant for health and safety during

this inspection instead our own staff. Another question surrounds the legitimacy of the inspection, whether it is to enable future works or if it's a stunt to appease the minister of rail in preparation for the next election.

Stay safe and look out for each other. 🌐

# Auckland Branch

**W**e have recently completed the Auckland One Rail bargaining process and held an online ratification meeting for our members to vote. We had fantastic participation in the voting. Well done to the delegates for encouraging our members to update their contact details!

You may have noticed some new additions to the noticeboards around the depot. These noticeboards are the best way to communicate with our members, and we aim to keep

them consistent and up to date. If your depot does not have a noticeboard, please one of the Organisers or your delegate so we can arrange for one to be set up.

On another note, as we approach 16 October 2025, we are getting closer to the integration of Auckland One Rail and CAF. The company has held multiple meetings with the current CAF members to prepare them and help them become familiar with their future employer, Auckland One Rail. The RMTU has been invited to

these meetings, and we are here to assist our members with any questions or issues related to the merger.

It has been a busy time for our members and delegates at Auckland One Rail. With the CRL opening approaching, there have been proposed changes to roles, and we are working to support any members whose positions may be affected by this opening. We are also heavily involved with the upcoming batch 3 EMUs. 🌐

# Waikato Branch

**T**he Rapa rolling stock were heartened recently with the decision of no closure of Te Rapa maintenance depot. What an absolute shambles that process was an UNORGANISED, HALF ARSED PLAN that is a black stain on Rolling stocks GM of operations and his level of competency for the role. Our thoughts are with our neighbouring branches, Kawerau rolling stock members who have lost a jobs through this process.

High profile safety incidents with

hi rail trucks have put a spotlight on our region around this safety critical activity. We all want to go home safely and infrastructure staff need to take a look at ways to deal with pressures put on them by managers and time pressures from train movements. Other incidents have occurred where blocking has been removed in error by train control and these have caused concerns amongst infrastructure staff. Members want to work closely with train control to rectify any mutual concerns.

In operations low levels of freight volumes are hurting but we ask what more could KiwiRail's commercial people do to get more freight on trains. Signalling changes and issues in Auckland are causing many headaches for Locomotive engineers travelling North of Hamilton. 🌐





## ◀ Napier Rail Branch

**A**s we move into winter, the track teams have been actively engaged in a range of infrastructure improvements. This includes crossing upgrades, removal of track sets for culvert upgrades, and planning for rail replacement work between Bridges 216 and 217 on the Palmerston North–Gisborne Line (PNGL).

A discussion is currently underway regarding a portion of land in the Ahuriri Yard, where our Adzing plant is located. The Property Group may be expressing interest in leasing this area.

Since 27 January, the Ernslaw log train from Karioi has been consistently operating five days a week,

carrying 600 tonnes of logs per trip to the Port of Napier. This removes the equivalent of 21 logging trucks from the roads daily—a significant contribution to road safety and emissions reduction.

The TREC Alliance continues resilience strengthening works from Ashhurst through to Napier, with formation stability improvements and new culvert installations on track for completion by the end of June.

The Napier Structures Team is currently working in the Manawatu Gorge on Bridge 15A, replacing old hardwood spans with refurbished steel spans—a vital upgrade for long-term reliability. New initiatives are also being trialled within the Networks group. Inspectors in the

Track and Structures teams are testing a digital tool—the Touchstone product—which integrates with Maximo and allows completion of five compliance forms via a new app. This aims to streamline compliance and reporting processes.

Meanwhile, the RMTU has launched its electronic voting system under Vero, with elections underway for both the National Industrial Council (NIC) and the Kiwirail Networks Industrial Council (KNIC).

Wage negotiations for the new Collective Agreement are also currently in progress with KiwiRail. As always—keep situational awareness high and safety first. 🌐

## Hawke's Bay Port Branch

**I**nteresting times in Hawkes Bay have seen a shift in the relationship between Napier Port and the RMTU. After almost eight months of negotiations, they have stalled.

Currently as we write these notes the HB Port branch is running a strike ballot. The members have made it clear that they are not happy with the company's treatment of the union through this period and the company's offer is not good enough. The loss of two branch secretaries in 18

months, the austerity measures post Cyclone Gabriel are all producing tough times and testing the members patience.

Reduced staffing has had a huge effect on the members, their workloads have increased as NPL have their busiest season in three years. The workers have had to make do with doing more with less and after posting record profits the company is prioritising profits and returns to shareholders over their workers.

At a report back meeting the

members unanimously rejected the company's offer and may by the time this goes to print be taking industrial action, please send your messages of support to our Hawkes Bay brothers and sisters.

The members are solid in their resolve to pressure the company into respecting their collective voice and remember there are families and communities that rely on these negotiations. 🌐

## Taranaki Branch

**G**reetings from the West Coast and the RMTU team at Port Taranaki.

Like many ports around the country, 2025 has brought its fair share of challenges. Our journey began in

September 2024, when Port Taranaki Limited's Operations Manager initiated a review of operational capacity ▶

and team structure. This led to a lengthy and sometimes tough negotiation process, with a focus on streamlining operations and increasing role flexibility.

With strong representation from our branch team, and support from Allan Addison-Saipe and Scott Camlin, we worked closely with PTL management to navigate the changes. After months of discussion, a new structure was implemented on 1 March 2025. Since then, it's been full steam ahead with training, upskilling, and onboarding.

The restructure, while necessary, came with some difficult farewells. Several of our longest-serving and most experienced members made the tough decision to step away. Among them was former branch president Robin "Biggles" Maindonald, who took a well-earned redundancy package with retirement already on the horizon. Our current president, Destine Hull, also moved on to pursue a thriving art career—and we

encourage everyone to check out the incredible work from Nathan & Destine Hull online or at an upcoming exhibit.


We are grateful for the years of dedication from all those who have moved on, and we wish them nothing but the best. Their wisdom and camaraderie will be missed, but we're proud to know they left on solid terms, supported by a well-structured collective agreement.

Interestingly, the restructure created more demand for trained staff than expected, prompting PTL to hire externally to fill several new roles. Over the past month or so, new team members have joined and are undergoing training. We're optimistic about the fresh energy they'll bring and look forward to welcoming them into the RMTU family.

A positive takeaway from the negotiation process was the creation of new roles that provide clearer paths for personal growth and progression. While greater flexibility can

bring challenges, especially around workload and wellbeing, our members worked hard to ensure that the roles created remain realistic and sustainable. With the right balance, these changes can open new doors and future opportunities that weren't previously available.

At a wider level, Port Taranaki—like many ports—is feeling the pinch of a slowdown in shipping, particularly in the Oil & Gas sector. The outlook remains uncertain, and we await clear decisions at the national level regarding energy policy and international investment. Until then, our members continue to show resilience and professionalism in the face of ongoing uncertainty.

Despite all the changes, our team spirit remains strong. I'm proud of how our members have supported each other and stayed committed to doing their best—for the port, for the union, and for each other. 

# Hutt Workshops

**T**he year is well underway with a little uncertainty about the future workload. Several avenues are being explored with trials or other acts of testing the waters underway. We have the large EF locomotive project scheduled to be completed early in the next financial year which may necessitate transfer of staff into other Plants onsite upon completion.

The installation of new cranes continues to future-proof our facilities and we are grateful that new assets that have been talked about for years are now being installed before the money dries up.

Demolition of the old foundry which morphed into the former main

inventory building is well underway despite the old structure putting up a valiant fight against the mechanical onslaught of the contractor's wrecking equipment.

Our Wellington tunnel team has been formed with the trial 3-car consist due from Auckland late in June.

A recent spell of wet autumnal weather turned our traverser pit into a long shallow swimming pool complete with marked lanes.

As we write these notes, the wage round has commenced in Wellington and we trust our negotiating team has engaged with that of KiwiRail with a view to negotiating a fair and equitable renewal of the MECA. This should be somewhat simpler this

time around as a 'Date & Rates' type negotiation was proposed which is a pragmatic strategy given these crazy economic times. At the time of writing, we were awaiting a joint statement from both parties covering progress at the initial meeting attended by all of the land-based Industrial Council representatives.

This year's Industrial Council elections are underway and we believe many seats are being contested—good luck to all candidates, especially as electronic voting may be put into play. The next MCC is scheduled for 4–5 June in Christchurch. As it will be nearing the end of FY25, an informative business update from management is expected. We all





*Decrepit SA/SD train sets in Hutt Workshops*

◀ appreciate the fact that things can remain fluid for some time however actual updates must be able to become more specific over time.

On the topic of updates, we had a site meeting in early April to update us with what was on the cards at the time, covering the movement of tier 2 managers with Andre Lovett's (Infrastructure) departure, company

Vs. business unit safety performance, costs of consumables, changes to, and trial of, the Provisioning & Servicing regimes affecting our Rolling Stock Operations cousins, to name but a few. A recent LCC covered a bit of a scorecard for our managers covering last year's KAAs/KPIs and what they hope to achieve this year, including future apprentice intakes.

To wrap up, we continue to look like a used-train dealer's yard with the recent arrival of Auckland's SD cars from Taumarunui. I don't know if we're charging a fee but we should be perhaps!

Until next time—play by the rules and stay safe out there! 🇳🇿

## Nelson Branch

**T**he Nelson Branch have over the last four or more years, with our past executive, encountered three areas that have taken a very large amount of time, dogged determination, stubbornness and passion

to keep working, for a more balanced lifestyle for the Stevedores in our branch.

Fatigue Management, Rostering and Ordering Guidelines where not words commonly used or previously heard of, in the day-to-day working

life, of a Stevedore.

However, ALL of these essential elements are pivotal to a continued career and a more balanced work and home life for 2025 and beyond.

**FATIGUE MANAGEMENT**

In conjunction with our employer

Port Nelson, we now have guidelines set out. The short overview is as follows; maximum consecutive 6 days worked or 60 hours. The 6th day is not compulsory. Night shifts not to exceed 5 nights or 48 hours maximum. The 5th night is optional. Breaks between day or night shift is 48 hours.

Totally Awesome for a better sleep balance!

### ROSTERING

In less than 1,000 words—here is my simplified version. Just under 3 years of work put in by the Branch and Port Nelson together. After 3 different trials of rostering style formats and numerous meetings/discussions 2025 sees us with our outcome: of 4 days, 2 off, 4 flexy (night shift) 2 off repeating pattern.

On day shifts it is not compulsory to work any night shifts it is by mutual agreement only, there is no financial disadvantage for an employee who does not want to work night shift on his day shift roster. On night shift if there are no night shifts allocated, you could be allocated to work, day shift.

### Rostered Days Off (RDOs)

We now have 120 days off a year which are not compulsory to work. If you do work these days are paid as overtime.

Background: In December 2019 in our CEA, we had to put in a request for a day off, unpaid, and only one

a month. With a multitude of conditions which meant an employer could cancel at short notice, if need be, and the Stevedores had to apply at a minimum of two weeks in advance. In other words, we were an on-call workforce.

Have you ever seen when a dog keeps barking at its master and the master wonders why?

### ORDERING GUIDELINES

Short Version—again. In times past we could basically be ordered or changed at very short notice. 2025 the Employer has to order you no later than 15:00 and the employee has to answer by 17:00. In Summary a Stevedores life has changed somewhat, to reflect what the majority of working people have in New Zealand already (it is out of this world) to actually know and have a weekend. However, my leave balance is suffering as friends and family know you can have time off to have a life with them included!

### CEA Negotiations 2024

Our 2024 pre-CEA started in July with some of the Executive doing an on-line course run by the NZCTU Education, for Preparing for Collective Bargaining. This course helped us on how we could work better as a bargaining team. Learning how we could better prepare remits and for ourselves to achieve the best possible outcome for our CEA negotiation team (Old dogs can learn new

tricks).

In March we used electronic voting and got roughly 66% turn out and 85% yes for ratification for a two-year term. Two of the highlights, for me, of this round was a remit we have had forever in having a night shift allowance from 18:00 to 06:00. Not just part of a shift and all union members wherever they work in the port.

Our shore crane (LHM) drivers have, for many years, not been well paid for their skill set and this has shown as they have left for better paid jobs and lifestyle. The ultimate being the remuneration and acknowledgement in their pay scale now reflect this, as they are some of the highest paid staff in our branch.

Areas of focus for our 2024 CEA was long service recognition and retention of staff, we were not successful in this round for these remits. However, persistence over many years for the night shift allowance was successful. We look forward to future negotiations in these areas.

In summary: quote that a wise Union man once said to me.

A good outcome of negotiations often means that neither party are totally happy with the final outcomes.

In this round—this quote is 100% correct! (Thanks Al). Our job now is to make sure that Port Nelson play by the rules that we have negotiated over the years. 🌐

## Christchurch Rail

**T**he Canterbury rail and port branches had a successful workers memorial day with the general secretary attending.

The Canterbury rail branch need to be thankfully for another year of safety for our members meaning

our families and love ones keep on seeing us. Safety was on the agenda again when members of the branch met with the NZTA to discuss hi-rail incidents. We had a team of very experience networks people for whom hi-railing is an everyday part of their jobs giving their views around how

training should be lead and changes that might improve our safety.

We, the Canterbury RMTU branch, had a run in with the project management team in the South Island with Halswell Junction Rd crossing upgrade happening. They seem to think that clause 29 of the MECA







*LPC Inland Port Members*

doesn't count where they were concerned and they, with the Protection team, can run roughshod all over it. We, as a branch, and other branches should be vigilant around these sort of breaches happening and remind people of their obligations around clause 29 in the MECA.

Clause 29 states that RMTU should be given 14 days' notice of the need to use outside contractors. In this

case the Project management team had not procured the services of the RPO's and no notice was given about the use of contractors. And the use of the word urgent doesn't count when a job has been known about for months and where the planning around protection for the worksite was poorly lead.

This was a job that our South Island RPO's could have gained

lots of valuable experience around running a multi worksite which a number of them are qualified to do. The branch is lucky to have good numbers of delegates bring these matters to our attention. The other point to raise is we have very active HSAT teams doing great work bring to everyone's attention the risk out there. 🌐



*Timaru Branch Workers*

## Timaru Branch

**S** Hi all from the Timaru Rail branch.

We are still feeling the low tonnage volumes around these parts, which will likely decrease more as we head into the low season. Unfortunately, a trucking firm pulled the new work that was in the pipeline from under our noses, disappointing especially with the coal dropping and finishing up relatively soon around these parts.

We are making the new roster work at this stage, but it hasn't really been tested with the team being pretty flexible and not a lot of sickness about touch wood.

It was good to catch up with some of our comrades from the Timaru port on Workers Memorial Day recently as we remembered those who were needlessly maimed or lost their lives at work. A timely reminder to call out any unsafe practices or equipment.

Relative newcomer RO Baxter

Harris after some gentle persuasion is training as an RCO having just passed the RSR and ASR courses, well done. As anyone that has done this can attest to it being stressful, too much taught in too shorter time, that's one way to keep costs down I guess. He is off to Invercargill for the practical training, I'm sure the team down there will make him feel welcome.

Trainee RCO Caitlin has completed the required hours and will hopefully sit her mastery soon, best of luck for that I'm sure you'll do well.

With the recent BOL the southend switchlock at Fairton was used for the first time. It seemed to perform pretty well but there were some gremlins causing issues with the siding. Many thanks to local signal guys Stu and Adrian who helped to troubleshoot the issues. It's still a work in progress but the design team further up the chain are looking into it.

With an aging depot and retirements on the horizon we have

employed 2 new trainee ROs which is great news, let's hope the tonnage will follow.

As we buckle in for a new pay round, let's hope there's something to help with the increase in the cost of living, and that the savings we are all making are actually making a difference to the bottom line. It's great to get \$600 odd million from the govt but from an operations standpoint that's not our money but will certainly help us deliver a better, more resilient service through a properly maintained network.

Heading to the middle of the year in still soft and uncertain economic times, our hearts go out to the Interislander staff and any others for that matter who are potentially losing their jobs. We can only hope as few are lost as possible confined to mainly those who want to go. Stay strong team and best of luck from Timaru. 🇳🇿





**Howard Phillips and Mike Morgan in front of the new DM locomotive at Otira.**

*Howard was down in Otira as a union observer for the testing of the DM loco through the Otira Tunnel. Mike Morgan is an LE based in Otira. The crew took DM 8029 through the Otira Tunnel on 23 March 2025 hauling coal wagons. They have previously been doing load and clearance testing of the DMs around the South Island. The Otira Tunnel was a test for the DMs on the coal route. The currently used DXs dated 1972 and 1975 will be retired. 47 DMs have been ordered for the South Island from Stadler Rail, the heavy engineering manufacturers of rolling stock. Howard and Mike both went to Valencia in Spain to assist with cab design.*





*International Womens Day flag proudly sponsored by the Otago Rail Branch members*