

THE ACTIVIST



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July 2025

Message from the Gen Sec

Welcome to the July edition of The Activist.

AGM season, in August, is fast approaching. The Organisers have been asked to co-ordinate the AGM dates, regionally, so I and other National representatives can attend as many AGM's as possible.

This week has seen two KiwiRail members with crushed fingers, this occurred in 48 hours. Our thoughts are with our injured members, we wish them a speedy recovery. This is a stark reminder to really focus on the many risks and hazards we have in our industries.

Stay safe out there.

Todd Valster

RMTU General Secretary



KiwiRail MECA – Union Bargaining Update

In a shortened line up meeting with KiwiRail on June 25, KiwiRail presented a revised (improved) offer.

The RMTU bargaining team meet July 4 to discuss this offer. The RMTU Bargaining team has agreed to recommend the offer to members for ratification.

Once we have an agreed terms of settlement and updated MECA, we can arrange for report back meetings and ratification via electronic voting.

KiwiRail MECA – Union Bargaining Update continued

The electronic votes come via an Australian e-mail address, Support@verovoting.com.au to the e-mail address provided or mobile number. The message has a link that takes you to where you can vote.

New RMTU Role – Assistant General Secretary

In recognition of the strong leadership and the support of my role, it gives me great pleasure to announce the appointment of Karen Fletcher as Assistant General Secretary, effective immediately.

This appointment came with full endorsement from the RMTU National Management Committee.

Karen will continue her role as the RMTU H&S Organiser in addition to this appointment. Congratulations Karen, you deserve this promotion.



Recent TAIC Report

Derailment of Tamper 703 in Purewa Tunnel, Auckland, 9 October 2023

While there were no injuries, there was significant damage to the Tamper. The incident has highlighted unacceptable shortcoming. The report can be found [here](#).

Update of RMTU Industrial Council elections. Elections will be held for the positions below.

Online ballot papers (e-ballots) will be sent to members via email or phone.

Locomotive Northern: Candidates are Steve Peacock and Paul Watene.

Lower North Island Terminals:

Candidates are Oliver Pratt and James Down.

Hutt Workshops: Candidates are Myles Carter and Slade Pilcher.

Servicing Mechanical : Candidates are Bruce Mander and Sanjeewa Waduge.

Good luck to all of the nominees who are subject to ballot. See RMTU website (Hot Topics) for full list of the elected industrial council members.



To receive e-ballots let us know if you've changed your email address since you joined the RMTU. Update your details using the QR code.



Building New Zealand Rail Skills for the Future

This week on the Australia's Rail Express webpage, there is an article on a recent report released in May 2025. This webpage can be found on the following link - [The plan to grow New Zealand's rail workforce](#)

The report was produced by the Australasian Railway Association (ARA), together with Hanga-Aro-Rau (Workforce Development Council) in collaboration with sector stakeholders.

Rail Express summarises the "Key Recommendations" -

1. Establish long-term foundations for workforce sustainability through infrastructure planning, procurement, and regulatory reform.
2. Position rail as a modern, inclusive and attractive career sector through branding, visibility, and better workforce insights.
3. Build a future-ready rail workforce through planning, education partnerships, international collaboration, and mobility pathways.

More information can be found on the Hanga-Aro-Rau (Workforce Development Council) website - [Laying the Tracks for the Future: Building New Zealand's Rail Workforce - Hanga Aro Rau](#) where they outline the three pillars for action.

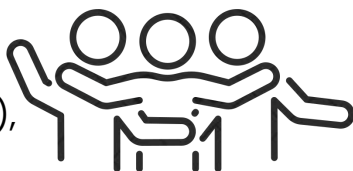
The "Building NZ Rail Skills for the future" report can be found here -

[ARA-Building-NZ-Rail-Skills-for-the-Future.pdf](#)

Port Napier result

After a protracted negotiations (nine months), a deal has been made at Napier Port that protects conditions and sees a decent pay rise for our members. It was necessary to run a strike ballot and have 7 days of industrial action to finally achieve a deal. A nervous few days was endured by company and members as NPL chose to selectively suspend members and our members refused overtime and shift adjustments.

The ace in our sleeve was the Port's inability to tie up fuel boats. Our members held strong and kept their nerve for a full seven days until an acceptable deal was reached. A big shout out to the negotiating team for keeping their nerve maintaining excellent comms with the members. Grateful members ratified the deal on 30 June and were very grateful to the bargaining team.



Safeguard Awards win

The RMTU is proud to have been part of the Tripartite Ports Industry Leadership Group which won the prestigious Supreme Award at this year's NZ Safeguard Awards.

The Award was given for the collaborative effort between Unions, the Ports Industry Association and Maritime NZ to develop and implement Ports specific guidance on improving Fatigue Risk Management. In our acceptance speech the Union acknowledged the ports industry still has employers that don't adhere to the guidance and see it as optional because it's yet to be enforced by Maritime NZ. We hope this Award will encourage more Port employers to recognise the risk of fatigue and use the guidance to improve the way fatigue is managed, including better rostering. The link to the Ports industry guidance on fatigue is [here](#)



KiwiRail Property acknowledges failure to tell staff about high asbestos risk at Greymouth depot for 13 days.

The Union has asked Worksafe NZ and Waka Kotahi to investigate KiwiRail's Property division's failure to notify staff in the Greymouth depot immediately about a high risk of exposure to asbestos dust in the Greymouth Signals Room. On the 5th of June KiwiRail received asbestos monitoring results showing a "high risk" of exposure to asbestos dust. Rather than immediately sealing the area. The company opted to do further testing which confirmed the asbestos. On the 18th June (13 days later) they sealed the affected area and informed staff. Since then further monitoring has shown the extent of the asbestos issue with 4 more areas sealed off at the depot. This is the second time in a year KiwiRail has failed to tell staff about asbestos risk. In March last year, Kiwirail Property apologised to workers in the Wellington freight terminal for not telling them about the asbestos identified in the building back in 2022. At the time KiwiRail apologised to staff and said "they missed the worker engagement piece". Unfortunately they seem to have done it again. **Where's the accountability KiwiRail?**



Upcoming KiwiRail Ordinary Safety Assessments Upper South Island and Lower North Island- RMTU invited to participate

Waka Kotahi is commencing their Ordinary Safety Assessment of KiwiRail in **Christchurch** from 21 July-31 July. The assessors have requested a meeting with RMTU Representatives, including HSAT reps on **Thursday 31st July, 12:30 to 14:30** at Midas Place.

The **Wellington** Ordinary Safety Assessment is from 4-18 August. Waka Kotahi has requested to meet with RMTU representatives including HSAT reps. The meeting will occur at the **RMTU office on level 1, 1 Thorndon Quay from 1000 to 1200 on Wednesday 6 August** for infrastructure and from 1000 to 1200 on Wednesday 20 August for rail operations. All KiwiRail members are welcome to attend to meet with the Regulator.

Lyttelton Port (LPC) proposing to cut 35 jobs- UPDATE

The Unions' application for a court injunction to restrain LPC from taking any further steps to implement a restructure of the container terminal has been upheld by the Court, pending further order of the Court.

Further to LPC's appeal of the Employment Relations Authority decision to halt LPC's restructure of the container terminal 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.

KiwiRail bans sleep aids melatonin and zopiclone- UPDATE

Recently Kiwirail's Chief Medical Officer has told Kiwirail the medications zopiclone and melatonin can no longer be used by safety critical staff. The change was not expected by the union because there hasn't been any incidents attributed to impairment caused by the use of the drugs. Also, the ban has only been applied to Kiwirail staff, Transdev Wellington and AOR workers have not been told to stop using the medication. Members have told the union, the change will be difficult to manage as some people have been taking the medication to help them fall asleep doing shiftwork for years, sometimes decades. Kiwirail told staff to see their health practitioner to discuss alternative medications for sleep issues. The CMO's decision appears to fly in the face of MedSafe's decision to make Melatonin a non-prescribed medicine, available over the counter. The Union is concerned that the ban will mean more staff will be working fatigued and there will be an increase in alcohol use which has a detrimental effect on sleep quality.

Take the Poll on Sleep medication

Do you use melatonin, zopiclone, another medication or no medication to help you manage your sleep? This poll is completely anonymous, you are not identified. We'll publish the overall results in the August Activist magazine.

To take the poll click

[here](#).

Or scan the QR code here.

Activist poll - July 2025



Auckland One Rail

In June, Auckland One Rail held several consultations with the RMTU. A proposal was made regarding coupling and uncoupling trains with passengers onboard. This raises concerns for the RMTU, as we believe that coupling trains with passengers on board may be dangerous and could place unnecessary safety responsibilities on our already burdened train crew. Passenger trains run by Transdev Wellington do NOT couple with passengers onboard due to the safety Risk. We are also very concerned about the recent batch of EMUs. A new feature of the EMU is the relocation of the horn and headlight buttons. The company decided to change the locations of these buttons to accommodate a potential ATO button. However, this new configuration may cause disruptions for those living near the train tracks.

KiwiRail – Auckland Traction

Auckland KiwiRail Traction has proposed changes to the management team following recent traction events. These changes are significant, and we remain hopeful that they will lead to improvements within the team and foster better cooperation and trust among our members.

Team Global Express

We are preparing for another round of bargaining and have agreed to meet with the company on July 22 and 23, 2025. Wish us luck!

Ports Retirement Plan

For any RMTU members who are also members of the Ports Retirement Plan, your end of year Member Benefit Statement is now available online. The Member Benefit Statement provides you with details of the benefits to which you or your dependants will be entitled in the event of your retirement, leaving service, death or disablement. Go to the Ports Retirement Plan website to see your member benefit statement: www.portsretirement.org.nz Any queries, please contact your branch delegate or the Ports Retirement Plan Manager 0800 728 370

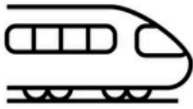
Cost of living NZers biggest concern

Running since 2018, the June 202 Ipsos New Zealand quarterly survey of 1,002 New Zealanders reveals that (55%) consider inflation / cost of living to be the most important issue. Healthcare follows as the second highest concern, while the economy remains the third most important issue, with slight increases for both issues. Notably, New Zealanders' concern for the economy has reached the highest level since February 2021. Carin Hercock, Country Manager, Ipsos New Zealand, said: "Despite several reductions in the OCR, New Zealanders are still feeling the impact of high living costs. This is particularly an issue for young adult New Zealanders who are increasingly concerned about inflation, housing costs and unemployment." To see the report click [here](#)

Current top 5 issues in New Zealand



PETITION: LET'S GET THE SOUTHERNER TRAIN BACK!



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](#)

Port Marlborough

After a quick wage round this year Port Marlborough are focusing on their land side infrastructure for the new ferries. With the demolition of the Aratere berth and infrastructure the clock is ticking to build a new wharf, link spans and associated infrastructure and have it all ready by 2029 or the arrival of new ferries.

We continue to look at availability in this unique Port and the challenges that a small operation has in covering a 24/7 operation.

Port Nelson

Nelson Port branch continues to work hard to reach consensus with the Port Company of ordering guidelines for its stevedoring roster. While it is understandable that times are tough and the business needs to have continuity, it defeats the purpose of having a roster if you constantly break it bringing in people in on their days off. Getting them to work in multiple positions throughout the port with adequate breaks.

Palmerston North

Alarming incidents have caused two crushed hands in two days in this region. With at least one causing a partial amputation of finger. A reminder to all to keep our hands clear when working with machinery. Continued low cargo volumes in the lower North Island continue to impact operations in this area. Concerns continue over the plan to make this the mechanical hub for EF reliability with many of our ME's being diesel mechanics not electrical engineers, this will need some intensive training.

Interislander

Uncertainty continues in this area as the RMTU and KR continue to look at how a two-ship timetable will impact on the terminals roster. Reducing from six turns a day to four will have a significant effect on when people are needed to work. The problem being that when a vessel is in port it is very busy and when it leaves it is not. Considerable thought needs to be given to road bridging operations over the next 4-5 years to keep the freight flowing between Auckland and Christchurch.

Taranaki Port

Still some tough times ahead for this Port as the changes that came with a recent restructure bed themselves in, we continue to work with our members to find a way forward to maintain meaningful jobs in tough times. Our Qube members in New Plymouth have questions around how guarantees are calculated in their company and the visibility of those hours which are good questions. If any other Qube members have questions around guarantees, pay slips and timesheets contact your Organiser. In this day and age, we should not have pay slips and pay systems that out people do not understand.

Transdev

Our delegates continue to work through a new master roster in a working group. It was disappointing that a recent report back meeting was poorly attended by the members. However our team continues to work hard. The biggest roadblock at the moment is around pre-service checks and the timings of these, the working group is seeking some clarification from Hyundai Rotem on when and how often they are done. This has raised some issues around timings of relays and some of the times contained in the ROM. When these issues can be resolved we will be able to take a new master roster to the roster delegates for their take. This is a big project that is highly complex however we do need to keep our eye on the goal which is to produce a better master roster.

KIC cont.

The **GTRP** payment is progressing but there is still no date for payment on this yet due to the high number of current and ex staff to work through, and the payment needs to be

SPAD Working Group

The Rail Regulator Waka Kotahi has put Kiwirail on notice to deal with the risk of SPADs, (signals passed at danger) in Auckland. A joint Union/KiwiRail working group has been set up to review the causes of the SPADs within the Auckland Metro network. Analysis of incidents from the past 10 years showed the contributing factors include lack of route knowledge of LE's, distraction, confusing signal arrangements and losing situational awareness. The RMTU is critical of KiwiRail's often punitive response to LE's who've had a SPAD. LE's have been issued disciplinary warning letters blaming them for failing to stop at the signal despite the investigation identifying significant systemic failures such as unclear signals. Actions include a risk based training needs analysis. Mandatory use of Signal Alert Function, improving route knowledge and improving sight lines and moving obscured signals.

KIC-KiwiRail Industrial Council: LE's want safer level crossing at Taupiri Mountain.

Kiwirail has approved the design and funding for improving public safety at the Taupiri Mountain Urupa rail level crossing. KiwiRail agreed to upgrade the crossing after the LE Industrial Council reps raised their concerns with Te Kupenga Mahi and the Union. LE's say there has been an increase in near misses at the crossing with up to 50 trains and a high number of people visiting the Urupa. Kiwirail says a temporary solution will be fitted soon including a gate that swings shut to help prevent kids from entering the rail corridor. KR says following the gate's installation they'll look for a more robust solution.

Safer Shunting: Digital shunter trials will begin at a couple of depots before a review. The DSH design is coming along nicely, the Wabtec RCL project is also progressing well, and the safer shunting group will have a loco to look at and see at the Mount at the next meeting end of August.

**Stay safe
out there.**

