

# THE ACTIVIST



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August 2025

## Message from the Gen Sec

Welcome to the August edition of The Activist. July was a busy month for the RMTU. We had 35 KiwiRail MECA bargaining report back meetings, nationwide, by three teams over 4 days. Feedback was generally positive from the members that attended these report back meetings.

We had the Women's and Ports Forums late July. These forums were well attended by Delegates and Observers. There were full and interesting agendas with plenty of interaction and engagement. At the Ports Forum, our Ports growth plans was presented, members had the opportunity to meet Te Roimata (Roi) Rangi. Roi has been employed at the RMTU to recruit non-union members in C3, primarily, and other stevedoring companies.

August is our Branches AGM season, many of our Branches have arranged and advised National office of dates and venues, some AGMS's are in September and others yet to be arranged. For the Branches that have not set dates for their AGM, please advise National Office as soon as possible?

Stay safe out there.

Todd Valster

RMTU General Secretary



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

## KiwiRail MECA – Union Ratification 2025

As previously reported, the proposed KiwiRail/RMTU 2025 – 2027 ratification process will be **via electronic voting**, not the paper postal ballots that we have used in the past.

The electronic votes come via an Australian e-mail address from Vero Voting to the e-mail address and/or mobile number members have provided to the RMTU.

The message has a link that takes you to where you can vote and view the MECA and Terms of Settlement.

The voting procedure is the same as paper postal ballots, members only vote if they are rejecting the proposal MECA, the electronic vote will only have one option – to reject. **That means if you choose to accept the offer, do nothing.**

These e-ballots went out to members on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August at 5pm to either their e-mail addresses and or mobile numbers.

This ballot will close **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August at 5pm.**

If less than 33% of those balloted reject the proposed MECA then it will be ratified, and we will advise KiwiRail immediately.

The use of electronic voting has many advantages, but it does rely on our members contact details being up to date.

We include a QR code in our publications for members to update their contact details or via the RMTU website under “contact us” tab.

## Crystalline silica dust – Remutaka tunnel

Work done to re-rail the 8.8km Remutaka Tunnel over the Christmas block of line has created a dust problem for onboard Transdev Wellington staff who operate the commuter train and members from Hyundai Rotem (who service and maintain the passenger carriages). Staff became aware of excessive levels of dust both onboard the carriages and clogging up the HVAC filters. Hyundai Rotem staff said they'd had twice as many door faults due to the dust. The dust is left over from the re-railing work done in the Remutaka tunnel done in December '24-January '25 this year. Workers noticed the unusually high levels of dust inside the carriages and reported it to their H&S Reps. The H&S Reps recommended KiwiRail test the dust for hazardous substances. KiwiRail arranged for occupational hygienists Air Matters to do static testing onboard the carriages in June. The Air matters report received in July said Respirable dust levels were "relatively low, however crystalline silica was detected in all of the measured cabins with total composition ranging from 14-20% of the total content." They recommended staff wear personal monitors to determine the level of risk to health.

The first round of personal monitoring was completed and staff are waiting to hear the results due shortly. Mitigations include a deep clean of the carriages. Staff are waiting to hear from KiwiRail regarding health monitoring.



You can update your contact details by scanning the QR code



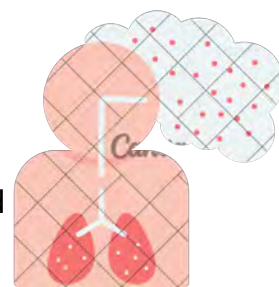
## Track workers blow the whistle on unsafe work during the Remutaka tunnel re-railing work

KiwiRail workers who carried out the re-railing and ballast replacement work over summer have contacted the union after they heard that Crystalline Silica was found in the dust onboard the passenger trains.

Some of the Track Workers who did the re-railing work have taken issue with KiwiRail's CEO Peter Reidy's email sent to staff on 24 July saying KiwiRail had "provided respiratory protection that went well beyond the required standards for protection against respirable dust and silica, and taken the precaution of double washing the ballast"

The Union has received statements from track workers, along with photos and videos showing the tunnel environment during the re-railing work. One worker described working in the tunnel as **"horrendous to say the least"**. Staff report the dust levels were so thick you couldn't see. They said the Respiratory protection was not fit for purpose. Issues include a lack of fit testing of the respiratory protection and only receiving one filter for the mask per shift. Staff resorted to wearing P2 masks underneath the full-face respirators but found the dust was still getting into their masks. Staff said they felt 'unheard' when they raised the issue at team briefings. Workers said the dust was especially thick in the middle of the tunnel where it was very dry.

Loco Engineers said that no one checked whether they'd done their tunnel induction training, which resulted in some LE's working in the tunnel without respiratory protection or knowledge of the tunnel risks including silica dust. The Union has brought the issue to KiwiRail's attention and asked WorkSafe NZ to investigate.



## KiwiRail backtracks on ban. They say sleep aids melatonin and zopiclone NOT BANNED – UPDATE

KiwiRail has clarified to staff that sleep medications zopiclone and melatonin are NOT BANNED. The Chief Medical officer has told KiwiRail that the drugs are not compatible with safety critical work, however they can be prescribed to workers if they use them in the correct way so not to cause impairment at work.



KiwiRail workers who declared their use of the prescription medications, were stood down from work (on full pay) whilst they waited to see a Rail Medical Officer (RMO). Members report that after seeing the RMO they have continued to be prescribed the medication on the proviso they take it correctly so enough time elapses between dosage and starting work. In the case of zopiclone, one RMO recommended a 36 hour window between dosage and starting work. This is good news for workers who use the medications to recalibrate their sleep pattern when they're coming off night shifts and have more than 36 hours rest before coming back to work. The RMTU and Associate Professor Guy Warman were interviewed about the issue on Radio NZ, To hear the interview go to the link [here](#).

## Results of the Poll on Sleep medication

**Last month**, we asked members to take the poll on use of sleep aids melatonin, zopiclone, or other medications to help manage sleep. The responses showed 59% of respondents take sleep medication. Melatonin is used by 31% zopiclone (16%) and other (12%) 41% of respondents said they didn't use any kind of medication to help with sleep.



## FREE Webinar

### Understanding Oral Fluids and Urine Drug testing by Advanced Diagnostics.

Delegates are invited to join a webinar on understanding Oral Fluids and Urine Drug testing.

This webinar will be held online on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August, 12 noon to 1pm. Members can register with the link below: <https://www.advancediagnostics.co.nz/course/drug-alcohol-testing-webinars/>

The RMTU has had a long relationship with CK Rahi from Advanced Diagnostics. CK has presented at our conferences and Forums.

We have promoted Advanced Diagnostics and CK to our employer groups as well.

## KiwiRail LE's trial new rostering rules

Loco Engineers in Te Rapa, Greymouth and Palmerston North are trialing new relief links. The trial introduces new rostering rules designed to create better rosters to reduce fatigue and improve work-life balance. The rules under trial include mandatory two nights rest after one or more night shifts (A-shifts). After 3 consecutive A's LE's will have three nights rest before starting back. Rostered days off are grouped into two or more to provide better rest opportunity and work life balance, and a minimum of 4 RDO's per fortnight. LE's trialing the relief links will give their feedback via a RMTU survey. Earlier this year KiwiRail LE's voted in favour of the trial for 6 months. After this initial trial of 3 depots the trial will extend to the rest of KiwiRail's LE's. After the 6 months trial, provided it meets both the members and KiwiRail's expectations, it will be formally voted on by the KR Loco Engineers.

### Nelson Port

Whilst huge steps forward have been made in terms of introducing a roster for stevedores, we continue to argue over how the roster is applied and the application of the Fatigue Risk Management Guidelines published by MNZ.

It needs to be noted that the Guidelines are referenced in the Approved Code of Practice and therefore have a legal standing and need to be followed. MNZ will soon be issuing a letter of expectation around employers following these guidelines.

It is not good enough for an employer to say they are only guidelines and we are not required to follow them.

### Wellington Port

This branch continues its recovery from the loss of our long standing delegate Murray Sidaway, some excellent work from our new delegate as we try to rebuild the team. The next step is an AGM on 26 September at the Thistle Inn at 1400. We will be looking for members to put their hands up to be delegates and to grow the branch.

### Taranaki Port

This port continues to struggle with low cargo volumes and the effects of changes to the oil and gas industry. Failing gas fields and an inability to supply Natural gas to Methenex means that this small Ports access to its traditional cargo streams is drying up. Interestingly the production of certain synthetic fertilisers is linked to the oil and gas industry such as Urea. These fertilisers will need to be imported in greater quantities; the dilemma is that such fertiliser production is energy intensive and releases greenhouse gases. Logs continue to be exported in good numbers and break bulk holds steady. Uncertain times for our members in this area.

### Napier Port

As the dust settles on our successful industrial action at the port the government has moved to make changes to the Employment Relations Act which will mean that partial strikes of this type will now result in an employer making deductions of 10% from an employee's wages, this is the advice from MBEI:

#### For employers:

- You may deduct pay from employees involved in a partial strike. You must give written notice before making any deductions explaining which pay period it applies to.
- You may suspend employees involved in a partial strike without pay.
- You may recover overpayments made during a partial strike. You must notify employees within 10 working days and recover the amount within 2 months. The notice must explain how the deduction was calculated.

#### For employees:

- If you have any questions about pay deductions during a partial strike, speak with your union representative as soon as you can. Your union will talk to your employer on your behalf.

#### For worker unions:

- If your members have questions about pay deductions during a partial strike, they must approach you for assistance. You must then talk to their employer on their behalf to resolve the matter or their questions.

This will only seek to push Unions to have a full withdrawal of labour in these situations as we are removing that ability to prove that employers are taking advantage of our members good will.

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/news-and-updates/changes-to-the-rules-for-partial-strikes>



### **Palmerston North Rail**

Another branch looking to rebuild after the loss of some key delegates either from retirement, redundancy or changing jobs. The role of the delegate is key to the function of the Union. The PN AGM will be Friday 12 September, look forward to seeing our members there.

Alarmingly the RMTU has been alerted to instances of managers monitoring CCTV from home we can only assert that CCTV is used for operational matters only not for monitoring workers.

It is also important to note that it is the members who decide who represents them should they require representation. This follows the principles of Natural Justice and is up to the individual to receive effective representation from a delegate or work mate they are comfortable with, don't listen to any other views on this topic.

### **Wellington Rail**

This branch will have their AGM on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August at 1130 at Loaves and Fishes by the Wellington Cathedral. Looking forward to a good turnout of Wellington members.

Interesting issues continue in Wellington with the Remutaka Tunnel Silica Dust issue and various network issues.

Transdev members continue to work through master roster issues and the Christmas Block of Line looks like it will be extensive this year.

### **West Coast**

The MECA reports meeting had a good turn out. The powerpoint was sent to the branch to ensure good comms to those who couldn't attend. The Greymouth Buildings is undergoing Asbestos removal. This has been a major H&S event.. More on the next page.

### **Hawkes Bay Rail**

The freight depot continues to struggle with numbers post restructure. It is the RMTU's opinion that the restructure cut too close to the bone requiring yard staff to work long hours with inadequate cover for leave. Long days are required to cover shifts at Takapau, the slog is real.

Infrastructure members keep up the hard work of keeping the Hawkes Bay line open which is of vital importance to our Port in that region. Hawkes Bay Rail will be having their AGM August 29<sup>th</sup> at 0900 at the depot and the port having their AGM 1300 at Shed 9 same day.

### **MCC update**

The mechanical world continues to face challenges as we deal with management restructures and the continued challenges of solving the riddle of how to make assets more reliable to enable effective DIFOT. The about face on depot closures has done little to allay fears for the future as closures have not been ruled out in the long term.

Our South Island mechanical members continue to face delays in training on the new DM locomotives and are at a loss to understand what is taking so long. The MCC next meets on September 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Delegate Training**

In the wake of AGM season, it will be important that we get all our new delegates trained so can branch executives please contact your local organiser promptly so we can arrange delegate training for all our new delegates.



## Asbestos at Greymouth Rail depot- Update.

Worksafe NZ has issued KiwiRail with an Improvement Notice following the company's failure to notify workers at the Greymouth depot of the high risk of exposure to asbestos dust for 13 days after it was discovered. The notice says *"KiwiRail Limited has an ineffective system for the provision of information and instruction necessary to protect workers from risks to their health and safety arising from work carried out. Workers were not informed of the presence of asbestos containing dust following a positive result returned in an asbestos refurbishment survey."*



KiwiRail has responded to the notice by updating their procedure. In future, where actual or potential asbestos risk is identified, the area must be sealed off whilst an assessment is carried out. The process includes notifying the HSAT and Union's National Office.

This is the second time Kiwirail has failed to notify workers of asbestos risk. In March 2024 Kiwirail's Property Representative 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. The Union has asked KiwiRail investigate the failure of leadership so accountability can be achieved.

## Interislander

Plenty going at both terminals at present as we gear up for a two-ship timetable with at least four years of road bridging to be organised.

After initially proposing some pretty ugly rosters, concerted feedback from members caused a whip lash like about face from Interislander to provide rostered that were better for life balance.

This is a really challenging time for our members as they react to constant change and pressure from both the company and the media.

## Christchurch

Rail, MECA report back meeting had good turn outs and good feedback.

A number of industrial issues are being dealt with, this may become more of an issue when Charlotte England HR finishes this month, leaving Annett Telfer as the only HR person in the South Island. It may take more time however my focus will not change.

Protection, we had one delegate leave KR and one delegate step down leaving Tarsh as the only delegate however watch this space we may have another delegate to help out soon.

Scenic Journeys continues to bring interesting challenges, the latest shift roster change is not ideal and feedback to improve this has been put forward.

Port



## REMINDER: Auckland AGM

will be held on 21 August 1900 at the 83 Selwyn Street, Onehunga, Auckland.

## REMINDER: Northland Rail AGM,

12 August at 0900 at the 20 Jellicoe Street Whangarei Northland

### **Lyttelton Port Company**

The gift that keeps on giving, numerous industrial issues are ongoing many requiring legal support at Mediation and in Court. It is fair to say that unions and company relations are at an all time low, union members feel that their conditions are being attacked in many different ways and still feel that the overall goal is to sell off or lease out the Port. We have engaged with local Councilors, Iwi and Public groups to attempt to fend off these actions.

Drugs and Alcohol Policy, we have supported MUNZ with their feedback to the proposed changes and hope to see amendments to the policy that do not assume impairment by trace amounts at testing from historical events.

A new CA is being bargained for a small group of Customer Support officers. Inland Port CA will be initiated for CA bargaining very soon.

All in all a busy time. Thanks to all the delegates for their tireless efforts.

### **Marlborough Port & Rail**

Unique issues for this branch as PMNZ grapples with the logistics of delivering the land side infrastructure by 2029, when we will see our new ferries.

There will be major challenges for our members over the next few years as we face the challenges of dealing with new wharves, ramps and linkspans, all the while keeping the freight moving between islands. Utilising road bridging and dealing with the challenges of operating in a construction zone.

### **Invercargill**

Rail, terminal mapping is into the consultation phase.

Ohai line is to be mothballed, no job losses as a result. MECA report back meeting had a good turn out.

### **Dunedin**

Rail, Terminal mapping is in the consultation phase, a good level of feedback has been given and some changes to the initial proposal have been actioned.

MECA report back meeting had an excellent turnout at the Hillside, great venue for Union meetings.

**Port Otago** Collective Agreement bargaining is underway, BPA to be finalized and then dates to be set. Still many industrial issues to work through some requiring legal support.

**Dunedin Railways** Collective bargaining is underway.

### **Timaru**

Rail, Terminal mapping complete and team are seeing how the changes are shaking out, still able to give feedback for improvements.

Good MECA report back turnout at Timaru and Oamaru.

### **Port Timaru**

Quality Marshalling Collective Agreement bargaining complete.

**Prime Port** Collective Agreement bargaining underway.



### **Team Global Express**

On July 22 and 23, we met with Team Global Express to discuss the next round of the Collective Agreement. The company's financial situation is concerning, as evidenced by an initial pay offer of only 0%. Despite these challenging circumstances, we have successfully negotiated a small increase in the pay offer for the next two years, along with additional long service leave for our members.

We will be presenting this proposal for ratification to our members shortly.



## RMTU Supporting Pay equity

The Pay Equity petition was presented to Parliament in July with more than 94 000 signatures.

### What's Pay Equity

Pay equity is about people in female dominated professions and people in male dominated professions receiving the same pay for doing jobs that are different, but of equal value. That is, jobs that require similar levels of skills, responsibility and effort. The Equal Pay Amendment Act (2020) established a standardised way to assess roles to see if they are undervalued. The CTU website has excellent resources on this topic <https://union.org.nz/pay-equity-explainers/> including a list of all the 33 Pay Equity Claims that have been gutted by the recent legislative changes. The CTU is calling on the Government to:

- Reverse all proposed amendments to the Equal Pay Act and restore existing pay equity claims.
- Undo Equal Pay Act changes that make it impossible for people working in female dominated professions to achieve and retain pay equity
- Deliver pay equity settlements to every worker waiting for their claim.

**The RMTU and MUNZ are asking members to show solidarity and support the CTU and all Unions affected by the recent pay equity changes.**



Pay Equity supporter protesting at Parliament

## How to show your support

Show you support pay equity for New Zealand workers: youth workers, learning support workers, kindergarten teacher aids, health care support workers, hospice nurses, aged residential care nurses, plunket nurses, vet nurses, and more

### Here's how:

**Step 1)** Take a photo of yourself, with a friend or whanau member whose pay has been or could be affected by recent pay equity legislation

**Step 2)** Include the reason you support pay equity, for example:

- Because I want my daughter to be paid fairly
- Because I support people who care for people
- Because pay equity means better quality of life for my whanau

**Step 3)** Email or text your photo to [payequity@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:payequity@rmtunion.org.nz)



RMTU Organiser Allan Addison-Saipe and daughter Talia Addison-Saipe

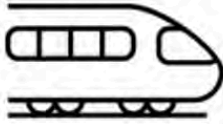
***"I support pay equity because I want my daughter to be paid fairly"***

And that's it! RMTU & MUNZ members will compile all the photos to support the pay equity campaign on behalf of members, starting at a nationwide event: "Women Rise Up" on 20 September 2025





## 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](#)

## Expressions of Interest 'WIMDOI'

11-14 May 2026

WIMDOI stands for Women in Male Dominated Occupations & Industry. The RMTU is calling for expressions of interest

from women RMTU members who would like to attend the WIMDOI Biennial Conference next year in Rotorua. The WIMDOI Conference provides women with a safe environment to share stories, enhance skills, build networks and strategies, and develop Union power. Feedback from previous RMTU attendees includes:

- "Empowering"
- "Inspiring"
- "I made lifelong connections within the union movement"

"paving the way for the younger generation of women coming in to the industry"

For further information please contact Rebecca Hauck at [gunkgirl7@gmail.com](mailto:gunkgirl7@gmail.com)  
To register your interest please email [reception@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:reception@rmtunion.org.nz)

Note: to secure spaces for RMTU women and to keep costs to a minimum, please register your interest by **16 SEPTEMBER 2025**



## Stay Off. Stay Safe. Rail Safety Week

KiwiRail and TrackSAFE are launching a new safety campaign for Rail Safety Week 11-17 August.

**Stay Off Stay Safe** aims to get the message across to the public that the rail corridor is not a public walkway, and unauthorised access is both dangerous and illegal. In the past ten years KiwiRail

has reported more than 6,000 incidents of people trespassing, and this is obviously just the tip of the iceberg. This new campaign will emphasise the importance of using only designated level crossings and staying clear of railway tracks, bridges, tunnels and yards to prevent fatalities and life-changing incidents. Thanks to all the RMTU members who are actively involved in the campaign. All resources are available [here](#)



### Port of Tauranga Ratification

After a few months of bargaining, we have now settled a deal that we are recommending to be ratified amongst our RMTU members. The main general wage increase is 3.5% for year 1 and CPI + 1% or 3.5% whichever is the higher for year 2.

There are a few other benefits for departments and a few working parties that will be worked on outside of bargaining.

Thank you to the entire bargaining team for your mahi.

Ratification meetings will run next week Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August and Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August at 10am and 3pm both days.

### Qube Ratification

The ballot has now closed for Qube and the results are in. The Qube deal has been ratified with 63% of returned ballots voting in favour of ratification. We will now get it signed and back pay will be paid on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September. The next step will be to assemble a team of representatives who are on the 1,820 model. We will review the hours worked of all RMTU members and ensure they are safe with fatigue management guidelines and the work is being distributed evenly.

### Availability at the Port of Tauranga

We have been having discussions with the port companies in Tauranga about their availability provisions in their Collectives.

### Availability at Port of Tauranga

Currently our Qube Collective is the only Collective that discusses availability provisions, and we are hopeful that in the next couple of months the other Collectives will also.



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

**Stay safe out there.**

