

TRANSPORT WORKER

MAR 2026

The journal of the RMTU
- NZ's largest specialist
transport union



Cover Image

RMTU NMC Womens Rep Rebecca Hauck standing in solidarity with the Professional Fire Fighters Union senior firefighter Aimee Taylor.

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Stand Up, Fight Back, Vote!

Welcome to the first edition of *The Transport Worker* for 2026. It will be a busy year preparing for our Biennial Delegates Conference in October and the General Election in November.

To prepare for our Delegates Conference, it would be helpful if all Branches hold their AGM's in August and provide the names of Conference Delegates and Observers as soon as possible following their AGM's.

For the General Election, enrolment and participation will be essential and that includes ex-pat New Zealanders that can vote easily online, but they must be enrolled first. Of an estimated 900,000 ex-pat Kiwi's, only around 10% are currently enrolled. Also our 18–30-year old eligible voters need to be encouraged to enrol and vote. The more voter participation, the better the outcomes.

So if you have whānau overseas and/or potential young voters encourage them to enrol and vote.

We are very concerned that the changes to employment legislation that have been rushed through—like the Employment Relations Amendment Bill which has now been passed—will have dire outcomes for NZ workers. This will, in all likelihood, affect unionised workforces as well.

I attended the CTU National Affiliates Committee (NAC) meeting recently with our President, Aubrey Wilkinson. There was session where two Uber delegates and

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their volunteer Organiser, John Ryall, presented on the Uber concerns. These brave Uber workers fought hard to win in the Courts and to be recognised as employee rather than contractors. This fight went to the Supreme Court and they won their workers rights, only to be stripped of the hard-fought wins by a change of legislation, clear state overreach. The Uber delegates call the legislative change, “the Uber law” because the current Government have bowed down to Uber and not supported NZ workers.

Some facts—1700 Uber drivers in NZ are unionised, NZ Uber revenue is \$450m but they only pay \$1m in tax. Costs are high for these transport

workers with Uber getting around 40% of all fares. There is no cap on driver number so to make ends meet, they need to be on call for long hours, fatigue is an issue, there was an Uber fatality in 2025 due to long hours and fatigue.

Well done to the unions that are supporting the Uber drivers, all of the unions that attended this NAC meeting pledged their support to the Uber drivers—they are not alone.

KiwiRail

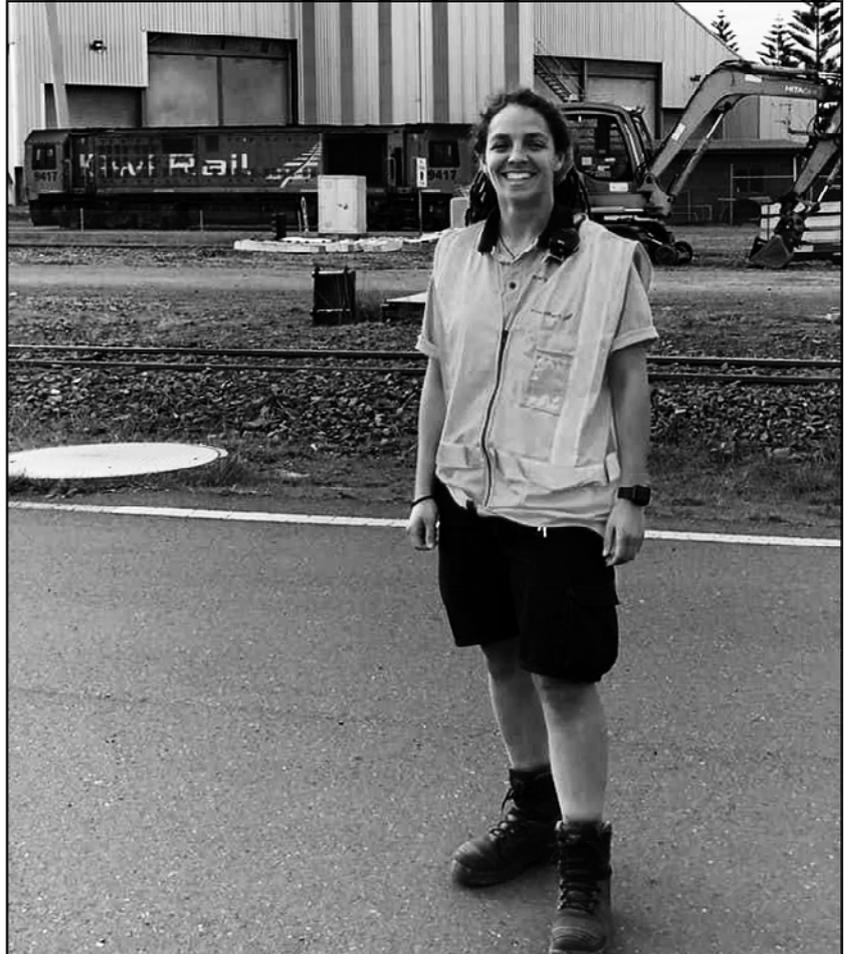
While it is good to see KiwiRail is saying they are going to reach their profit target this financial year and freight volumes have increased, it was also concerning that the media is reporting that we may have “managed decline” on some lines and potential line closures in the future due to Infrastructure budget cuts of \$200m over three years. This will lead to mode shift from Rail to Road. Another reason to vote for a Government that will continue to support Rail.

In March we are meeting with Maritime Union NZ (MUNZ) to initiate discussions on a potential amalgamation of RMTU and MUNZ. Our National Management Committee (NMC) has selected a team to represent the RMTU at these discussions. At the 2025 Ports Forum, delegates agreed that we need to initiate discussions. All RMTU members will be well informed following this and any other amalgamation discussion meetings.

We are continuing our campaign for membership growth on the Ports with Roi (our recruiter) agree to a further 6 month term with RMTU

Take care, be safe.

Todd Valster 



Farewell Christie Yule

I regret to inform you that I have officially resigned from KiwiRail. I want to say a massive thank you to you all. It has been an absolute pleasure to meet, work with and stand beside you all. This was my first union that I have ever been a part of and I can honestly say the bar is set high.

I have had the pleasure of being involved in numerous events over my membership and I am grateful for them all. I want to thank you all for being so kind and welcoming to me.

I am, of course, standing down from my role as North Island Rail Rep for the Women's council. This is bitter sweet for me as I have had such a wonderful time as part of this group. Not to mention with the first WIMDOI NZ around the corner.

Finally I would like to say one more time how grateful I am to be part of this union.

Take care everyone.

Kind regards,
Christie

Obituaries



George Fry

Tamper. George took immense pride in his work and was a wealth of knowledge, always willing to mentor and support those around him. He was widely respected for his attention to detail and his unwavering commitment to safety, qualities that defined both his professionalism and character.

Prior to joining the Track Machine Group, George held the role of Track Ganger for one of the Destress teams. It was during this time that he earned a reputation as both a hard and determined worker and one who was not afraid to speak up. Whether operating complex machinery or working hands-on on the track, George brought the sane work ethic, reliability and pride to every role he held.

Beyond his technical skill, George will be remembered for his strong personality and sense of humour. He was someone people trusted and made a lasting impression with everyone he met. His contribution over the past two decades has left a lasting impact, not only on the infrastructure he helped maintain, but on the many colleagues who had the privilege of working with him.

We extend our deepest condolences to George's family, friends and loved ones. George will be greatly missed, but his legacy lives on through the many people he guided, the standards he upheld, and the lasting impact he made on his team and the wider rail community. 🌐

It is with a profound sense of sadness that we share the passing of our KiwiRail brother, George Fry, whose sudden loss has left a deep void across both our team and the wider KiwiRail whānau.

George had over 20 years of dedicated service and spent more than half of his career within the Track Machine Group as Senior Machine Operator/2IC on the Tauranga



Richard Kingi

times. He has worked mostly in the Northland region on the NAL and has learnt from some experienced people while becoming that same experienced person along the way.

Richie has worked from a temp worker to a track worker, working on projects from Otiria to Pukekohe (and maybe an odd stint through Hamilton at times), upgrading and destressing the NAL and progressed during that time to a Senior Track Maintainer in the early 2000s.

In the mid 2000s he became the NAL track ganger based in Whangarei, first as a team of two, then eventually up to 4, making it through multiple restructures through some up and down uncertain times. In the 2010s

he once again moved into the projects world was part of the NRU upgrades and then eventually earned the spot as the NAL Track Inspector in the late 2010s where he has worked most recently.

Richie leaves behind a loving partner of 40 years and many nieces and nephews that he loves like his own kids. His knowledge of the railways, kind nature, and calm approach to both work, and life in general, will be missed by many.

Richie 'locks off' finally after 28 years of working on the railways and we wish him a well-earned and restful Jim Beam on ice once he is laid to rest alongside his mum in the far north. 🌐

Richard Kingi started working in the railways in 1998 as part of a group brought in from a labour hire company. One of his first jobs for the New Zealand Railways was to upgrade the Dargaville branch line from 55lb rail to 75lb, hardwood to pine sleepers and scoria to rock ballast - a definite upgrade for the



Rail supporters gather to support Te Huia

Te Huia

In January I had the pleasure of being able to attend an event called Stack the Station at Hamilton Station put on by a group called “The Future is Rail”. The event was to get people out in force to show that there is strong community support for this wonderful service. Many of the conversations I had were focussed on just how well our Te Huia team does, and how excellent their customer service skills are, even during times of breakdowns and failures.

There was approximately 300 that turned out for that event, from other

unions, to people who use it regularly, to those who just wanted to show support for inter-regional rail. The Future is Rail would like to see Te Huia extended into Tauranga, and hey, why not! If you see these events or petitions, please go along and support. The MPs and the Councillors there on the day did commit to pushing for an extension of the trial by one year, which helps to align with the CRL timetable, and to get a better understanding of the usage for when it isn't cancelled due to works on the lines and various other factors like COVID.

I am very pleased to see that NZTA has committed to extending the trial into 2027, so if you are in Waikato or Auckland, please utilise this service wherever possible, as the more patronage the better the business case stacks up. Support our lovely Te Huia team and let's see it become a permanent fixture on the rail network. 🌐

■ RMTU Northern Organiser Sean Robertson

Sleep Disorder Caused by Poor Rostering Covered by ACC

Aaron Gledhill began working for KiwiRail in 2015 as a locomotive engineer (LE). During the COVID-19 period, he was required to work extended hours and, at times, consecutive shifts without sufficient breaks. The demanding roster led to extreme fatigue, yet he became unable to fall asleep without medication.

In November 2021, Aaron was diagnosed with a work related circadian rhythm sleep disorder caused by constantly shifting sleep schedules and single days off that did not allow recovery from sleep debt. Despite severe fatigue, he struggled with insomnia and felt unrefreshed after sleep. Shift work sleep disorder disrupts the body's natural circadian rhythms and can have serious cardiovascular, metabolic (obesity and diabetes), and psychiatric consequences.

By March 2022, KiwiRail advised there were no suitable light duties available. Because the LE role

required shift work in a safety-critical environment, Aaron was medically retired in August 2022.

Aaron sought assistance from the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU), whose lawyer helped him obtain ACC cover on the basis that his condition was a workplace injury. After an initial decline, KiwiRail's ACC provider Aon approved cover in October 2022 following a successful challenge by the Union.

After leaving KiwiRail, Aaron secured a new job working 7:00 am–3:00 pm Monday to Friday, which he was able to sustain. However, the role paid significantly less. His weekly compensation was topped up to match his pre-injury earnings, and he received funding for medication and treatment.

In March 2025, Aon suspended his weekly compensation, claiming he had recovered and was working full-time. With union support, Aaron challenged the decision, arguing he remained unable to return to shift

work or his job as an LE. A medical report confirmed ongoing fatigue, fragmented sleep, and a high risk of relapse if he resumed shift work.

With RMTU support, Aaron took the case to review in November 2025 and won. The reviewer directed Aon to reinstate weekly compensation and provide backpay.

Aaron said “The support provided has been literally life-changing for my family and me.” He said “I wish words could convey our gratitude.”

RMTU organiser, Karen Fletcher said this is an important decision because it highlights that shift work, particularly erratic start times that prevent workers from having regular sleep patterns can cause injury such as a sleep disorder. And it is covered by ACC which not many people know about. Sleep disorders are debilitating (both physically and mentally), causing significant suffering and can last for years. 🌍

Health and Safety Law Reforms

The ACT–National coalition agreement to “reform health and safety laws and regulations” has progressed through the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill. The Bill, tabled on 9 February 2026, has been widely condemned by unions and professional and industry associations.

NZCTU President Sandra Grey described the Bill as “heartless” and the latest in a string of anti-worker attacks from Workplace Relations and Safety Minister Brooke Van Velden.

Under the guise of clarity and cost-saving, the Bill establishes a two-tier safety system where workers in small businesses (less than 20 workers) will have significantly less protection than those in larger

organisations. Critics say the proposed health and safety changes will neither improve safety nor make compliance easier for businesses—calling it a major missed opportunity.

NZ Institute of Safety Management spokesperson Mike Cosman said, “This Bill does not do justice to the results of the recent consultation. We urge a radical rethink of the Government’s proposals. New

Zealand workers and businesses deserve better.”

New Zealand already has a poor health and safety record compared to Australia and the UK.

The Bill would allow small businesses to focus only on “critical risks” in the workplace and exempts them from many of their current health and safety obligations. While critical risks that cause death or the most severe injuries are important, this approach ignores the fact that most injuries do not result in that level of harm—yet account for 75% of ACC’s work injury costs.

Small to medium-sized organisations make up the bulk of Kiwi businesses but are generally less safe than their larger counterparts.

The cost of workplace harm is conservatively estimated at \$5.4 billion a year—up from the previous year. The NZ Business Leaders’ Forum reports that the cost has increased by nearly \$1 billion in real terms over the past decade. They agree the proposed changes are a mistake, warning they



CTU President Susan Grey

will add confusion and paperwork without reducing workplace harm.

Many significant risks—including violence and aggression in retail, back injuries, some occupational diseases, and work-related mental harm—are

unlikely to meet the threshold of a “critical risk” but still cause serious harm to workers. The Bill effectively encourages small employers to step back from addressing these issues. The result will be more injuries, more time off work, and ultimately lower productivity.

There are additional concerns, including a proposal to make the Health and Safety at Work Act subordinate to other legislation in the same area, even if that legislation sets a lower standard. For rail, this could mean the outdated Railways Act becomes the dominant health and safety law. Given that the Railways Act predates the Health and Safety at Work Act by ten years, it does not include protections such as worker engagement, risk management, and health and safety representatives that exist in the current law.

The RMTU will submit against the Bill. The first reading took place on 12 February. Written submissions are due on 18 March, and the Education and Workforce Select Committee is expected to report back by 13 June 2026. 🌐

Minister of Workplace Relations & Safety Brooke van Velden



Southland Silica Dust

Invercargill Container Terminal has made a significant progress in reducing dust exposure over the past three years. The change began when the site's Health and Safety Action Team representative raised concerns about the amount of dust present on site. The site had air quality testing by Air Matters Ltd which confirmed there were higher levels of respirable dust, including silica which was likely sourced from the unsealed yard.

A dust management plan was put in to action. With key steps including sealing the machine cab and filtering air entering the machine, more frequent yard sweeps, applying dust suppressant spray, regular cab cleaning of machines by staff, with the overall goal of sealing the entire

site. The air quality testing was carried out over a year which was done seasonally and showed the levels were decreasing which was due to the controls and dust management plan that was in place.

Progress was also made by approval of a storm water consent given by the Invercargill City Council, which allowed for new upgraded drainage to be installed, which will help in the future of the entire site being sealed.

The site has also benefited from a full internal building upgrade, giving staff a much better working environment. The boundary fence and footing were also replaced to support future sealing as the project moves forward.

A huge thank you goes to the Invercargill CT HSAT representative for keeping the momentum going behind these improvements and to Kiwirail management Team for the planning, coordination and making it all possible. We also acknowledge the contractors and their work to date, as well as the Invercargill CT team for their ongoing commitment to dust management.

From a union perspective we are very pleased with the progress so far and appreciate the commitment from all to improving health, safety and welfare of everyone on site. 🌍

■ Terri Scott, Southern CT RMTU Delegate.



From Left to Right we have Nic Ratlidge, Luis Ubatay, Terri Scott, and Dom Millan



Alana Ranui Speaking at a Union Event, and with Union Sister NMC Womens' Rep Rebecca Hauck

International Women's Day

March 8

Kia Ora Whanau. This year's International Women's Day is dedicated to all the amazing wāhine that have come before us, those who are with us in wairua, those who are present, and those who will be rising in the future. To all those mums, stepmoms, grandmas, sisters, aunts, cousins that support each and every one of us in our lives... Thank You.

A special tribute to a union sister that is no longer with us. Allana Ranui, mother, sister, grandmother, train driver, unionist and the most calm wāhine that you could ever meet. Your presence is missed sister, as well as your infectious smile and laughter. Your unveiling was beautiful, even Te Rangi was shedding a heap of tears that day.

This International Women's Day take the time to remember those mana wāhine that are no longer with us. Celebrate our sisters past, present and future.

If you get a chance support and attend International Women's Day events in your local communities.

I Kotahitanga—In Unity 



Selling Our Lifelines

The Cost of Port Privatisation

New Zealand is an island nation. Ninety-nine per cent of everything we eat, wear, drive, or build comes across a wharf. Our ports aren't just businesses, they are the strategic bedrock of our entire freight system. They are our gates to the world.

Right now, these essential assets are being eyed up by predatory international corporates and fund managers looking for easy profits.

To right-wing politicians and highly-paid consultants, our ports are not essential infrastructure. They are "undervalued assets" and "lazy capital." From the push to lease the Port of Auckland to overseas conglomerates, to the Christchurch City Council's flirtation with selling off the Lyttelton Port Company (LPC), the threat of privatisation is escalating.

From the perspective of port workers, privatisation is a direct threat to our livelihoods, our safety, and the economic security of our country. If we want to understand the true cost, we only need to look at the disastrous outcomes across the Tasman,

the lethal consequences of "efficiency" in many New Zealand ports, or the recent management attacks on unionised workers in Lyttelton.

Private Profit, Public Loss

The salesmen of privatisation always come with the same pitch. They promise "market discipline" and private capital will lower costs and improve service. It's a lie that has been debunked again and again, and needs to be challenged.

A port is not a standard competitive business. It is a regional natural monopoly. If you want to get goods into Auckland or Christchurch, you can't just go to the "discount port" down the road. When you privatise a monopoly, you are simply handing over the right to tax the local economy to a private, often foreign-owned, corporation.

We have seen the "Australian Miracle" first-hand, and it looks more like a mugging. State governments across the Tasman leased their major container ports to private equity and sovereign wealth funds for periods of

up to 99 years. Freed from any public accountability, these private owners did exactly what you'd expect: they jacked up the prices.

At the ports of Botany and Melbourne, Patrick Stevedores saw its rent increase by 140% post-privatisation. DP World reported a 60% increase in a single review period. How did they respond? They passed the bill to everyone else. They introduced "terminal access charges" that have become the stuff of legend. Since 2010, the infrastructure levy at the Port of Brisbane skyrocketed from \$4.95 to over \$110 per container, a jump of more than 2,000 percent.

This is wholesale price gouging. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) investigated and found that these private operators earned sustained, high profit margins while investing the bare minimum back into infrastructure.

When the suits take over, they talk about "sweating assets." In the ports, the primary asset they want to sweat is the worker. ▶



The Christchurch City Council, facing debt and a “cost of living crisis,” is looking at its commercial arm, Christchurch City Holdings Limited (CCHL). The jewel in the crown is the port of Lyttelton.

A 2022 report by Northington Partners paved a roadmap for privatisation for the Lyttelton Port Company. The report explicitly blamed the port’s alleged underperformance on its unionised workforce. This is a classic tactic. Throw in some unsupported claims to set the political agenda and use them as an excuse to sell. But as port workers, we know what asset sales and contracting out mean – union-busting, lower wages, insecure hours, and dangerous conditions.

In early 2025, Lyttelton port workers warned that proposed restructures and job cuts would lead to another death in the port because critical safety oversight roles were being abolished.

Threat of the “Super-Council”

There is a new threat on the horizon with the push for local government mergers and the creation of regional “Super-Councils.” This has already happened in Auckland.

In a Super-Council model, the port becomes just another piece of a giant investment portfolio. It’s easier for a centralized board of directors, miles away from the wharf, to justify a sale or a long-term lease. Once the port is tucked away in a regional holding company, the public loses its voice. We see it happening in the North and we see the pressure building in the South.

The underlying issue isn’t that our ports are publicly owned, it’s that they are fragmented. Because of the 1988 Port Companies Act, we have 13 international seaports operating as individual, competing profit centres. They spend billions on duplicating infrastructure (more cranes, deeper channels), to fight over the same containers.

This leads to a race to the bottom which only benefits international shipping companies. These companies play our ports off against each other, driving down fees while demanding we spend billions to accommodate their mega-ships.

The solution is not to sell the ports to the highest bidder. One solution is a National Ports Strategy based on a “hub and spoke” model.

2 to 4 deep-water “hub” ports would serve as primary international

gateways. Regional “spoke” ports would act as feeders via a revitalised rail system and New Zealand-crewed coastal shipping fleet.

By shifting freight off our congested, dangerous roads and onto sustainable rail and coastal vessels, we would reduce emissions, improve road safety, and create hundreds of well-paying transport jobs for New Zealanders.

Our Ports, Our Future

The push to privatise New Zealand’s ports is an attempt to strip-mine public wealth and hand monopoly control of our supply chains to offshore corporations.

Transport workers have paid the price in blood when management puts profits ahead of people. Our ports were built by generations of Kiwi workers. They belong to us.

It is time to end the destructive, free-market experiment on our waterfronts. We must reject privatisation in all its forms, whether it’s a long-term lease, a “strategic partnership,” or “restructuring.”

Our ports are our lifelines. Our lifelines are not for sale. 🇳🇿

1951: The Strike That Shook the Nation

How 151 Days on the Waterfront Redefined New Zealand's Industrial Landscape

In early 1951, New Zealand found itself gripped by the most extensive and politically explosive industrial confrontation in its history. For 151 dramatic days, the nation's wharves—lifelines of a small export dependent economy—fell silent as more than 22,000 workers were either locked out and walked off the job or refused to handle “scab” cargo. It was a bitter struggle of wills between waterside workers, employers, and the National Government under Prime Minister Sid Holland.

The Watersiders were considered a militant union and were at odds with the Federation of Labour. Many of their members were returned servicemen or had worked during the war, the issues that drove the union movement at the time were not all that different to the issues we see today such as health and safety, cost of living, cost of energy and heating and a decent pay for a day's work.

A Powder Keg Decades in the Making

Industrial unrest on the waterfront didn't begin in 1951—it had been smouldering for decades. Long working hours stretching up to **15 hours a day** during WWII, outdated loading methods, and the persistent refusal of employers to modernise the wharves had created deep resentment. After the war, shipowners expected watersiders to maintain exhausting hours even as inflation eroded real wages and the cost of living surged.

The union's push for a **guaranteed 40 hour week**, fair wages, and modernised conditions clashed with government efforts to preserve economic stability in the inflationary post war years. These tensions were heightened by Cold War anxieties, which cast militant unions—fairly or unfairly—as vehicles for communist influence.

Flashpoint: February 1951

The immediate trigger came when the Arbitration Court granted most workers a **15% wage rise**, but watersiders—whose pay was regulated separately—were offered only **9%** by shipping companies. In protest, they refused overtime work. Employers retaliated with a **lockout**, and the workers refused the imposed terms. The standoff spread quickly, drawing in miners, rail workers, seamen, freezing workers and others in a chain reaction of solidarity.

A Nation Divided

Public opinion split sharply. Supporters saw the watersiders as fighting for dignity and fairness; critics viewed them as holding the economy ransom. Rural communities, benefiting from booming wool prices, felt especially alienated—many believed the waterside workers were already well paid and out of touch with the struggles of farmers.

The dispute unfolded under intense political tension. Sid Holland's National Government took an uncompromising stance, asserting that industrial militancy threatened national stability. Emergency regulations limited press freedom, banned coverage of the union's viewpoint,

and empowered police to shut down perceived subversive activities.

Only six years after the allies defeated fascism in Europe the New Zealand government is passing draconian laws. Forbidding freedom of association for striking workers and forbidding the New Zealand people from aiding a striking worker. Even to the extent that striking workers children were segregated at lunch breaks so other children would not share their food.

This created an underground movement where illegal pamphlets were printed and distributed in secret. Farmers would donate beasts which were dealt with in backyard butcheries. The wives of the striking workers and locked out Watersiders made a network to care for the families that were suffering.

The citizens of New Zealand were however divided, some saw the savagery of the situation while many were unaware of the true plight of the workers as the news was heavily censored.

Violence was limited but tempers ran high: picket lines, confrontations with police, and deep suspicion coloured everyday life. Unionists and government supporters hurled ideological accusations—“Commies” versus “fascists”—reflecting global Cold War narratives playing out on local soil.

The Government Strikes Back

As weeks dragged into months, the government escalated its response. Emergency powers enabled censorship, strike breaking operations, and eventually the **deregistration of**



Locked out Picketing Wharfies in Wellington Face Off With Police

the **Waterside Workers' Union**—an extraordinary move that dissolved the organisation and seized its assets. In its place, 26 local unions were established under tight state oversight.

The government framed the conflict as a necessary stand against extremism and economic sabotage. But for workers and many in the wider labour movement, it represented a chilling example of state overreach and an attack on fundamental worker rights.

151 Days Later: A Changed New Zealand

By mid July, exhaustion and economic pressure took their toll. The industrial action effectively ended without the Watersiders achieving

their aims. Yet its impact rippled far beyond the wharves:

- **Unions were weakened** for a generation, as the state asserted unprecedented authority over labour relations.
- **The political landscape polarised**, solidifying divisions between conservative and labour movements.

Legacy of a National Showdown

75 years on, the 1951 Waterfront Dispute remains one of New Zealand's defining industrial battles. It is remembered not only for its scale, but for the questions it raised about fairness, democracy, and the limits of state power. It is a story of

a courageous stand by determined workers; it was an era of industrial extremism that shaped our industrial relations. Every contract from 1951 until 2018 contained compulsory overtime as a result until another National Government wrote that provision out of employment law.

What is clear is that the dispute reshaped New Zealand's labour landscape. It tested the bonds between government, workers, and the public—and left scars and lessons that continue to inform industrial relations today.

We will throughout this year bring you all aspects of the '51 Waterfront Dispute. 🌐



Labour MPs, Alongside Manager Martin McArthur (Pointing), and Hillside Leading Hand Michael Beaufort (Right)

Labour MPs Join Union and Community Leaders to Celebrate Wins at Hillside Workshops

Taieri MP Ingrid Leary hosted six Labour MPs recently to celebrate developments at Hillside Workshops—including the hard-won retention of an iconic

building used by workers and the RMTU over many decades—ironically known as “the Manager’s Building”.

The Labour MPs toured the redeveloped Hillside site to meet workers,

apprentices, and union delegates, and to hear directly about progress on the ground. The visit showcased the value of maintaining a skilled rail manufacturing base in Aotearoa, as well as the importance of heritage, ▶

identity, and pride within the sector and Dunedin's industrial workforce.

"Our rail workforce and the RMTU fought hard for Hillside, and they won," said local Labour MP Ingrid Leary. "The rebuild has safeguarded local jobs, created apprenticeship pathways, and restored capacity to build and maintain rolling stock right here in Dunedin. That's not just good for Otago — it's essential for a resilient national rail network with industrial capability the country can't afford to lose."

Labour invested directly in the rebuild of Hillside, securing the future of the workshops after years of neglect and uncertainty. Without that investment, the facility would likely have closed its doors, taking generations of engineering expertise, skilled jobs, apprenticeships, and much of New Zealand's domestic rail manufacturing capability with it.

The MPs also acknowledged the recent announcement—reported by the Otago Daily Times—that the historic Manager's Building will now be retained and restored. The Manager's Building is historically significant because it formed the administrative heart of the workshops—where workers collected their pay, signed on, and engaged with management—making it a living reminder of Dunedin's industrial and social heritage.

The decision followed sustained advocacy from heritage supporters, local leaders, and RMTU members who argued that the structure was both sound and significant.

"This was a genuine collective success," said Ingrid Leary. "Unions, community advocates, heritage groups and elected representatives made a clear, evidence-based case for keeping the Manager's Building, and we got the outcome Dunedin

deserved. It's a win for workers, for our industrial history, and for the city, and the people who built it."

RMTU Otago Branch representatives also highlighted the importance of protecting skilled trades and local manufacturing.

"Hillside shows what's possible when government, unions and industry pull in the same direction", said Ingrid Leary "It's how we sustain jobs, build capability, and keep our rail heritage alive while planning for the future. We're deeply grateful to the RMTU for their tireless advocacy and practical leadership. Their members never stopped believing Hillside had a future—and because of that persistence, Dunedin has one of New Zealand's great rail workshops back at the heart of its economy." 🌐

Election 2026: Why bother?

Well here we are with around 8 months to go until the next election. At this stage, it's looking like it will be a very tight race. In fact, the outcome of who gets handed the keys to power and control over us and our loved ones until 2029 could potentially come down to as little as 28,000 votes!

Whether you think recent changes to voting accessibility equate to voter suppression or not, the fact is that no one will be able to enrol to vote in Election 2026 after the 25th October this year

So why bother enrolling?

■ Enrolment in New Zealand is compulsory: If you're eligible to enrol to vote, and you live in New Zealand, then you are legally required to do so.

- Even if you don't think you are going to vote this year, you might change your mind. Something might really get your blood boiling closer to the time. Better to keep your options open?
- Given the expected very tight race this election, every single vote really will count!
- The power of our Union is the solidarity of our people:
- Would you be willing to set the goal of enrolling to vote by Oct 4th, to allow for any last-minute systems outages?
- Would you be willing to actively encourage your colleagues, friends and whanau to do the same? Maybe have a (calm and respectful) conversation about why enrolling and voting is important to you?

In the lead up to Election 2026 let's support each other to have a voice, to utilise and protect our democratic rights, and to be represented by people who actually give a sh** about us. It would be very helpful to have a Union friendly government too!

In the words of one of our great and successful political campaigners, Kate Sheppard:

"Do not think your single vote does not matter much. The rain that refreshes parched ground is made up of single drops." 🌐

■ The Election this year will be held on Saturday 7 November. You must be enrolled to vote before 25 October. Enrol or check your details online at www.vote.nz/enrol



Kiwrail Mana Wāhine celebrating Internatio
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International Womens' Day at Hillside in Dunedin
by the RMTU Otago Branch



RMTU President and CTU Vice President/Māori—Aubrey Wilkinson with the Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi team at Waitangi

Standing at Waitangi with Unions

What an amazing experience! I had the honour of attending this event as the Vice President Māori Council Of Trade Unions. The photo displays our team. We managed to secure a site at late notice as a base of operations for our CTU team to spread our messaging over the two days, Thursday and Friday—Waitangi Day. Our messaging;

“We are Union! We stand shoulder to shoulder with Māori! Let’s vote this Government out!”

Running our operation over the two days was bloody hard work, coupled with long hours of engagement. The people! Oh my god the people! Thousands of exuberant, proud,

excited, engaging individuals. Our team spent what seemed like endless hours of kōrero and whakarongo with so many whanau, individuals, and groups. I can state that 99.5% of people were excited with our 3 pou;

Unions hard! Solidarity with Māori! Vote to change this Government!

The atmosphere over the two days was electric with plenty of positive anticipation. It was clear that people came to Waitangi to experience and celebrate a significantly historic occasion of Aotearoa. The unity, appreciation, and respect that people held for each other was stunning to witness. Smiles everywhere you went.

Other CTU Affiliated Unions were present over the two days. PPTA, TEU, Pulp and Paper, NZ Nurses Organisation, NZEI Te Riu Roa, PSA, and DWU, as well as union members from across the country. A general discussion was had among those Unions that attended, to perhaps have a larger site for next year. This would provide the opportunity for all Affiliates to set up their individual Union stalls under the CTU banner. This would certainly drive home the message that we are a combined Union Movement supporting Māori for a fair and just Aotearoa. Unions do this for Workers, why not for everyone! Here’s to a better Aotearoa Whānau! 🌐

Indian Railway Union.

On Wednesday 11 February, I was fortunate enough to spend some time with the General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation, Shiva Mishra. This was a true eye-opener conversation.

During our discussion, Mr Mishra shared insights into the history and evolution of the Federation. Founded in 1924, the All India Railwaymen's Federation has played a crucial role in advocating for the rights of railway workers throughout India's independence movement and into the modern era. Its influence extends beyond wage negotiations, encompassing safety, working conditions, and broader social issues affecting its members and their families. The All India Railwaymen's Federation has over 1.4 million Union workers across the country, with over 5000 branches! It is interesting to hear that, even though New Zealand and India are worlds apart, we face very similar threats as Unions.

One of the issues we talked about is technology replacing people, and how we, as workers, can reduce the impact of automation on the railway. Mr Mishra agreed that we cannot stop technology and should embrace technology, but technology is here to serve people and not to replace workers. When I asked how they have slowed down automation, he said that because of the unemployment percentage, automation will only increase unemployment.

The last time the All Indian Railwaymen's Federation took industrial action was in 1974. I asked what the reasoning was for no industrial action in the last 50 years. Mr Mishra said that if railway workers in India were to take action, it would put a hold on the economy! This just shows the power of the Union is not

in its officials, it's in the influence it has on society and the strength of its members.

We also took a walk around Britomart, where we met some of our members working on the metro network. Mr Mishra was genuinely impressed by the cleanliness and excellent maintenance of our trains, commenting on how welcoming and comfortable the environment felt. This visit marked his first time in New Zealand, and he remarked that, although he has travelled to many countries around the world, New Zealand stands out for its stunning

natural beauty, cleanliness, and warm hospitality.

Reflecting on the future, Mr Mishra expressed optimism but also caution. He believes that the Federation's continued relevance will depend on its ability to adapt to technological and economic changes while preserving the core values of solidarity and mutual support. As I left the meeting, it was clear that the challenges faced by railway unions in both India and New Zealand are deeply connected, and that the spirit of international solidarity remains as important as ever. 🌐

Shirley Horne with Shiva Mishra from the Indian Railway Union





The People's Select Committee Reporting Back

A Flagrant and Significant Abuse of Power

For the first time in Aotearoa New Zealand's history, 10 former MPs from across the political spectrum (4 National, 4 Labour, 1 Green and 1 NZ First) were driven to establish their own Select Committee in response to a government that stripped pay equity overnight for working people in female dominated professions. The Committee set out to do what the government did not do, ensure that the people's voices be heard on the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2025

RMTU members were represented at the launch of this report by Administration and Finance Manager

Lara Topping. Here are her reflections on the event:

On Tuesday Feb 24th this year I was lucky enough to attend the launch of the People's Select Committee Report on Pay Equity. It felt like an historic moment, a moment where once again women (and their male allies) in New Zealand were coming together to stand up for not just working women's rights but also democracy in New Zealand.

I went along telling myself to be open-minded. I knew that the Select Committee was made up of former MPs from different political parties, and I prepared myself to hear that some of the steps the coalition

government took in making the decision to change the law were reasonable and necessary. I told myself to put my own preconceptions and strong emotions on the subject aside and give other voices a fair hearing.

Well, I needn't have worried! The report was overwhelmingly damning and just confirmed the absolute fury I and many others felt when the Act was rushed through last year.

Here are some of the Select Committee's findings that I think are important for RMTU members and their friends and families to know:

The committee received nearly 1400 submissions and held 30 hours of hearings with men and women, ▶

unions, employers, advocates and experts.

They concluded that the processes of planning for and enacting the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2025 were “a **flagrant and significant abuse of power**”

1 Ministers covered up their plans to change the Act while at the same time asking claimants to “participate actively” in the pay equity process- a clear breach of good faith negotiations. Even the Ministry for Women was left out of the loop!

2 The use of “urgency” was used not to avert a crisis, but to avoid public scrutiny. The only “urgent” time constraints were those that required decisions to be made in time for the law to pass before Budget 2025

3 Some Ministers mocked the process, punching down from their positions of power. “Did you hear about the social worker who got compared to the air traffic controller” is not an argument but a conversation ending punchline.

4 The Act conflicts with international Bills of Rights and other legal commitments. Major unions are challenging the Act in the High Court

5 One of the most damaging changes was the shift from arguability to merit. This means that whereas previously the process started with an agreement that there was grounds for further discussion, claimants now have to prove sex based discrimination and undervaluation before discussion can even begin. “A legal barricade, not about making the system better but making it unreachable”

6 75% of Rural Women NZ members said they are deeply concerned about the Act reforms. “It’s not a reset, it’s abandonment”. Pacific women and their families will bear the brunt of cancelled pay equity claims.

7 The government is the primary employer (or the funder) of the vast majority of workers whose claims were cancelled.

Therefore, when they suggest changes needed to be made for the benefit of “employers” they are effectively referring to themselves. Meanwhile, employers potentially affected by the changes to the Act were not asked by Business NZ or the Government for their views

8 The only evidence of attempts to “game” the previous pay equity system that the committee could see were in the behaviours of government agencies

9 In the document dump that the Committee received via the Official Information enquiries, no bureaucrat (apart from one) demonstrated they knew how the process worked and no Cabinet Minister ever asked for it to be explained. No Minister, or briefing bureaucrat, and no speaker in the parliamentary debate, demonstrated any knowledge of how key elements of the process like comparators and factor scoring actually work.

10 The Committee found that no budget savings were made in cutting pay equity—the funds were reallocated to other government expenditure and Coalition Government priorities. However, the Committee was unable to ascertain where exactly the

funding has been redistributed to. This lack of financial transparency is very concerning

11 There was no good peer reviewed research about the economic implications of pay equity available to assist the government with their decision, and nobody did an economic cost-benefit analysis.

The Committee found **no evidence** with the government’s suggestion that claims had previously been able to progress without strong evidence.

They found **no evidence** to support the demolition of the pay equity system.

They found **no evidence** that the changes to the pay equity system make it more workable and sustainable, instead “they appear to make the process more time consuming, expensive and administratively complex, possibly to the extent of unworkability”

They found that the previous system was “a world leading human rights vehicle with a robust pay equity assessment methodology, with incredible research integrity. Full of checks and balances, highly sophisticated, a rigorous and meticulous system that placed NZ as the world leader in this historic and ongoing exploitation of women workers.”

I left the event wondering: was this important government decision, directly affecting the lives and livelihoods of 180,000 NZ workers, a flagrant and significant abuse of power, sheer bloody-mindedness, willful ignorance, or just plain incompetence? I am thinking probably a bit of everything.

You can read the full report, including the Committee’s recommendations, here: <https://www.payequity.org.nz/report> 

Review Juggernaut 1 & 2 From the Spinoff

The Juggernaut's podcast offerings stand out as powerful, compelling, and deeply relevant exploring the history and circumstances surrounding the fourth Labour and National governments—crafted with journalistic rigor, cultural nuance, and utilising rare interviews from the National Library and contemporary accounts of a political story that needs to be heard to be believed.

We start with the end of the Muldoon era and as New Zealand transforms from the highly regulated “Think Big” era, to a time of wild free market reform dubbed Rogernomics, through to the Rainbow Warrior bombing, the end of the Post Office and the demise of NZ Rail. A tale of

intrigue, forbidden love and turmoil that would be a good story in any movie.

Once you have lived through the rise and fall of the fourth Labour Government, strap in for the equally tumultuous story of the fourth National Government with Juggernaut 2. Learn about the rise of Bolger, the infamous Employment Contracts Act. The betrayal and coup from Jenny Shipley and on to the mother of all budgets.

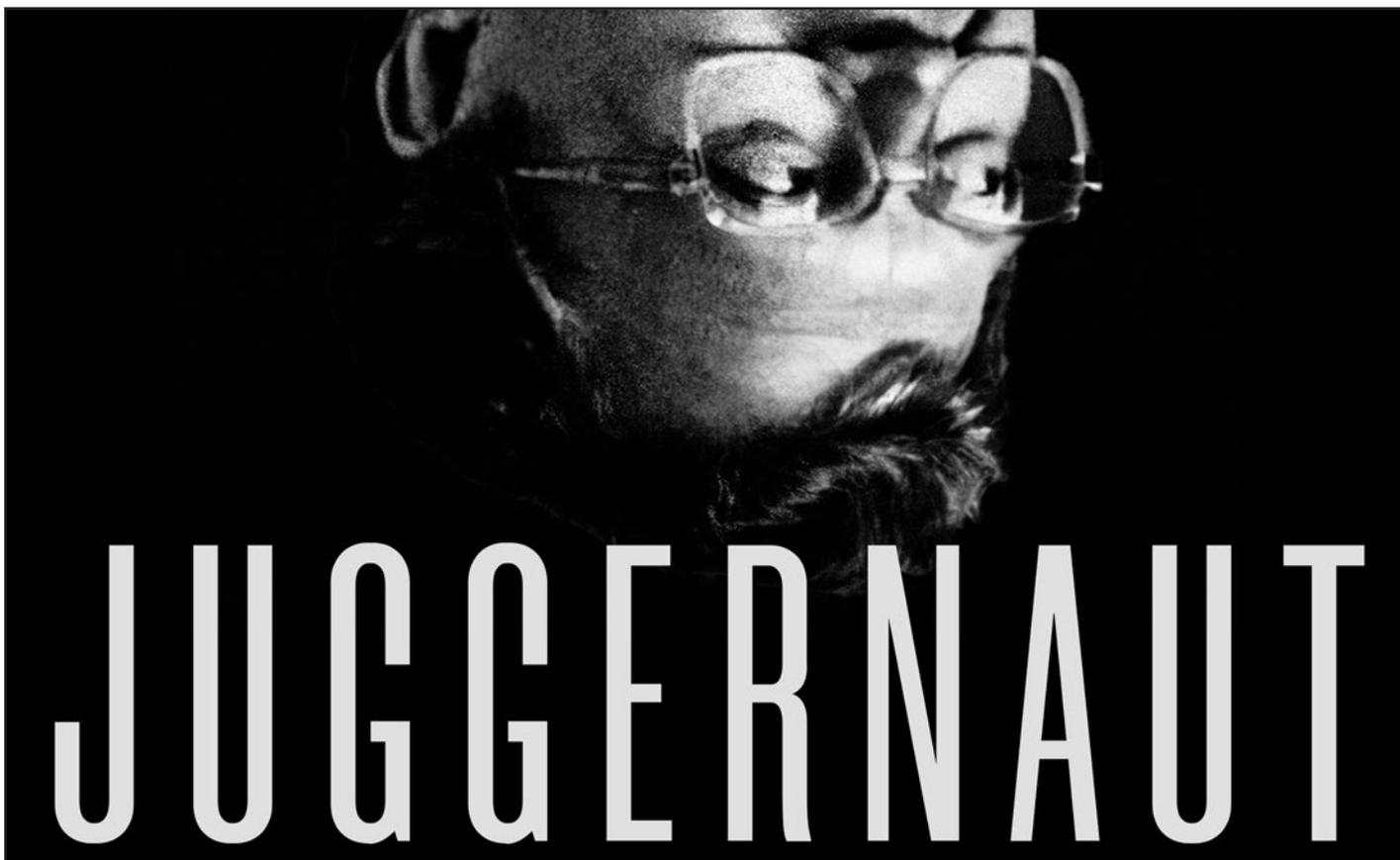
The tale of suffering that these two New Zealand governments' inflicted on the people of New Zealand and the clear path to where we are today.

Whether you're exploring the lasting influence of cultural icons, breaking down a social issue, or diving into lesser-known historical

events, both Juggernaut podcasts offer content that sparks reflection and conversation. They don't simply inform—they invite listeners to re-examine what they think they know.

Verdict: Essential Listening

Together, the two Juggernaut podcasts represent some of the best narrative audio journalism available today. They're bold, beautifully produced, and rooted in a mission that feels both urgent and inspiring. For anyone interested in storytelling that goes beyond surface-level narratives—especially within the rich complexity of New Zealand experiences—these podcasts are an absolute must-listen. Available from wherever you access your podcats. 🌐



Northland Branch

It is with sadness that I tell you that Richi Kingi passed away unexpectedly 23 of January, 2026. Richi was a Track Inspector for KiwiRail for 28 years.

Briar George has left for the Western Island, as has Matt Bennie. We wish them well.

We survived the summer rain with a couple of big downpours in Whangarei. The track has held up well apart from a new subsidence at 87 NAL Km peg with a 10km restriction on it. The coast was not so fortunate. Helena Bay took quite a hammering and the road from Helena Bay to Russel is still severely damaged.

KiwiRail has picked up some extra work from AFFCO in Moerewa. Empty

reefers come up from Southdown, and these are trucked to Moerewa. Trucks bring full reefers back to Whangarei that are then sent back down to Southdown.

The five-week Christmas shut-down in Auckland required us to road bridge from Whangarei to Southdown. We averaged 16 containers per day. This meant we had to run a yard shunt up to the Fonterra siding 5 days a week. This was successful.

The Marsden Point Spur Line, that will go 20 km from Oakleigh to Marsden Point, is still awaiting funding from the government to be able to start. Similarly, out at Marsden Point, North Port is waiting for government funding for wharf extensions and the dry dock facility. Ideally, the Spur

Line should start before the beginning of the coming winter as KiwiRail now owns all the land required to build the line and have completed the planning and engineering of the route. We are not holding our breath of course.

The track upgrade North of Kauri to Otiria has been put on hold. All the rails that were shipped to Whangarei for this upgrade are now being shipped out to other locations around NZ for work sites to use. The stockpile is dwindling and as of next month we start shifting the stockpile at the Kauri siding. There are still piles of sleepers along the route from Kauri to Otiria, these have not been repositioned. 🌐

Waikato Rail Branch

The Waikato branch is back in full swing for 2026.

Operations in Te Rapa are dealing with many absences due to illness and KiwiRail's noticeable heavy handed approach to disciplinaries have resulted in members losing their job. We want to see Just and Fair culture reviewed and reset, because KR is being harsh in all parts of the business when it comes to incidents. Whether it's new managers trying to make names for themselves, or older

ones taking new disciplinary directives from the top, it's the workers who do the core work of the railway who suffer the consequences.

It's no surprise the NZTA have told KiwiRail in their ordinary safety assessment that they put too much emphasis on blaming workers rather than assessing how procedures and systems contributed to incidents. More training is needed for managers on how to do thorough and fair investigations that get the whole

picture rather than just going straight to disciplinary.

Annual leave balances are also being scrutinized by with this heavy-handed approach. We say to KR keep your hands off our accruing leave and lieu days not older than one year. Network Services are being asked to take on consultation again for Sunday rosters another case of members being asked to give to the company miserable rosters that take consistent time away from families. 🌐

Taranaki

The past quarter has continued to present challenges for members at Port Taranaki as the port adjusts

to reduced activity levels across parts of the energy sector. Work has remained variable compared with previous years, and members

have had to navigate ongoing uncertainty around workloads and future opportunities. Despite this, members have continued to demonstrate

professionalism, adaptability, and strong commitment to keeping port operations running safely and efficiently.

A significant development during this period has been the Government's announcement naming Port Taranaki as the preferred location for a proposed liquefied natural gas (LNG) import facility. While the project is still subject to commercial arrangements and detailed planning, the announcement has

been received positively across the region as a potential pathway toward greater long-term stability for port workers and the wider community.

Members recognise that projects of this scale could provide important employment opportunities through both construction and ongoing operations. The branch's priority will be ensuring that any future work delivers secure, unionised employment, recognises local skills and experience, and maintains the high health

and safety standards expected on the waterfront.

Health and safety remains a daily focus, particularly as operational demands fluctuate. Members continue to play an active role in maintaining safe practices across all areas of the port.

The branch will continue to monitor developments closely and advocate for outcomes that support secure jobs and a sustainable future for Port Taranaki workers. 🌐



Napier Port Branch President Chris Vaughan (Left), with Branch Secretary Samm Fieldhouse (Right) farewell Warren Nicholas

Napier Port Branch

Kia Ora Comrades. Napier Branch has farewelled longstanding member and colleague Warren Nicholas as he heads into his well-earned (and eagerly anticipated!) retirement.

Warren has given nearly 26 years of service at the Port and has been an outspoken and committed Delegate for the Heavy Plant team since 2013. He has also been a strong voice for Health and Safety in his role as H&S Delegate, contributing to meaningful improvements and helping drive new safety initiatives across the site. Those are big boots to fill.

The membership extends our best wishes to Warren for a long and enjoyable retirement. Between family, fishing and travel, we're sure he'll have no shortage of things to keep him busy—Keep chasing that big one, Waz!

Transformation and Infrastructure

The Port continues to work through major infrastructure upgrades as part of its transformation programme.

Roadways are being widened to support changes to the horizontal transport model, and significant electrical infrastructure upgrades are underway to meet growing operational demands—including the expansion of charging capability for new equipment. There is also ongoing evaluation of future crane configuration options and associated wharf upgrades.

At 6 Wharf (Te Whiti), Shore Tension upgrades are being installed to address our unique swell conditions. Monitoring technology is also being introduced to help assess performance and inform future operational decisions.

Work has also been completed on New Zealand's first private commercial 5G network at a port, improving

reliability for automated systems and reducing dependence on external providers.

Preparing for Change

With substantial operational and technological changes underway, the Branch is focused on ensuring members are kept informed and properly represented as developments progress.

Change of this scale brings both challenges and opportunities. Our priority is to make sure that workers' voices are heard early, that consultation obligations are met, and that any impacts on members are managed fairly and transparently.

We are also continuing discussions around improving rostering certainty, particularly for currently non-rostered staff. Greater predictability and better work-life balance remain key priorities for the Branch.

As always, we encourage members to stay engaged, attend meetings, and speak with delegates if they have questions or concerns.

In solidarity, Napier Branch 

Hawkes Bay Rail

Greetings from Hawkes Bay. The RMTU delivered delegate training sessions in Palmerston North and Napier in December last year. It is encouraging to see increased engagement across the Branch, with more members undertaking training and strengthening local representation.

The Track and Structures teams were involved in the Wellington Block of Line over the Christmas period. Since returning from leave, the teams have been heavily engaged in local out-of-town works, including

culvert renewals, maintenance, and bridge-related projects.

Engineering has implemented a change in materials specification, replacing the traditional hardwood caps with steel caps. A project is currently underway south of Napier, with several additional installations planned in the future.

Napier Freight continues to operate at capacity with daily services. The 624 log train contract from Tangiwai has been confirmed through to the end of June 2026, providing ongoing stability for the operation.

Civil and resilience works are progressing at Awatoto, where Bridge 217 is being strengthened. This project involves the removal of four existing spans (two at 6 metres and two at 12 metres) and their replacement with a new 18-metre span at both the north and south ends of the river. With Contractors removing the existing concrete pier using an excavator and large breaker to prepare for the installation of the new 18-metre spans.

Speak up/Safety First. 



Celebrating Steve Brown's Half-Century in Rail

Palmerston North

Over the last 4 to 5 years the Palmerston North branch of the RMTU have been somewhat filtered, through the retirement of some experienced and strong minded RMTU members. We now have a changing of the guards so to speak,

with over 70% of our experienced rail members either resigned or retired. A new bunch of employees have started and have yet to get their teeth into the operational nuances of the rail industry. Here in Palmerston North we have a deep desire to continue to rebuild the strength of the

union movement, with a continued push for these new employees to become actively involved with the RMTU. With the current training and engagement, the new generation will be set to resume the reigns when the remaining few of the 70s and 80s era retire.

Alleged Manipulation of Mini Rosters:

Allegations have arisen that some Locomotive Engineer mini rosters have been deliberately manipulated to create continuous work patterns for staff. This practice, if true, may be intended to allow shift continuity but could breach rostering rules, fatigue management, and industrial agreements. We have engaged with emails and are awaiting responses.

Lighting Tower North end of the yard:

Yard employee's with the cooperation of the HSAT Team, and Servicing employees approached local Management with concerns that the lighting at the north end of the depot was weak and insufficient for safe operations. Once again, a strong involvement from the Union saw the replacement of 5 bright LED bulbs, with the tower to be completely replaced by 2027.

Terminal Locomotive Engineer (Depot Driver):

Back in 2007, the disestablishment of the Taumarunui Locomotive Depot took place. 4 Locomotive Crew lost their jobs and were made redundant. KiwiRail (formally New Zealand Rail back then), engaged with the RMTU and hammered out a deal that would see the establishment of 4 Terminal Locomotive engineers established in Palmerston North and 4 in Te Rapa. Their job was to oversee all trains running on the NIMT be at their destination without busting their crew hours. Over time this concept was slowly dwindled away, and talk of removing these Terminal Locomotive Engineers by Management became a real threat. At the end of 2025 and continuing through the beginning of 2026, RMTU delegate's both in Palmerston North and Te Rapa engaged with the company and fought for the retention of these employees. A new agreement is

currently being worked on to continue with the Terminal LE concept, and should be approved and signed before these notes go to press.

Locomotive Engineer Redundancies:

In November 2024, KiwiRail moved to impose redundancies at the Palmerston North depot, advising that 12 Locomotive Engineers were surplus to requirements. The irony was not lost on staff, given that in 2008 the company had directed Management to employ 10 percent above establishment, to which we had achieved. Despite this, we were able to complete the 12 redundancies through voluntary severance, ensuring that everyone who wished to remain with KiwiRail were able to do so.

Employee Incidents:

An ever-increasing number of rail incidents have occurred across the Lower North Island, and the investigations carried out by KiwiRail Management, in collaboration with HR, have been noticeably lacklustre. We sought assistance from RMTU Head Office to help address concerns about how Management is handling these investigations.

The findings produced by Management have been inconsistent with what actually took place, and the investigations have failed to focus on the real reasons these incidents occurred. There is a pattern of placing 100 percent of the blame on the employee, without considering or accepting any organisational responsibility.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and professionalism our people continue to show, even through challenging periods. Our employees are the backbone of this industry, and their commitment to safety, teamwork, and continuous improvement is something we deeply value. I wish each of you every

success as you continue to build your careers in the rail industry, and we at the RMTU look forward to supporting your growth and achievements along the way.

Positive Roster Ideas:

Work is progressing on the Palmerston North Locomotive Engineers roster review, with the RMTU actively engaged throughout the process. The project team is utilising the High Performance High Expectations (HPHE) framework to explore and test practical solutions aimed at achieving more consistent book-on times and improving rest and recovery opportunities for members.

These issues have been raised by members for a considerable period, and while the work remains in its early stages, the direction is constructive. The HPHE approach provides a structured environment for trialling options, gathering evidence, and ensuring that any proposed changes are grounded in operational reality and member wellbeing.

The involvement of Howard Phillips and Karen Fletcher brings significant experience and credibility to the process. Their participation ensures that member interests are strongly represented and that the work undertaken in Palmerston North meets the standards expected across the network.

Importantly, any successful outcomes from this project will be assessed for potential nationwide application, meaning the improvements developed locally may contribute to broader, system-wide gains for Locomotive Engineers.

The RMTU will continue to update members as the work progresses and will ensure that your voice remains central to the development of safer, fairer, and more sustainable rostering practices. 

Wellington Rail

Melling Station has officially been shifted about 500 metres south, moved in its entirety by truck. While an impressive logistical feat, it comes alongside reduced services, with trains currently only running as far as Western Hutt. Members have also seen the Te Ara Tupua Cycleway move closer to completion, bringing long anticipated improvements for active transport users.

On a positive note, there are no speed restrictions on the Johnsonville Line for the first time in a long while, a welcome improvement for both staff and passengers.

TDW Rail Operating Memorandum

The TDW On Board Rail Operating Memorandum (ROM) is now available for members to view. We strongly encourage everyone to read and

become familiar with it. The more we understand the expectations and processes, the better equipped we are to hold the company accountable when they fall short.

However, there has been no meaningful progress on the TDW roster rewrite. Transdev must move this forward - the ongoing delays are beyond reasonable and continue to cause unnecessary pressure on staff.

Surveillance and Member Treatment

We are also seeing a concerning trend: TDW has been needlessly persecuting members through increased surveillance, including random downloads that go beyond their own policies. This appears to be a reaction to a higher than desired incident rate, but it is being handled in a way that targets workers instead of addressing systemic issues. We will continue to challenge this behaviour.

Regional Developments and Weather Impacts

GWRC has announced fare increases to compensate for lower patronage—an approach that feels completely backwards and risks driving even more passengers away.

The network was also shut down by wild weather on Monday 16 February, a reminder of how vulnerable the system remains to extreme conditions.

Union Participation

Finally, a call to all KiwiRail members: please consider standing for union roles at the AGM in August. Strong representation leads to stronger outcomes for everyone. If you've been thinking about getting more involved, now is the time.

This is your union—your voice matters!

Hutt Branch

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026! We now have a new RMTU Branch committee with some delegates returning or changing roles and new people have come on board. We have started up our fortnightly raffles again this year and have had a great response to the first raffle, drawn on 23rd Feb.

We had 4 apprentices come out of their time at the end of last year so had a presentation and celebratory lunch with family members attending.

Looking ahead Plant 2 is picking up some Infrastructure vehicle work and Hutt Workshops will be busy with the new DL Reliability project. Teams

are currently looking at options to increase the flow of DL locomotives.

We are sending team members to other depots to help with their workloads with people going to Palmerston North Depot, Waltham Depot, Te Rapa Depot and Hillside Workshops.

2026 has also seen some team/staff movements onsite and a change in reporting lines for some. Staff seem to be settling well into their new locations and teams.

LCC meetings have been booked in with management for 2026 and our first LCC meeting was held 12th February.

The work on the Powerhouse is now completed, and the final

demolition of the remaining old structure is underway.

We have been having issues with security onsite. People are accessing the site in the early morning when the rear gate is unlocked or people coming through the front gate when it has been opened using a swipe card by an employee. They have been stealing scrap metal and copper wires. We have reported 2 vehicles to the Police with photos of the vehicle and licence plate numbers.

We continue to have our monthly smoker lunches onsite with the proceeds going to local charities. Last year we donated \$6000 to charity.

Wishing everyone great things for this new year. 🌍

Nelson

Kia ora, comrades, from the blazing, suspiciously cheerful sunshine of Nelson

Pull up a crate and steady yourself—because the wheel of industrial fortune is spinning again.

After a record-shattering 14 days locked in the fluorescent purgatory of last year's bargaining sessions—fuelled by lukewarm coffee, stubbornness, and pure union grit—you'd think the Nelson Executive might've been granted a quiet spell. A chance to lie down in a dark room and forget the phrase "operational requirements."

But no.

The great machine grinds on. The Port is having a stormer of a year—ships sliding in heavy with cargo, forklifts buzzing like caffeinated hornets, accountants smiling in ways that should concern us all. Prosperity! Momentum! Spreadsheets glowing in the night!

And yet... somewhere in the fog of "what was agreed," the definitions began to blur. Lines bent. Meanings shifted. Words that once stood tall and proud suddenly developed flexible spines. And so, like any good

frontier town dispute, we've had to bring in an outsider—a mediator—to stand in the middle of the street at high noon and remind everyone what was actually said.

Not ideal. But necessary.

Now, the new roster—ah yes, the roster. Our bold mechanical experiment in civilised work-life balance. It's up and running. It's breathing. It's mostly behaving. Members are seeing real improvements: clearer days off, better fatigue management, something resembling predictability in a world that usually laughs at the concept.

Of course, there have been "teething issues." A phrase that sounds harmless until you realise the teeth belong to management. A bit of kick-back here and there. Some resistance to the radical notion that well-rested workers might actually be a good idea.

Still—the foundations are solid. The bones are good. You can feel it.

Idle time remains the lurking beast in the background. Stevedoring work has morphed into a shape-shifting creature—one minute predictable, the next minute performing circus tricks. In response, your Executive

has worked bloody hard—and I mean deep-in-the-trenches, sleeves-rolled, muttering-into-the-wind hard—on a fatigue management working document that is about to be signed off.

A document forged not in comfort, but in necessity.

And just in time.

Because fruit season is coming.

When fruit season hits Port Nelson, the place transforms. It's organised chaos. Steel, salt air, diesel fumes, and urgency. The pace lifts. The stakes rise. The margins tighten. It's beautiful in a slightly unhinged way.

And this year, we'll face it with clearer rules around fatigue and workload—not just for productivity, but for safety and sanity.

So yes, comrades—bargaining looms again on the horizon like a familiar storm cloud. But we've been in the weather before. We know how to pack the right gear.

The Port may be booming. The definitions may blur. The managers may grumble.

But the Nelson Executive stands steady—slightly sleep-deprived, mildly caffeinated, and fully committed.

Strap in. And stay hydrated. 🌐

Canterbury

The Canterbury rail branch has had some memorable landmarks with two of its members.

With Andy Chivers reaching 50 years' service in rail.

And Mark O'Connor reaching 40 years' service.

Both men bring a wealth of rail experience. Having worked in passenger group, then team leader at operation, before switching to

networks to be an OSM, Andy is experienced. The way he has at putting people at ease makes his years' of experience apparent to all who meet him.

Mark—on the other hand—has mainly work in networks; doing first a signals maintainer, then doing his electrical apprenticeship, being a qualified signals technician, and then upper South Island electrician. Both guys carry that air of men who know

rail inside and out, warts and all. That needs to be passed on to the youth who are coming through needing to gain that knowledge.

The thing that will start to be noticeable is that these length of service will start to decline now, and what will be apparent, is that rail has not recruited enough people through the late 90s and early 2000s.

There is a gap in service, which also will eventually be noticeable, as

a lack of depth in that knowledge which comes through years of experience within rail.

KiwiRail has recruited well in recent times until the latest down

turn. And now we are in survival mode. Again.

KiwiRail need to retain its depth in rail knowledge and signals, but seem incapable of knowing what to do next.

This all comes from having a lack of funding future. Welcome to rail under a National government.

So let's vote them out.

West Coast

Greetings from the West Coast where the beer is cold and the days are warm! This last Christmas/New Years period most coal loading was closed meaning a good break for many of our operations members. There was of course plenty of other work going with infrastructure toiling away and a few dedicated trains like the TranzAlpine and the Hoki shunt. The TranzAlpine has bounced back this summer with this world class trip bringing in large numbers similar to pre Covid times which has been great to see.

The signalling project has been forging ahead which will eventually give Train Control the ability to control train movements remotely on the Midland Line, currently all signals are controlled by track occupancy and hand points operated by the Loco crews. It appears this may happen mid-year with most of the ground works completed. While it will be good to have automated points, the lack of intermediate signals in the

Block Section is concerning to some, as now with intermediate signals you can follow trains and have assurance the section is clear.

In the Buller long time shunter Sid Neighbours has retired instantly, leaving the coal load out stretched, with cover often coming from the Reefton Kid—Stacky. He is also in his volunteer work years and a wise move would be to find someone in the Town Of Light for him to teach the ways of Mai Mai and Reefton as these coal sites show no signs of slowing down.

The Otira situation has calmed down a bit of late with robust discussions about how the tunnel operations should be carried out. In what can only be described as a full circle move KiwiRail would like it operated the way it was previously, without dedicated crews and without Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA).

To date we have had many meetings, a risk assessment and tunnel trial, and seem no closer to an

outcome. The big player in this long drawn out saga could well be the DM fleet which will take some time to roll out. In the meantime, it's the status quo—with everyone using CABA as required—just as it was implemented by the company.

On the political scene, the big news is the redeployment of West Coast—Tasman MP Damian O'Connor down to Dunedin leaving a vacant spot for Labour to fill, and sitting National MP Maureen Pugh resigning. It has been many, many moons since a Labour candidate selection has taken place and this will be watched closely. By the time this goes to print we will know who is going to be standing for the electorate and caution the incumbents that we wish to continue our work in the mineral and dairy products sector which have shown enormous growth in recent years for the West Coast overall, not only rail.

Stay safe out there. 🌐

Otago Rail

Kia Ora from Ōtepoti Dunedin! We are more than half way through our high season, TGE (Team Global Express) are chocker blocked with domestic freight. Dunedin Railways

has been super busy with the cruise ships still arriving. Our members are all busy making the wheels turn if you will. The weather has been keeping our Networks and Track Gangs busy with lots of rain and flooding

in places. It's been a crazy summer for sure.

The branch had good numbers at its last branch meeting which was held in the canteen at Hillside Workshops. We will continue to have



Coal train 846 at Stillwater

meetings there, as it is a great space with ample amount of parking. The branch is always looking to refresh and rejuvenate the officials of the Otago Rail Branch. Getting young motivated people active in this space is key to keeping the movement going. Our Chairman Dave Kearns attends a lot of the Unions

Otago meetings which is excellent. Working with other unions in the community is so important to keeping the union movement strong and alive, and extremely important for our members, as we gain knowledge, experience and support from other unions at rallies and protests. Some of the unions also do delegate

training or have workshops available to attend. This is a great place to meet other unionists and become more active in the union movement.

As the RMTU Logo says, "WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER!"

Stay safe out there whanau
I Kotahitanga
In Unity 



WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY 28 APRIL
Mourn for the dead, fight for the living.

SOME HAZARDS ARE INVISIBLE



This year's theme for workers memorial day events are about the hazards we can't see. Hazards like respirable silica dust, fume, noise, chemical and biological hazards as well as fatigue, stress and burnout. These invisible hazards cause significant harm. Look out for the posters and then look again because the message is almost invisible, like the hazards.