

THE ACTIVIST



Published regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online)

March 2026

Message from the Gen Sec

Autumn is certainly upon us. With adverse weather, travel by road is more hazardous so let's take care out there.

Our first "The Transport Worker" magazine is with our designer, this issue covers a wide range of topics, thanks to all the branches that provided Branch Notes.

Workers Memorial Day is April 28th, can all the Branches and regional CTU Committees let us know if you are holding an event?

We are working on a WMD poster with our theme this year is to focus on the hidden hazards in the workplace, like asbestos, fumes, respirable silica etc. While these hidden hazards may not be as identifiable as say, working from heights, these hidden hazards can be as deadly.

Initial discussions with the Maritime Union NZ on a potential amalgamation are being held March 12th in Wellington - watch this space.

Stay safe!

Todd Valster



Big step back for workers' health and safety

The Government has proposed changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act and is calling for submissions on the changes. The H&S Amendment Bill threatens a two-tier system where employers with less than 20 people will have less obligations to manage risk than employers with more than 20 workers.

Critics argue the Bill encourages small employers to abdicate responsibility for addressing Important risks such as violence and aggression in retail, back injuries, some occupational diseases and work-related mental harm caused by bullying behaviour. Small and medium-sized businesses are already less safe than larger organisations. The reality is most workplace injuries aren't fatal or severe – yet they make up around 75% of ACC work injury costs. The RMTU will be submitting against the changes.



Workers Memorial Day 28 April 2026

28 April is International Workers Memorial Day. On Workers' Memorial Day, we "remember the dead and fight for the living".

The theme for this year is protecting workers health from invisible hazards such as respirable dust, fume, chemicals and psychosocial risks such as stress, bullying and fatigue. Union branches will be holding workers' memorial day events around the motu.



Calling all H&S Reps! Safeguard State of the Nation survey

Safeguard magazine is running its annual State



of the Nation survey and invites you to take part! The idea is to take the pulse of how we are doing in health & safety as a nation.

The results will appear in the March/April edition of the magazine and will enable any year-on-year trends to be detected. The survey is anonymous and all but one of the questions are multi-choice, so it takes only a minute or two.

The survey is designed to be taken by Health & safety reps or H&S practitioners. If you tick one of these boxes then please do the survey [here](#). The survey closes on **13 March**.



Remutaka Tunnel dust update

RMTU members at Hyundai Rotem and Transdev are becoming increasingly frustrated with the ongoing dust issue which requires servicing staff to carry out intensive additional cleaning of the Wairarapa passenger train carriages following last January's rerailing work. They are asking the question "How long is this going to be a problem?"

The deep cleaning of the carriages was recommended by Occupational Hygienists following the discovery of respirable dust onboard the trains including respirable crystalline silica. The dust comes from the crushed ballast and is thought to be a hangover of the rerailing work done in the tunnel early last year. In December last year, onboard air monitoring found the risk of exposure to respirable silica (for onboard staff) is a "high risk". The risk is lower for LE's due to the sealed cabs. They recommended increased intensity of cleaning to manage the dust. They also suggested the ballast be sealed with a sealing agent and have a periodic wash of the tunnel. Last year KiwiRail washed down the walls of the 8.8 km tunnel to capture the dust, however the dust onboard remains persistent. The Union asked the Rail Chief Medical Officer to review the results. He wrote to the union saying "On the basis of the recent testing, (his) opinion is that the chances of staff suffering from significant long-term health issues from these potential exposures is not at all high." The Union has asked Dr Ryder Lewis for a meeting to clarify. In the interim he said that respiratory PPE should be recommended and discussed with onboard staff.

Government must reverse disastrous pay equity changes

NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi Secretary Melissa

Ansell-Bridges is calling on political parties to adopt the recommendations

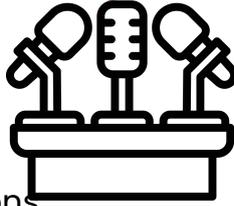
of the People's Select Committee and ensure that women are valued and paid what their worth. *"The release of this unprecedented report is a historic day in the decades-long fight of women to be paid what their worth,"* said Ansell-Bridges.

"Never before has a group of former MPs felt compelled to come together and establish a select committee and do the job that current MPs have refused to do. "This report is clear – the Government's changes to the Equal Pay Act must be repealed and the cancelled claims should be reinstated without a requirement to restart a pay equity process.

"The Government's disgraceful gutting of pay equity is a huge setback but this report gives me hope that we will soon get back on track and continue reversing historical undervaluation of women's work."

"The CTU is calling on political parties to make the recommendations of this report bottom lines heading into the general election. Women are demanding cast-iron commitments.

"For too long women been disrespect, undervalued and underpaid – we are no longer going to put up with it," said Ansell-Bridges.



Dark day for working New Zealanders as the Employment Relations Amendment Bill passes

The Employment Relations Amendment Bill has passed into law. NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi President Sandra Grey, described it as "a dark day for workers in NZ." She said "This law strips working Kiwis of long-held and fundamental rights she said. Employers will now be empowered to misclassify employees as contractors, stripping from them key entitlements including the minimum wage, sick pay, and Kiwisaver. This threatens entire workforces, particularly in industries where work is already low-paid and precarious."

"With this change, National, ACT, and New Zealand First are once again prioritising profit over people. The National-led Government is shamelessly giving in to Uber and other multinational companies whose business models rely on insecure work. "The legislation also makes a mockery of the personal grievance system. Workers now face the absurd situation where they could prove in court they were unjustifiably dismissed but not be eligible for remedies for this injustice.

"This Bill was strongly opposed during the select committee process. The Government was warned by employment experts and working Kiwis that it will dramatically undermine job security. It has refused to listen.

"National have let Uber and the ACT Party set the agenda for employment law in this country. They need to grow a backbone and stand up for the interests of New Zealand workers," said Grey.

SOUTH ISLAND UPDATE Jan/Feb 2026

Happy New Year everyone, back to work after the break and straight into it. Collective Agreement (CA) Bargaining update:

Port Otago has hit an impasse and we are heading to mediation, the Company's offer to settle was voted down by the joint Unions members and a counter-offer was presented.

C3 Dunedin Bargaining has initiated bargaining and is working on the Bargaining Process Agreement (BPA). Two meetings were held with members to discuss the bargaining and claims. Bargaining dates set for 11 and 12 March.

LPC Logistics Officers, first day of bargaining exchanged claims and details given by both parties in support of claims, By day 3 of bargaining some progress has been made however we are still some way apart. LPC's main Collective Agreement has been initiated, the bargaining BPA to be agreed and claims meetings held.

LPC variation sought to adjust foreman start finish times to better suit workload.

Kiwirail

There have been 4 medical retirements at Kiwirail with one potential legal challenge being assessed.

Check out the RMTU Transport Worker Magazine.

**Otira**

Ongoing evaluation of Otira operations are underway, Tunnel based, testing of locos, breathing apparatus and egress to be carried out, O2 levels to be monitored during Train ops through the tunnel.

Otira/Greymouth Signals restructure, feedback given and awaiting response from KR management.

Midas Place toilet block very slow progress, still closed, a timeline has been requested for this project to be completed, members are getting more frustrated about the portaloos situation and lack of progress.

Dunedin LETL's feedback received on dissatisfaction with constant changes requested by management to rosters and duties and seeming lack of interest in feedback given by management to members concerns.

Christchurch Lime Scooter verses Train incident, fatality occurred, investigation underway, LE and RCO are holding up well post incident, Kia Kaha guys.

Ongoing campaign with Christchurch City Council to hold LPC to account over Letter of expectation regarding Unions/Company collaboration and ongoing concerns over potential outsourcing of work.

You can change it

Job security is a major concern for young people entering the workforce, especially in a fast-changing city like Auckland. Stable, reliable employment feels harder to find, and uncertainty is now part of most young workers' lives. For young workers, job security means stability, a regular income, and the hope of career growth—not just having a job today, but the chance to build a future. With more casual jobs and short-term contracts, many young people see work as a way to pay the bills—not as a long-term career. Few expect to stay in one job for life, and most don't have a clear vision for the next decade. This shift makes it harder to plan for the future. Long service is now rare—staying even five years in one job is unusual for young workers. While some industries, like rail, still have long-serving staff, this is becoming less common everywhere. To bring back a sense of career and stability, young workers need to understand the importance of unions—especially those truly run by and for workers. Unions exist because workers stood together and fought for better pay and conditions—not because employers offered them freely. Maintaining what we have requires the same unity and collective action today. Don't just blame circumstances—stand up, speak out, and demand better. Real change happens when people unite and take action together.

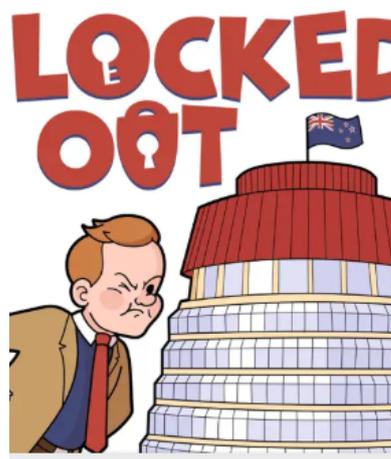
Be ready to vote on 7 November—Election day

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.

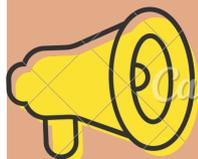


To be eligible to vote you need to be registered on the electoral roll with the correct address by **25 October** before the advance voting starts.

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



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



TIME!
TO UPDATE

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.](#)

KIC Updates

Another busy start to the year for the KIC council at KiwiRail. Already there has been meetings for the Locomotive Engineer School Reform, that is progressing but still plenty of work to be completed before the implementation for the August school. work to do includes the minders and their role, the digital OJT logbook, yes finally there is serious implementation of a digital OJT logbook, this will be a major upgrade from the manual processes currently in place. The data that will be able to be collected about the LE trainee journey and experience will prove to be helpful in ensuring they get enough exposure to all things and not just the simple 1040 hours. The first school will be a trial phase, and there will be improvements made in the review. The course content and facilitator guides are in the works, and we now have the non-technical skills that was an issue in the Auckland SPADs being addressed as those will be woven throughout the course. Also, in LE land the recognition of prior learning test pilot is underway, the people involved have done the initial required assessments and documents needed. So now it is a wait for Competenz to come back and find out if there are any further needs or if that is good to go, big thanks to Matthew Schofield who was been a strong champion and putting in the effort on this one.

Review of Metro Rail operating model underway

The Ministry of Transport has begun a review of the Metro Rail Operating model .

Following the disruption caused by advanced rolling contact fatigue (2019–2020) and the failure to schedule Wellington's EM80 track evaluation car led to independent reviews. Both the Deloitte report and the 2023 Rapid Review found that these incidents reflected wider system-level issues, including weaknesses in governance, unclear system objectives, funding pressures, and the need for a stronger role for NZTA. Both reviews recommended a review of the Metro Rail operating Model. The RMTU has asked the Ministry of Transport for a briefing on the review's progress.

KIC Update cont.

In Yard land we have the rollout of the Wabtec RCL pack starting to come together there are now both a DSG and a DSJ fitted with this equipment the DSJ needs more testing before being put out, but the RCL training will start to come out sometime soon. The DSH locos are being built and are still currently on schedule too, these will be a massive upgrade and will definitely be a key piece of kit for our terminals.

Stay safe out there. 