

# THE ACTIVIST



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## Message from the Gen Sec

Happy New Year 2026, we have a full-on year ahead of us. The RMTU has successfully reregistered under the new Incorporated Societies Act 2022. A lot of hard work was put in by our Admin & Finance Manager, Lara and Armstrong Thompson Barristers and Solicitors - a huge thank you to both. We have set the dates for our Biennial Delegates Conference, 20 - 22 October in Wellington. Following the success of the Ports & Women's Forums at a new venue, we will hold our National Delegates Conference at this new venue, James Cook on the Terrace. It may seem a while away, but it will be important that all Branches hold their AGM's in August so we have enough time to make arrangements for the Branch Conference Delegates to attend. We are planning a meeting in March with the Maritime Union New Zealand (MUNZ) to initiate discussions on a potential amalgamation with MUNZ. The Future is Rail have launched a campaign for regional passenger services between Auckland and Tauranga. This campaign has a petition which we should all get behind. The petition details are in this newsletter. Stay safe!

Todd Valster



## NZCTU Te Kauae Kamahi

### Media Release – 23 January 2026

Cost of living rises faster than workers' wages. Cost of living data released by Stats NZ today shows that working people are being left behind, said NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi President Sandra Grey. "Data released by Stats NZ today showed that the cost of living rose at its fastest rate for 18 months. 68% of workers across the economy are currently facing another year of real terms pay cuts under this government" Food prices rose 4.3%, electricity prices rose 12.2%, and gas prices rose 16.2%. Working people are struggling to afford the basics." "Minimum wage workers are now facing a third straight year of real terms cuts to their income. The lowest-paid workers in the country are paying the price for this Government's economic mismanagement. When last measured, annual household inflation was running 2.7 times faster for the lowest income New Zealanders than for the highest income earners." "Working people need wage increases, not tax cuts. The Government may be celebrating the economy improving, but working people aren't feeling any relief. It's time the government stopped leaving workers behind," said Grey.

## Proposed change to give Maritime NZ the power to ban substandard ships

The RMTU and MUNZ have written a joint submission supporting the Ministry of Transport's proposal to give Maritime NZ

increased power to ban unsafe and non compliant foreign ships from coming to NZ. The proposed law change would mean the Director of Maritime NZ will be able to prevent ships from coming to NZ that are known to be substandard from a health and safety and labour rights perspective.

Last year's the Transport Accident Investigation Commission's (TAIC) made the recommendation to strengthen NZ's Maritime law to ban unseaworthy ships from entering NZ in response to the Shilling incident. The container ship Shilling had to be rescued twice by NZ Maritime authorities due to mechanical failures. Unsafe ships have caused serious injury to our members working on them. In January 2023, a Port Nelson stevedore was seriously injured after falling 12 metres through a corroded guard rail whilst working onboard the Maersk Nansha. The Nansha was well known to be a deficient ship. The proposed change would give Maritime NZ a narrow power with specific criteria relating to maritime safety and labour non compliance. The change would bring the NZ in line with Australia's and the US legislation.



If you've moved house or changed your email or phone number, please update your contact details with the RMTU so you receive important union information. [Click here](#).



This is for the information and guidance of RMTU members only

## Check out the December '25 Transport Worker.

The Northland Branch farewells Rail Branch Secretary and Health and Safety Committee Chair Mat Bennie. We'll miss you Mat!

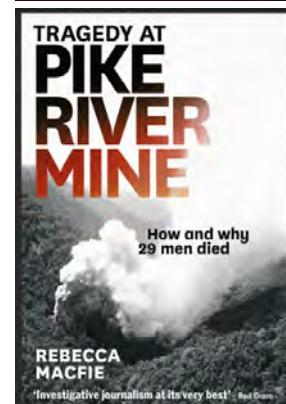


## Pike River movie

Pike River is now available digitally on Apple, Neon, Prime, Youtube, Aro Vision and Madman on Demand.

Links to view the film are available by clicking on the image below:

This is an easy way for people to click through to view the film on demand on one of the platforms it is available.



The book 'Tragedy at Pike River mine' was written by Investigative Journalist Rebecca Macfie. It is a thoroughly researched and detailed account of the tragic disaster that should never have happened.

The book reveals an appalling string of mistakes that led to the explosion killing 29 men. The lessons from Pike River are still relevant for today.

## **Onboard staff of Remutaka passenger service recommended to wear respiratory protection as an interim measure**

Since early 2025, staff onboard the Remutaka passenger train have reported exposure to dust onboard following the work carried out in the Remutaka Tunnel over Xmas 2024/25 block of lines.

Work has been done by KiwiRail to reduce the dust hazard but it is still present. The RMTU asked the Rail Chief Medical Officer, Dr Simon Ryder Lewis to review the most recent air monitoring results from dust sampling taken onboard the service. He said there are two related hazards to consider, respirable dust and respirable crystalline silica.

Respirable dust levels are less than 10% of the workplace exposure standard (WES) values produced by Worksafe NZ. He said the WES value is not a safe level and some individuals may experience effects below the WES value, and alternatively some may experience no effects above the WES value.

## **Business Leaders forum shows NZ is lagging behind UK and Australia with poor health and safety record says their "State of a thriving nation report 2025"**

The report says NZ's fatality rate today is where Australia was 16 years ago, and where the UK was 40 years ago. Our workplace fatality rate (averaged over the last 5 years) is 1.7x higher than Australia, and 6.5x higher than the UK". The cost of harm from workplace injury and fatalities was estimated at \$5.4billion for 2024, 1.3% of GDP. That doesn't include the human cost of devastation to families. Find the report [here](#)

The health risk of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) from respirable dust has been independently assessed as 'medium' (exposure is unlikely, the health effects may be moderate/major).

Respirable crystalline silica (RCS) samples ranged in value from below the practical quantification limit (meaning that RCS may be present but in quantities too small to detect) to 26% of the WES. The health risk of silicosis from RCS has been independently assessed as 'high' (exposure is possible, the health effects may be major/severe).

The CMO notes "the chances of staff suffering significant long-term health issues from these potential exposures is not at all high". However, he advises that respiratory PPE should be recommended and discussed with Passenger operator and Train Managers even as an interim measure.

He said the situation / benefit for LE's is less clear as their exposures are even lower but it would still be reasonable to recommend the use of PPE.

He said the situation could be reassessed after engineering controls have been put in place and if further testing occurs.



## Excessive Blame on Workers, Says NZTA Draft Safety Report to KiwiRail Lower Nth Island

The recent safety assessment by NZTA regarding KiwiRail's Lower North Island operations reinforces the RMTU's concerns about KiwiRail's incident investigation methods and the unfair application of the just and fair culture process. Last year, the union called for a joint review of this process after several SPAD incidents, where the company disproportionately focused on Locomotive Engineers while overlooking contributing factors such as inadequate training and environmental issues like poor signal visibility.

NZTA pointed out that KiwiRail's investigations tend to emphasize the mistakes made by individuals, without adequately evaluating whether systems, procedures, or the working environment played a role in the incidents.

Additionally, investigations led by managers may lack thoroughness due to the pressures of their workload.

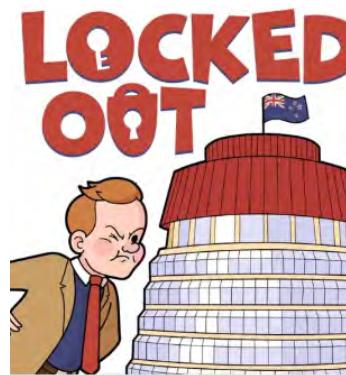
## KiwiRail / RMTU Multi Employer Collective Agreement (MECA) 2025 – 2027



## What is Happening to KiwiSaver?

We know that there is increasing interest from our members and across the community when it comes to retirement savings and this is likely to become a political football in this coming election year. It is time for our members to make an informed choices about their government.

If you don't want to sacrifice your pay rise for your KiwiSaver increase? If you don't want further cuts to government services because the government has not looked at the cost to itself of increasing KiwiSaver? If you are concerned that our KiwiSaver savings are not working for our country? And if you want to get the inside running what proposed changes to KiwiSaver? Click on the link below to see Craig Ranney's Podcast and learn all about it.



[Click here to see the podcast or go to the RMTU website](#)

The MECA 2025–27 has been printed in hardcopy. KiwiRail have sent copies out to the depots and terminals. The MECA can also be found on the RMTU website. Click [here](#) to download the MECA.

## Northern Region Update:

A welcome back to those that had a break over Xmas and New Years, and a big thanks to those who worked through, without your work the network would not run as smoothly through the rest of the year. This year is shaping up to be another very busy one, we have the next phases of the trials for Single Line Working, which is now Adjacent Line working, the Loco Engineer School update project which in the later part of the year there will be the first school under the new framework. Over at AOR there is still the preparations for the CRL and all the testing and training required. As there are many projects and workshops to come, now is a great time to think about putting your hand up for any open delegate or council roles, or even talk to your local delegate or council rep about projects coming up as we will be needing knowledgeable people to support this work. As always be safe, one task at a time, take your breaks, and keep hydrated when we get the warmer weather.

## Golden Triangle by Train? Campaign for Te Huia to Tauranga

The campaign to extend and grow Te Huia's service from the current Auckland and Waikato passenger train, to include Tauranga is being led by 'the future is rail'. The campaign asks for more frequent services, more stops and Golden Triangle rail – a passenger rail network linking Auckland, Waikato, and Bay of Plenty as a crucial part of New Zealand's public transport system.

Why is this important? Over half of New Zealand's population lives in the Golden Triangle, and it is one of the fastest-growing parts of the country – it makes sense to have a modern, safe and efficient train service between Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty. To support the Te Huia Golden triangle campaign [Click here](#)

## Be ready to vote on 7 November – Election day

It'll be election day before we know it and unlike other years where you could enrol to vote on the day, that's not the case this year.



To be eligible to vote you need to be registered on the electoral roll with the correct address by **25 October** before the advance voting starts.

To enrol, update or check your details on the NZ electoral roll, you can: visit [www.vote.nz](http://www.vote.nz) or call 0800 36 76 56. You need to update your details every time you move house.



**Message of thanks from 'The Future is Rail'** Kia ora and thanks for being one of the 2000+ people that have already signed on to support Golden Triangle by Train – extending Te Huia to Tauranga! We're heading into a crucial moment for Te Huia – With Waka Kotahi NZTA due to make a decision on whether Te Huia's trial is extended.