

THE ACTIVIST



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October 2025

Message from the Gen Sec

On Wednesday 8th October we held our first online AGM. The attendees included 29 voting Conference delegates, the National Management Committee and observers. Due to changes to the Incorporated Societies Act, we are now required to have an AGM in addition to our Biennial Conference. Aside from the usual AGM agenda, this meeting also endorsed and approved our new Constitution which is compliant with the new Act. Thanks to all the delegates that attended and a special thanks to Kristen Thompson, lawyer, for all the work she did preparing our Constitution and for providing advice.

The annual KiwiRail “Roy Sullivan” Apprentice awards were held this week as well. I was one of the judges on the panel for these awards. It was a difficult but enjoyable task, difficult because of the high caliber of nominees and enjoyable because it is great learning about the next generation of rail workers. The KiwiRail apprentice programme has been a great success. Long may this programme continue.

Stay safe out there.

Todd Valster

RMTU General Secretary



RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson nominated for NZ Council of Trade Unions–Te Kauae Kaimahi Vice President Māori

RMTU President Aubrey Wilkinson has been nominated for the position of Vice-President Māori for the NZ Council of Trade Unions–Te Kauae Kaimahi.

The CTU affiliated unions will vote on the position at the CTU conference held on 30th October.

Good luck Aubrey, you have our full support.



Great turn out of RMTU support for pay equity

[See photos of RMTU support for pay equity from across the motu.](#)



NEW

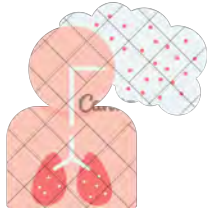
Check out your new RMTU website

www.rmtunion.org.nz

Remutaka silica dust update

Investigating the Remutaka silica dust issue

KiwiRail and RMTU have finalised the scope of the independent investigation into how dust risk was managed during the Remutaka Tunnel work. The Terms of Reference has been shared with BECA, who will soon begin the process of contacting staff to get their input.



This is an important part of the investigation process and staff are encouraged to be open and honest in sharing their experiences. All feedback will be treated respectfully and confidentially. If you wish, you are welcome to have a support person / union representative attend any meetings with you.

Addressing the source of the dust in the Remutaka tunnel

To address the source of the dust, KiwiRail began washing down the walls of the Remutaka tunnel in August. The Occupational Hygienist report recommended addressing the dust at its source by washing down the walls of the tunnel. Tunnel cleaning is expected to be complete by mid-October.

Occupational hygienists – Air Matters recommended that a further round of personal air monitoring for onboard staff including Loco Engineers, Train Managers and Passenger Operators be done to check the dust management controls are effective. The next round of monitoring is scheduled for November.

As before, personal exposure monitoring will involve collecting samples to determine the concentrations of dust and Respirable Crystalline silica in the air to which train staff are exposed, and these levels will be compared against the Workplace Exposure Standards.

Health monitoring

Respiratory health monitoring already happens for infrastructure staff and locomotive engineers working within the Remutaka Tunnel route. KiwiRail Infrastructure Track Machine and Track Production staff. As a precaution, KiwiRail's Chief Medical Officer supports bringing the next round of respiratory health monitoring forward for teams who worked inside the tunnel over the Christmas block of line. This relates to Infrastructure teams (Track Machine Group and Track production teams). Future health monitoring will occur at the normal frequency. As silica has already been established as a health hazard for the Track Machine group through previous exposure monitoring, this group already has health monitoring for the purposes of providing assurance that your health isn't being negatively affected by exposure to silica.

Keep your health monitoring records.

The Union urges workers to keep copies of all health monitoring results and share them with their GP. Health issues can appear years after exposure so it is important to have results of health monitoring to help with getting ACC cover for injury. Employers are only required to retain health records for ten years. Having a permanent record ensures workers can access the information if needed in the future.



NZ Council of Trade Unions–Te Kauae Kaimahi is calling for Publicly Owned Electricity



The NZCTU's report [here](#) calls for Government to rethink the way electricity is delivered in NZ saying electricity supply and demand should be managed as an economic development and industrial policy problem – not a revenue maximising concern for shareholders, including maximising the Government's shareholding power to improve delivery.

The CTU sites the risk of further de-industrialisation and job losses due to high energy costs. For example, the recent closures of large energy-intensive users of electricity including the Tokoroa PM6 Paper Plant, Winstone Pulp International's two central North Island mills, and Oji Penrose. According to Karen Boyes, executive director of the Major Electricity Users Group, if reforms are not made, New Zealand faces a "risk of deindustrialisation".

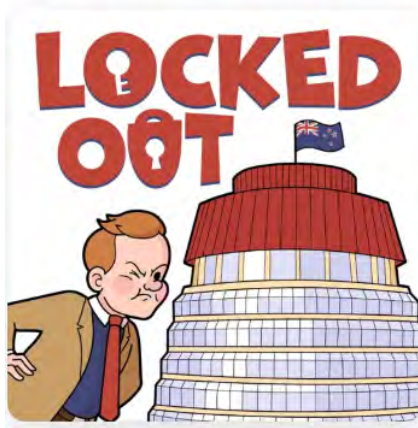
Energy hardship is also a major problem with more than 110,000 households could not afford to keep their home adequately warm, according to a 2024 report. To read the CTU's paper [click the link](#)

Economic crisis

The New Zealand economy experienced a sharp contraction in the June 2025 quarter. Once again, the return to growth has been postponed. The ongoing recession has now been deeper and lasted longer than that following the global financial crisis of 2008. For information and analysis of the figures see the latest [NZTU economic bulletin here](#).

More on electricity reform

The podcast, 'Locked out' with Craig Renney–Episode 26 discusses the question ***"should we have publically funded electricity?"*** Craig interviews Ed Miller from the Centre for International Corporate Tax Accountability and Research.



To watch
Craig
Renney's
podcast click
here or go to
the RMTU
website

Take the poll: Question

Are electricity prices too high in NZ?

[Survey link click here](#)
or scan the QR code



We will publish the
results
in the November
newsletter

Have you seen the September edition of the RMTU Transport Worker Magazine?

If you missed it click [HERE](#) or go to the new RMTU website.

The magazine is printed and distributed to the union branches.



Port of Tauranga

The RMTU recently met with the Port of Tauranga for our first Consultative Meeting since the ratification of the new Collective Agreement. It was again a constructive and positive start to ongoing dialogue between the Union and the Company, with a shared focus on collaboration, fairness, and clarity for our members.

These Consultative meetings are set up so our members can highlight changes or improvements that they would like to see in their workplace. We try to have an open discussion and if needed, draft variations to the Collective. We do not have to wait until bargaining. Especially if we can create efficiencies, what Company wouldn't want to talk about saving money?

A number of key areas for continued discussion and development were identified.

At 'Butters' (property division), further discussion will take place to define measurable time and clarify how it is calculated in relation to the diving duties. In the Workshop, the team will confirm the current list of First Aiders and invite any new volunteers interested in taking up this important role for the coming year. A significant piece of work will also focus on clarifying and defining supervisory roles for both Electricians and Fitters.

Members in Quarantine will collaborate to create a tier structure outlining clear pathways for progression from one tier to the next.

Within Cargo Services, the schedule will be updated to reflect current operations, including the introduction of a newly appointed role.

Port of Tauranga cont.

In Security, discussions continue around the CCTV Operators' job description to ensure it accurately reflects the responsibilities and expectations of the role.

A working group has been established to review availability provisions under the ERA. This will initially focus on Crane Drivers, with potential application to Permanent Part-Time members in the Lines and Security teams.

The Terminal Team has agreed to trial a new roster aimed at improving overall wellbeing and safety at work. This initiative is designed to reduce fatigue, lower psychosocial risks, support mental health, create a more sustainable work-life balance

Ports are high-demand environments, and the pressures can take a toll. This roster trial is a proactive step toward creating a healthier, safer, and more supportive workplace for everyone.

Your feedback matters. As the trial progresses, please share your experiences and suggestions with your supervisor or Union representative.

Let's continue working together to build a safer and more resilient team.



**Check out your new
RMTU website
www.rmtunion.org.nz**

Taranaki Port

Members at Port Taranaki have voted through changes to their collective agreement which sees changes to how work is done in this port.

Changes to gas exploration in NZ have meant that PTL's business has changed radically and the need to keep our members employed has seen them take on a more diverse approach to their work.

Multi-skilling is can work, hopefully. Our members have done a great job of finding compromises to keep jobs.

Nelson Port

The Nelson branch continues to struggle with applying its roster as they struggle with increasingly creative interpretations of clauses in the collective agreement and equally creative interpretations of fatigue risk management and rostering principles. It was made clear to us by Maritime New Zealand at the Port's forum that its Fatigue Risk Management guidelines could not be ignored by the industry and are fully backed by the Approved Code of Practice. Come on employers lets sort out availability, rosters and fatigue risk management.

Northland Rail

In Northland, following the departure of our wonderful branch secretary,



Matt Bennie, we are in need of a new Northland Rail branch secretary. I know this is a tough position to fill, but if you know anyone who could represent you well, please submit their name for consideration!

Palmerston North

Yard Optimisation work has been completed in Palmy North with a focus on matching staffing levels to the train plan. Bearing in mind that there are 26% less trains in the lower North Island than in previous years.

Despite the RMTU and KiwiRail agreeing on measures to manage excessive leave including changes to the MECA two years ago, leave balances are high in this area and need to be managed.

The leave does need to be managed and the RMTU supports our members having time away from work to rest and recharge. But it is important to remember that only leave that is over 12 months old, may be targeted as being required to be taken. Any leave that is accruing may not be accessed unless by mutual agreement. The changes at Palmy will not see any redundancies forced or voluntary. Any necessary reductions in numbers will be done through natural attrition.

Auckland Rail

With around 70 days left until Christmas, 2025 is flying by at lightning speed. In Auckland, many exciting developments are happening as we prepare for the opening of the anticipated Central Rail Link (CRL) tunnel in 2026. RMTU AOR members are gearing up for the handover of three new stations in December!

As the tunnels open, all areas of the metro rail system are also preparing for the challenges that the CRL may bring. On October 16, a significant number of our CAF members will transition to AOR. While some CAF members will remain at CAF, the numbers will decrease significantly.

Timaru Rail

Hero's awards for saving a life

Caitlin Bartley, Gavin Curragh and Riki Anderson our members at Timaru Rail were presented with their awards by Paul Ashton last week (pictured below) for their quick actions to save a man who'd fallen off a rail bridge into the water below.

What happened?

A Man searching for his dog wandered onto Bridge 93, try as they might the crew could not stop the train in time and the man was hit and thrown into the estuary, Riki and Gavin waded out to man, who was floating face down, they held him up and stayed with him until medics arrived, despite the extreme cold which caused leg cramps and a great deal of discomfort they hung in there. The man was taken to hospital and despite broken bones and other injuries he has survived. He and his wife are extremely grateful to the team. You are all true Heroes, well done.



Bay of Plenty Rail

Our Mount Maunganui Mechanical Depot has officially been confirmed to remain a provisioning and servicing depot for the foreseeable future! This announcement has brought a huge sense of relief and stability to our members there. It's great to see their hard work and dedication being recognised and supported. Well done, team!

Freight Ops kicked off a new initiative on Thursday, diving into Terminal Optimisation, starting with train plans. A few members have already popped in to share their insights, and it's been great to see that input shaping the conversation. This work will continue into next week, so if you've got ideas or feedback—don't be shy, get involved!

Things are looking up in Networks! Over the past month, we've seen a noticeable drop in recorded incidents, which is a great reflection of the team's focus and commitment to safety and efficiency. Keep up the awesome work—your efforts are making a real difference.

Tauranga Freight is going strong! With a full team now rostered, the branch is functioning in a self-sustainable way, which is fantastic to see. The crew's teamwork and consistency have really paid off—keep it up!

THANK
YOU

October Mega-strike of teachers , nurses and public sector workers

Nurses, midwives, health care assistants, public sector workers senior doctors and teachers have announced they will walk out on strike during October, about **90,000 workers**. RMTU President Richard Wagstaffe told Radio NZ "If all the strikes go ahead this will be the biggest walk off in about 40 years."



Resene workers to strike

Resene Paint workers at the Naenae and Upper Hutt factories in Wellington do not earn the Living Wage.

In response to a low offer from their employer, the workers are STRIKING for a LIVING WAGE

We need community support — please join Resene workers and the wider community to stand with them as they strike.



Wednesday 15 October



9:00 am sharp



Resene Head Office, 50 Vogel Street, Naenae

It's important that people arrive right at 9:00 am to greet the workers as they walk off the job. 👉 [Please register HERE](#)



The National Iwi Chairs Forum and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi have announced the 28th of October will be a national day of solidarity, Rā Whakamana, to reaffirm the tino rangatiratanga of Tangata Whenua and protect the rights and wellbeing of all workers.

The 28th of October carries deep meaning – it marks the signing of He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni and the first Labour Day demonstrations in 1890 that helped secure the eight-hour working day.

Iwi, unions, and activist groups are calling for mass mobilisations across the country at 12pm on 28 October to send a powerful message that we will not back down in the face of the Government's ongoing attacks on our people.

"Rā Whakamana is a tikanga-led stand for cultural wellbeing, dignity, workers' rights, mana wāhine, rangatahi, and tino rangatiratanga – guided by iwi leadership in partnership with the union movement," said iwi spokesperson Dr Kenneth Kennedy.

RMTU statement of peace for Palestine.

Peace is union business.
Prior to the recent announcement of the Gaza ceasefire and release of hostages, the RMTU's National Management Committee met in September and agreed to the following statement.



"Our union condemns the genocide being carried out in Gaza and call for implementation of an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

Those responsible for the killings, including those carried out in the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023, to be investigated and held to account in the International Criminal Court.

*Sanctions on the state of Israel. A Government sanction would include cutting diplomatic ties and therefore expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to NZ
We call on the NZ Government to adopt the same position.*



Please update your contact details with the RMTU by scanning the QR code.



Health & Safety Bulletin: A Reminder from the Union

The Union has observed an increase in disciplinary actions related to breaches in Health and Safety protocols. This trend is concerning and serves as a critical reminder:

Taking shortcuts with Health and Safety is never worth risking your life—or your job.

Every team member plays a vital role in maintaining a safe workplace. Whether it's wearing the correct PPE, following procedures, or reporting hazards, your actions matter.

Let's work together to protect ourselves and each other.

If you're unsure about any safety procedures or need support, please speak with your supervisor or Union representative.

Stay safe. Stay informed.

Stay accountable.

Stay safe out there.



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