

# THE ACTIVIST



Published regularly – ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online)

June 2025

## Message from the Gen Sec

Welcome to the June edition of The Activist.

It has certainly is a busy time for our members and staff.

Our magazine, The Transport Worker, is nearly complete and ready to go to the printers. Thanks to all those that contributed.

Members have been involved in the Anzac Day Memorials, Workers Memorial Day events and the NZCTU “Fight Back Together” Action Day on May 1st. The opening of the rebuilt Hillside Railway Workshops was also a recent highlight.

Stay safe out there.  
Todd Valster  
RMTU General Secretary



## Update of RMTU elections-RMTU National Management Committee

There were two ballots, the first for the Auckland Rail NMC Rep -congratulations to Leighton Mosese on his successful election. North Island Rail (less Auckland and Wellington - congratulations to Josh Goodwin on his successful election. Thanks to the others that stood for these positions.



## Update of RMTU elections continued The 2025 – 2027 NMC is –

- Aubrey Wilkinson – President
- Howard Phillips – Wellington Rail Rep and Vice President
- Todd Valster – General Secretary
- Ratahi Ellis – North Island Ports Rep
- Pierce Smith – South Island Ports Rep
- Rebecca Hauck – Women's Rep
- Sam Kahui – Te Kupenga Mahi
- Leighton Mosese – Auckland Rep
- Ian Walker – South Island Rail Rep
- Josh Goodwin – North Island Rail Rep (minus Auckland and Wellington)

KiwiRail/RMTU Industrial Councils – there are several positions that we will need to ballot for in the next week.

## KiwiRail MECA -Joint Union- Company Bargaining Update #1

The RMTU and KiwiRail Bargaining Teams met over two days, 21&22 May for constructive and respectful discussions as part of renewing the Multi-Employer Collective Agreement (MECA). Both parties have committed to using a “dates and rates” approach to structure the negotiations.

Both parties have formed a clearer understanding of each interests/claims relating to a general wage increase and term of agreement. We have agreed to take time to reflect on our respective positions and offers.

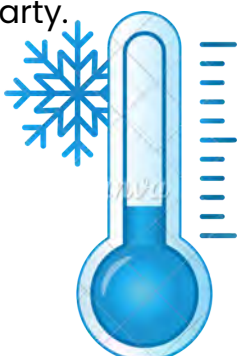
We remain committed to continuing this dialogue in good faith and promptly working towards an outcome.

## Budget talk- analysis of the May 2025 budget

The NZ Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi's, Economist Craig Renny and team have produced their analysis of the May '25 budget. It covers the major decisions made at the Budget, and how they might affect workers. They say this Budget is funded by the gutting of the pay equity system, the halving of the government's contribution to people's Kiwisaver accounts, and other cuts that will disproportionality impact women, welfare recipients, and working households. The Minister of Finance argues that the tight fiscal situation makes this inevitable. But none of these choices the government has made are forced. The government could have funded its spending initiatives by raising new taxes on the wealthiest New Zealanders. It could have not decided to give billions away to those who already have much, while cutting services for those with real and pressing needs. To read the report click on the link [here](#)

## Winter coats for Scenic staff

As the mercury drops, Tranz Scenic staff are relieved to be finally getting branded winter coats uniform to protect them from the elements whilst operating the passenger trains. Kiwirail initially told staff to wear their own coats provided it met their 'grooming policy' The Union offered to buy Scenic staff coats with union branding but Scenic found a way to come to the party. Staff should receive coats by end of June.



## KiwiRail bans sleep aids melatonin and zopiclone.

Kiwirail's Chief Medical Officer has told Kiwirail to ban the use of sleep aids zopiclone and melatonin. The union wasn't consulted on this change. We've passed on feedback from members to KiwiRail about the difficulty the ban will have on some who rely on the medication to manage their sleep doing shift work. Kiwirail told the union staff should see their health practitioner to discuss alternative medications for sleep issues. There is no change to the KiwiRail Drug and Alcohol policy, or the panel of substances tested for. The chief medical officer's position when assessing safety critical workers is that those medications (melatonin and zopiclone) are not compatible with safety critical work (ie category 1 and 2 workers taking those medications are not safe to be signed off as fit for work). The union has asked for more information from the Chief Medical Officer.

**You can update your contact details by scanning the QR code below**



## Government guts WorkSafe (again)

The Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety's announcement on 3 June on gutting WorkSafe's enforcement capability signals a return to a failed approach, that will weaken our health and safety system, said the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi.

"A soft approach to poor health and safety was a critical failing that led to the Pike River mine disaster, one of the worst health and safety failings in New Zealand history," said NZCTU President Richard Wagstaff.

"Brooke van Velden continues to systematically gut WorkSafe to help protect businesses from enforcement of breaches of the law, rather than protecting the workers who suffer huge rates of injury and fatality as a result of work.

"WorkSafe was established in the wake of the Pike River mine disaster. It was clear that we needed a well-resourced, effective, and strong regulator, that was prepared to prosecute where necessary, as this was clearly lacking.

"Every week a worker is killed on the job on average in New Zealand, and 17 more are killed from the impact of work-related illnesses and diseases. Every year there are over 30,000 injuries suffered that require more than a week away from work. Nothing in these announcements will have a positive effect on these numbers.

"In the past few years, WorkSafe has endured cuts to the tune of millions of dollars, resulting in fewer staff.

"The Minister's decision to gut WorkSafe is a reflection of a government that is prioritising profits over people," said Wagstaff.

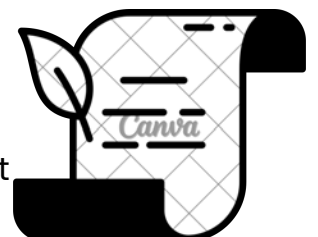


## Lyttelton Port (LPC) proposing to cut 35 jobs- Update

Further to last month's Activist article on the Employment Relations Authority's decision to halt LPC's consultation over a restructure of its container terminal operations because it breached collective employment agreements and its duty of good faith. The ERA found LPC acted unlawfully by excluding the Maritime Union of New Zealand (MUNZ) and the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) from the early development of a proposal to disestablish 35 roles. Instead, the port went straight to affected workers with a fully formed proposal. Since then, the Unions and the company have met to progress a resolution but unfortunately did not reach a conclusion. LPC has subsequently appealed the ERA decision and RMTU and MUNZ have sought an injunction to stop LPC from continuing with their process to cut jobs.

## RMTU constitution

Work is underway to develop the RMTU's constitution following changes to the Incorporated Societies Act. The changes require the Union to develop an overarching constitution which includes the union's purpose, activities and rules. This information is currently held in the Union's Rules and Standing orders and policy manual. In October this year the Union will facilitate an online AGM where Delegates will vote on the new constitution and policy manual. Prior to that, all members will have the opportunity to review the documents at the Union's Branch AGM's in August this year. If you have any questions please contact [admin@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:admin@rmtunion.org.nz).



**The NZ Council of Trade Unions has launched a campaign to ban engineered stone used in benchtops due to accelerated silicosis risk.**

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi has launched a campaign to ban the import, supply, and use of engineered stone in Aotearoa New Zealand. Described by CTU President Richard Wagstaffe as “the asbestos of our times”, the dust from cutting or grinding the stone used for kitchen and bathroom benches causes accelerated silicosis which is a severe progressive lung disease. The disease caused by exposure to the dust is a more aggressive form of silicosis that appears sooner and may progress faster than chronic silicosis. Wagstaffe says “Brooke van Velden has the power to save workers’ lives. All she needs to do is follow Australia’s example and implement a total ban.”

There is broad support for this campaign. Last year the CTU joined with 18 other organisations, including public health experts and health and safety specialists, and called on the Minister to act.

To sign the petition click the link [here](#).

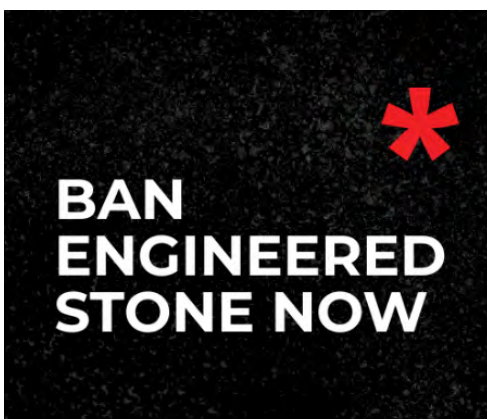
**Transport accident investigators want substandard ships banned from New Zealand waters.**

Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) has recommended a law change to give Maritime New Zealand the authority to ban unseaworthy ships from Aotearoa. Their recommendation comes after the investigation into the container ship Shiling, which twice had to be rescued and towed back to port in Wellington in 2023.

The commission noted that NZ is out of step with Australia’s Maritime Safety Authority which has the power to ban substandard ships.

TAIC’s chief investigator of accidents, Naveen Kozhupakalam, said substandard ships represented a real risk to their crew members and to New Zealanders – including coastal and harbour pilots, stevedores and other contractors – and to the coastal environment.

“The commission found that the Shiling had a history of deficiencies and that it’s virtually certain the ship wasn’t seaworthy while in New Zealand. To read the TAIC report click [here](#)





### Transdev Wellington

Work continues on a new master roster as per terms of settlement for the last negotiations. The project is running well over time however some progress is being made to make the most of this opportunity. Delegates continue to meet with rostering representatives of TDW in order to work through issues. It is proposed that we will have report meetings later in June to give members an update on where we are at and to get some direction on the way forward.

### Hawkes Bay Port

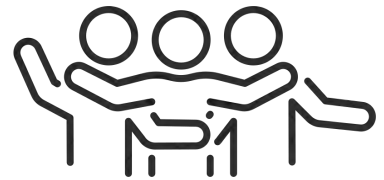
Napier Port members frustrated at the protracted negotiations have made a stand, a ballot for industrial action was undertaken with a resounding majority of members voting yes to an over time ban, which is due to start on 20 June 2025 at 0001 hours. Hawkes Bay is a region still recoiling from the fall out of Cyclone Gabriel and emotions run strong in the region. The members face struggles from ongoing effects of the recovery including such things as their rates doubling and insurance premiums through the roof. The Port is showing good recovery with their busiest season since Gabriel, in addition to a healthy profit last year would show that Napier has a bright future. That future should not be paid for by the workers however who have their own worries. Napier faces the same problems of many of our ports with ageing infrastructure and plant, the RMTU would like to see investment in people and infrastructure with out a priority on share price and profit.

### Hawkes Bay Rail

Still struggling with understaffed roster and a high workload. Kiwirail have still taken no steps to address the shortfall in numbers in this region. There is real concern about the long hours that yard staff have to do and that multi skilling could be a distraction from their core roles. The likelihood is that region will continue to bounce back and with KR's obsession with DIFOT it is important to give our members the tools to be successful.

### Marlborough Port

Just to show that bargaining is about having a positive approach



Port Marlborough come out on top. This year's bargaining was completed in a record two days and ratified a week later. With both party's taking a positive attitude into the day solutions were the focus not roadblocks. Port Marlborough will face a challenging next few years as they race to get their shore side infrastructure up to scratch for the new ferries. At the ratification meeting PMNZ members welcomed guests from Port Nelson who came across for the day to offer support and promote contact and relations between the two ports.



You can update you contact details with the RMTU by [clicking here](#)

### **Kiwirail Mechanical Council Update**

The Kiwirail Mechanical Council met recently at Waltham in Christchurch. Hosted at the newly completed \$99.8m facility, it was refreshing for the delegates to see a modern new workshop. Equally as shiny the new DM locomotives were on show for the team to look over and met with approval. The rollout of the new locos seems to be on time 6 months late due to flooding in Valencia. A team from Staedler are in Canterbury dealing with the rollout and ironing out nay teething troubles. Delegates were assured that DM training was to roll out at the end of June, as this has been a concern for our members.

It was made clear to management that the recent roadshow had found the mood of the mechanical division to be dark. Whilst the threat to close depots has had a respite there are no assurances that it will be lasting with horizons for many depots. It was the feeling that a lot of the future state is based on a number of assumptions, all of which will need to line up. The future to a great part will depend on making both the DL and EF fleet reliable, which is a huge task, but the RMTU believes that we have the skills within the division to achieve this, a lot will depend on managements ability to get the members on side.

### **Palmerston North Rail**

Low freight volumes in the lower North Island continue to be an issue for this depot. There is a real need for everyone to just be a little bit busier. As ever LE rostering is an issue as we still work on the ROM 3 rewrite. It seems to have gone quiet around proposals to remove the depot drivers but we remain vigilant to any attacks on our conditions. Great work done by the team to refresh the workers memorial out under the flag poles it looks great and is a fitting memorial for our fallen comrades.

### **Interislander Industrial Council**

We met in Picton for the first time in a long time. It is good to be able to show our members at the southern end of the journey that they are not forgotten. The delegates pressed management on possible cuts when the two ship timetable comes in given their will be large gaps in the day when there is little activity. The company maintains that no decisions have been reached and that for the time being no changes will be made. The membership is resigned to the fact that the change is on the way. This has been a really tough coupe of years for our Interislander members. A different story for those working on the ships who are not covered by the RMTU, with close to 100 jobs going when the Aratere is taken out of service, the onboard unions are fighting hard to save jobs and have our support. So if you are travelling on the ferries give a little support to all those workers who are struggling through tough times.

We will of course need to cope for at least four years with no rail enabled ferries, this means difficulty moving KR assets and freight across the strait. An expected 50 000 extra moves of containers that would have gone on rail will mean that container yards will be busy at both ends, extra operators will need to be recruited and the push will be on to keep Delivery In Full On Time (DIFOT) at 95%, it is a big ask and our members will be the key. With the railway being essentially split into two for at least four years this will be challenging to keep the network functioning. All now is in the hands of the Minister of Railways and Ferry Holdings as we all hope they can deliver something workable in what is a very tight time frame.

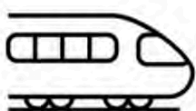
### Nelson Port

Nelson Port branch continues to be very active. Given things have calmed down after the last pay round there are still ongoing issues of availability and rostering. Whilst the stevedores now have a roster which is a massive step forward, there are still considerable challenges around how work is ordered and how fatigue guidelines are followed. It must be time for more concrete rules around rostering and legal compliance around availability, this is an industry wide problem and Nelson continues to lead the way with active delegates advocating for effective fatigue risk management.

### Petition to bring back the Southerner Passenger Train

The pro-rail lobby group 'the future is rail' is asking for people to sign a petition for bringing back the **Southerner Train**, from Invercargill, via Dunedin to Christchurch, as a regular public transport service, supporting South Island towns and cities along the route. They say a restored Southerner train route offers affordable transport for 750,000 South Island residents, bridging gaps where air is too costly for students/low-income, coaches inaccessible for disabled/elderly, and car travel unsafe/expensive. This boosts regional economic development and tourism. Recent rail investments, like Hillside Workshops, new ferries, and Inland Ports, confirm rail's viability in the South Island. If you'd like to support, sign the petition [here](#)

**PETITION:**  
**LET'S GET THE SOUTHERNER  
TRAIN BACK!**



### Taranaki Port

Another active group of delegates have worked over the last year to minimise the effects of a dramatic restructure. With no forced redundancies, the delegates have worked with the company to change some of the roles within the collective. Whilst this has mainly been successful in keeping jobs not everyone is happy with the new roles. There seems to be a growing trend across our employers to multi-skill the work force, this works well when times are quiet in keeping workers productive. But can be negative when it comes to individuals retaining multiple competencies or even wanting to have multiple competencies. Multi-skilling is not for everyone and should not be thrust on unwilling participants, it is often the first thing to go as businesses get busy as they need people doing their specialised role, so as we wait for the economy to pick up and for our employers to get busy we need to manage the multi-skill environment.

### Single Line Working Update

On June 19, 2025, we held a feedback session and working group meeting with participants in the Single Line Working initiative alongside KR. There was a great turnout, and I appreciated the insights and feedback from the RMTU delegates regarding the process. While there is still a lot of work to be done to implement single line working in Auckland, we are making progress in the right direction. This initiative aims to reduce the number of blocked lines in Auckland and provide a reliable train service to the wider Auckland area.

**Stay safe  
out there.**

