

# THE ACTIVIST



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

April 2026

## Message from the Gen Sec

Autumn is certainly bringing unpredictable weather going from summer temperatures in the south and record rain up north!

March was a busy month. RMTU representatives and MUNZ representatives met to start initial discussions on a potential amalgamation of our two unions. This meeting was held on March 15<sup>th</sup> in Wellington. These discussions are facilitated by Hazel Armstrong from Armstrong Thompson (Law). We had the opportunity to better understand each others union. The next meeting in April 22<sup>nd</sup>. It is far to say discussions at the initial meeting were respectful, straight up and constructive.

KiwiRail has put out a directive to reduce travel by 80% in May and June due to the current fuel crisis. They are proposing that the Industrial Council meetings in those months are online to reduce air travel.

After extensive research we have selected Swiftfox to replace the current RMTU membership database. This is a big move which will enable better communication between members and the RMTU Office and vice versa.

We have been invited to the MUNZ 75<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the 1951 lookout in Lyttelton on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

To commemorate this defining struggle, and to celebrate May Day, MUNZ are hosting the official release party for a specially commissioned music album by Adam McGrath and The Eastern. After a long journey to resolve the annual leave deductions with KiwiRail we are near the point where we can report back on what is being proposed once it has been agreed to by the KR Executive.

Workers Memorial Day is April 28<sup>th</sup>. All Branches that are organising events need to let the National Office and local Organiser know the time and place.

Stay safe out there.  
Todd Valster



## Union Representation



**Reminder**, if are required to attend a meeting with your employer, BRING a union support person!

**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 about protecting workers' health from invisible hazards such as silica dust, fumes and chemicals. Scan the QR code on the poster or [click here](#) for information. Please let the RMTU National office know if your branch is holding a WMD event.



**Remutaka Tunnel dust update**

Excess ballast is being removed from the Remutaka tunnel over the Easter block of line. The work has the potential to stir up respirable crystalline silica dust from the ballast. The RMTU is encouraging onboard staff, LE's and servicing/maintenance staff to take a precautionary approach and wear appropriate respiratory protection to minimise the risk of dust exposure. The RMTU has asked KiwiRail to seal the ballast to address the dust at the source. The next round of exposure monitoring for staff is at the end of April.



**Select committee hears RMTU**

**submission on Health and Safety Amendment Bill**

Last week, our Union took a clear message to the Education and Workforce select committee, "the Government's proposed changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act will put workers at risk!" We warned that making our health and safety laws subordinate to other legislation—such as the Railways Act—is a dangerous step backwards. We reminded the committee of rail's tragic past. Between 1995 and 2001, **11 railway workers lost their lives**. During this time, from 1991 to 2002, rail was carved-out (excluded from) the general health and safety law and left to be governed by industry-specific railways legislation. The result was deadly. At that time, the rail fatality rate was eight times the national average. We made it clear: weakening health and safety protections risks repeating that history. The same dangers exist in the maritime sector. The proposed changes could allow the Maritime Transport Act to override the Health and safety legislation. Our message was simple: health and safety legislation provides more protection to workers than the Railways Act or maritime Transport Act. We urged the select committee to **reject** the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill in full. To read the RMTU's submission [click here](#).

## One of the worst Workplace Ministers in history- Brook van Veldon, finally resigns

There were cheers from workplaces around the motu last week when Act Party Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety- Brook van Veldon announced she wouldn't be standing again for election. On hearing the good news The NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi President Sandra Grey called on the Government to pause harmful employment legislation changes made on Van Veldon's watch such as "Stealing pay equity overnight from more than 300,000 workers in low-paid, female-dominated sectors. Delivering real-term pay cuts for workers on the minimum wage for three years running. Letting multinational corporate lobbyists dictate our contractor law. These decisions demonstrate van Velden's priorities as Minister, said Sandra Grey. "Minister Brook van Veldon has two bills before the House that continue her track record of trampling on workers' rights, the Employment Leave Act and the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill. The CTU requests the Government to work with unions on real, long-term solutions to the issues these Bills raise. "The Government now has an opportunity to do right by working people. The next Minister for Workplace Relations should be one who truly understands the struggle of workers in a cost-of-living crisis, and who listens to working people and their unions," said Grey.

## Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC)

We have excellent contact with TAIC, they give us a heads up when reports are being released and send through embargoed copies of reports to prepare for any potential media interest. There are three reports being released in the next few weeks. The Kereone SPAD report will be released Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> April at 0500hrs. Followed by a Westfield SPAD report and then the Kaitaki incident that occurred in January 2023. The reports are factual, they do not name any individual involved and TAIC provide recommendations for safety improvements. TAIC is unlike the regulators – NZTA, Maritime NZ, Police and Worksafe. Unlike the regulators, TAIC cannot prosecute. While individuals are able to exercise their right to remain silent if being questioned, under caution, with the regulators, with TAIC individuals involved must participate in TAIC interviews. It is advisable to contact the RMTU if either the regulators or TAIC seek to interview you after an incident. To subscribe to the TAIC newsletter click [here](#)



**Bay of Plenty members members back 'Protect' insurance benefit.**

On Wednesday, 25 March, the RMTU Bay of Plenty Port Branch and MUNZ members held a joint Section 26 Union Meeting to discuss 'Protect', a global income protection insurance initiative. We were fortunate to host Abigail Hill and Christy Cain, who flew across the ditch to spend time with our members. Their presentation sparked an informative and engaging discussion, with many questions raised around ACC, the percentage of claims covered, situations where claims may not be eligible, and how income protection interacts with existing entitlements such as Southern Cross. At the end of the session, we held a vote to gain a clear mandate from our RMTU membership on whether to begin bargaining to include 'Protect' in our Collective Agreements. The decision was unanimous – members agreed that this would be an excellent benefit for both current and future members. Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to a productive and positive meeting.



RMTU, MUNZ , Port of Tauranga, C3, ISL, Qube members meet to hear about 'Protect'.

**Delegates talk health and safety**

On 24 March 2026, nearly 20 delegates from Auckland One Rail and KiwiRail came together for an engaging and thought-provoking Health and Safety session led by the knowledgeable Karen Fletcher. The energy in the room was a powerful reminder of just how deeply our delegates care about the wellbeing of their fellow workers and the safety of every workplace they step into. The session shone a spotlight on the Red Card – a vital tool that empowers workers to take a stand when safety is compromised – as well as the Union’s broader philosophy and approach to Health and Safety. These are not just policies on paper; they are the principles that protect lives and uphold the dignity of every worker on the job. It was truly inspiring to witness such passion, curiosity, and commitment from those in attendance. Events like these strengthen our collective resolve and remind us that a safe workplace is not a privilege – it is a right. A heartfelt thank you to Karen for generously sharing her expertise and for equipping our delegates with the knowledge and confidence to champion Health and Safety in their workplaces every single day.



Auckland Delegates from AOR and Kiwirail at RMTU H&S training

### Retirement planning

On 31 March 2026, the AOR team convened with company leadership for a meaningful conversation – one centred on a topic that touches every working life: preparing for retirement. Retirement planning is not a distant concern reserved for the few – it is a journey that begins today, regardless of where you are in your career. Whether you’re just starting out or approaching your final years in the workforce, the time to act is now. For personalised guidance and support, we encourage you to explore trusted resources such as [Sorted.co.nz](https://www.sorted.co.nz) or reach out to EAP.

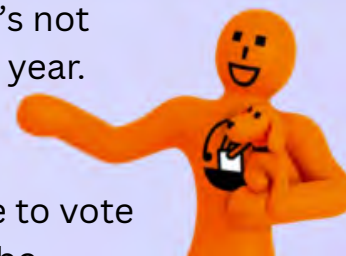


**[Check out the RMTU Transport Worker Magazine.](#)**



### 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](https://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.](#)

**KiwiRail Safety Foundations  
Conversation - Coming to your rail  
yard soon.**

At the end of March, we started in the South Island presenting the Safety Foundations presentation. This is a discussion and presentation on 6 key rules that the KiwiRail Industrial Council - Safer Shunting Subgroup believe, if followed, will keep you safe at work.

This is being rolled out nationwide to all the terminals and yard staff. It is a great discussion about the rules, and why we believe they will keep you safe, but also at the same time a good chance to discuss those rules, and any others that may need updating or adjusting to fit within the new way that people work in the yards. I would like to thank those in the South Island, Invercargill, Christchurch and Dunedin for your hospitality and the great way you engaged positively with the discussion, it is critical for us to understand if there are any local issues or nuances that we can look into. Already there are some early themes coming out of this, and some work for the Safer Shunting group to do. Look out for the posters for your local dates, currently Lower North Island is 21st - 23rd April, Bay of Plenty region will be week of 27th April, and Upper North Island 4th - 6th May. Other areas TBC. This discussion is led by your Safer Shunting Reps, and KiwiRail managers have kindly agreed to not be involved so we can have an open discussion. So, a shout out to the Safer Shunting team for their work coming up with this and presenting it. James Down, Josh Goodwin and Matto Croton

Regards, Sean Robertson-RMTU Organiser-Northern Region



Members of the Safer Shunting Working Group Safer shunting working group

**KiwiRail / RMTU Multi  
Employer Collective  
Agreement (MECA)  
2025 - 2027**



The MECA 2025-27 has been printed in hardcopy and are available at the depots and terminals. The MECA can also be found on the RMTU website . Click [here](#) to download the MECA.

**Happy  
Easter  
and Stay  
Safe out  
there.**

