

THE ACTIVIST



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Message from the Gen Sec

It has been a great time to be union in the last few weeks.

I attended the KiwiRail Anzac Day service on Friday 24th April. At this service there was the opportunity to speak and KiwiRail, RMTU and TransDev Wellington laid wreathes.

I also attended the Petone Anzac service on the day. The Petone service continues to grow, it is encouraging to see so many young people attending.

The International Workers Memorial Day, April 28th, was observed in many locations. I was fortunate to be invited to the service at the Hutt Workshops.

A real highlight for me was participating in the May Day events at Addington Racecourse and the Bridge of Remembrance in Christchurch. These "Fight Back Together, Maranga Ake" events occurred around the nation and were well attended - workers have had enough of the attacks on working conditions including the employment legislation, Holidays Act and the Health & Safety at Work Act. Hopefully some of the coalition Government listens to the workers strong protests and opposition from employers.

A special event, organised by MUNZ, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Waterfront lockout was held on May Day as well. Aubrey Wilkinson, Karen Fletcher and I attended this event in Lyttelton. At this event, a specially commissioned "Workers" album was launched by Adam McGrath and the Eastern Band.

Stay safe out there.

Todd Valster



KiwiRail prosecuted for Aratere grounding



KiwiRail has been ordered to pay a \$375,000 fine after the Aratere ferry ran aground with 47 people aboard in 2024. Maritime NZ- who took the prosecution said

"Steering systems are safety-critical. The crew must have a clear understanding of how the systems work and how to override any automatic commands," Maritime NZ director Kirstie Hewlett said. "In this case, there was a clear knowledge gap about how the newly installed steering console worked, including in an emergency.



Don McGlashen, SJD and the Etu orchestra perform to a packed union audience on 3 May in Wellington at Meow Nui.

Union Aid’s Solidarity Concert a blast

Wellington’s Union Aid supporters were treated to a night of entertainment by some of NZ greatest musicians. The concert, a Union Aid Fundraising event and tribute to Union titans Helen Kelly and Peter Conway, was headlined by music legend Don McGlashen along with musicians- Luke Buda from the Phoenix Foundation, Holly Fullbrook from Tiny Ruins, SJD, Sophia Machray and the Etu orchestra. All proceeds from the concert went to Union AID’s development projects in the SE Asia-Pacific region (www.unionaid.org.nz) To find out more go to unionaid.co.nz and show your support by becoming a solidarity member. [Here is the link](#)



Tauranga turns out for May day



Celebrating May Day at Christchurch’s Bridge of remembrance



Union members pack out Addington for May day

Show your solidarity with the NZ Professional Firefighters’ (NZPFU) by signing their petition below



PETITION FOR A PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO FIRE AND EMERGENCY NEW ZEALAND

The NZPFU is calling for an independent inquiry into FENZ to examine why FENZ has failed to manage funding to ensure that it has the capacity and capability for reliable emergency response to the New Zealand public.

Please sign this petition [HERE](#) to support the call for a public inquiry into whether FENZ has been properly using its funding to ensure that it has the staffing and resources necessary to keep the New Zealand public safe.

Moves to improve Port security due to drugs and weapons smuggling

An increase in organised trans-national crime targeting NZ Ports has prompted proposed changes to the Maritime Security legislation. The changes proposed by the Ministry of Transport include background checking of port employed workers and enhanced search and seizure powers for port security to look for drugs and weapons. The Ministry asked the union to give feedback on the proposed changes. The RMTU (with the input of Port Delegates) wrote a joint submission with the Maritime Union (MUNZ).

We told the Ministry of Transport we support their effort to combat illegal activity in the ports including background checks provided they are risk based, i.e. targeted at high risk roles, and workers rights to privacy and safety must be protected. We also said any enhanced search and seizure functions must be carried out by customs employed security staff rather than port employed security staff. To read the joint submission [click here](#)

Border Protect-tip hotline

NZ Customs encourage people who hear or see suspicious activity that could affect border security to call the anonymous tip line 0800 WE PROTECT (0800 937 768), 24-hour confidential hotline, [weblink here](#).



Former Port of Auckland CEO Tony Gibson loses appeal

Former Port of Auckland CEO Tony Gibson has lost his appeal against his conviction and sentence as an Officer under the Health and Safety at Work Act. Gibson was prosecuted by Maritime NZ following the death of Port worker Pala'amo Kalati- a lasher who was killed in August 2020 by a falling container onboard the ship. Gibson failed in his duty as a Officer by not taking reasonable steps the Port had a system for ensuring there was a safe exclusion zone for working near cranes.



Maritime NZ issues position statement on Fatigue Risk management Guidance

Maritime NZ have issued a 'position statement' about how they regulator will approach fatigue when doing assessments and incident investigations at the Ports. The position statement say that fatigue is a key driver of serious harm and injuries in the Ports. The Regulator said they will take corrective and enforcement action and have put the industry on notice they expect fatigue to be managed using a risk management approach. That means high risk work allocation such as consecutive 12-hour night shifts will receive scrutiny from the Regulator to check the risk has been adequately identified and managed to prevent harm to workers. To read the position statement [click here](#)

Workers Memorial Day 28 April 2026. RMTU members turned out to commemorate Workers Memorial Day on 28 April. RMTU events were held to 'remember the dead' including workers who died as a consequence of work from exposure to hazardous substances that caused disease later in life. The theme this year is "some hazards are invisible" such as silica dust, fumes and chemicals. To find out more about how to identify and manage invisible hazards, scan the QR code on the poster or [click here](#) for information on the RMTU website. Photos from L-R. Palmerston North depot, Kasia Kurene-Hutt Workshops, Canterbury Rail and Port Branch members, Wreath laying at Hutt Workshops, Auckland Branch members, flags at half mast to remember the workers who lost their lives at work or from work.



Calling for expressions of interest for RMTU Health and Safety and fatigue risk management training [REGISTER HERE](#)

RMTU Fatigue Risk Management 1-day course. Register your interest

The course is designed for Delegates, H&S Reps, Roster Delegates and members interested in fatigue management

Course date(s) and locations will be set at the end of May after we've received expressions of interest from members.

Learning Outcomes of the course include;

- (a) Understanding the main causes of workplace fatigue and how fatigue affects safety and health
- (b) Explain the employer's legislative duty to manage fatigue including how to do a fatigue risk assessment, learn about good rostering principles and fatigue data monitoring
- (c) Discuss personal strategies for managing fatigue from shiftwork, and
- (d) Know the role of the Roster Delegates in rail and the role of Health and Safety Representatives with regards to making recommendations to improve fatigue management. If you're interested in doing this course fill out the form here.

Note: This course is EREL approved, meaning union members are paid their normal daily pay to attend.

Click [here](#) to register your interest in doing the course.

RMTU Health and Safety Training 1-day course. Register your interest

The course is designed for Delegates, H&S Reps and members interested in improving workplace health and safety.

Course date(s) and locations will be set at the end of May after we've received expressions of interest from members.

This workshop aims to build the skills, knowledge and understanding of RMTU members in the rail and ports sector to ensure they can contribute to building good health and safety systems in the workplace. The workshop examines the key elements of the Health and Safety legislation for our industries and associated Regulations, to ensure members can communicate confidently with employers and workers about the risks faced, and the proper and effective operation of safety practices in the workplace.

Note: This course is EREL approved, meaning union members are paid their normal daily pay to attend.

Click [here](#) to register your interest in doing the course.

[REGISTER HERE](#) to register your interest for RMTU H&S or Fatigue management training. We'll be in touch with you to confirm date and location.



Remutaka Tunnel dust update

Wairarapa passenger service staff were surprised to see a contractor's water truck at the portal of the Remutaka tunnel last week whilst Occupational Hygienists were midway through their third round of exposure monitoring of staff for respirable dust. The members said that dampening the tunnel at the same time as exposure monitoring would likely give an unreliable reading of the actual dust exposure. The RMTU has asked Kiwirail to explain.

On 29 April RMTU members, Transdev Wellington and Hyundai Rotem staff met with the Chief Rail Medical Officer (CMO) Simon Ryder-Lewis regarding the risk of the dust to health. The CMO said (based on the last exposure monitoring report) it unlikely anyone would become sick from the dust onboard. But cautioned that respiratory protection should be offered to onboard workers and confirmed the current carriage cleaning regime remains an important for managing the dust. The RMTU has told KiwiRail to seal the ballast to address the dust at the source.

Centreport Initiation

The Rmtu along with MUNZ and Etu have initiated for renewal of the MUCA at Centreport.

Interesting times ahead as the cost of living crisis is forefront in many minds. It is noted that Centreport is considerably busy with a 25% increase in container volumes and small increase in cargo volumes over the rest of the the operation.

Good to see one of our employers doing so well, but as ever we deal with short staffing, training and fatigue, just to mention some of the issues.

C3 Nelson Initiation

Although comparatively few members are covered by this agreement now it is important to keep all our collective agreements alive.

As such we will be negotiating a renewal of this agreement too.

Holidays Act

Hot on the heels of proposed amendments to the Health and Safety and Work Act, submissions have now closed for the amendments to the Holidays Act.

To cut a long story short it is 45 pages longer, includes new complicated formulas for calculating leave. Removes averaging and relevant daily pay and will encourage employers to casualise.

The up shot is that workers will be paid less when they are on leave.

We can only hope the government gets cold feet on sweeping changes as an election looms.

Working in a Civil Defence Emergency

As we increasingly deal with natural disasters and civil defence emergencies, the question becomes should I go to work and what happens if I don't or can't?

In these situations the union and the employer need to engage in good faith and to find a suitable solution to the problem. If you have had an issue with this you need to contact your organiser and highlight the issue.



Celebrating long service

In April, we were fortunate to celebrate two long service in the upper North Island. John Paku retired after 60 years of service. It was wonderful to see everyone gather to celebrate his long service and to have three generations of John's family present. Todd Valster delivered a great speech. A more detailed story will appear in the upcoming Transport Worker.

Warren Makaua completed 45 years of service and is an outstanding delegate. A more detailed story will appear in the upcoming Transport Worker.

Steve Pope reached 50 years of service and membership.



John Paku celebrating 60 years with gifts of appreciation from the team.

Below Warren Makaua receiving certificate of appreciation from RMTU Northern Organiser Shirley Horne.



Building Strength Across the Bay of Plenty



Recently, delegates from across the Bay of Plenty came together for a series of RMTU delegate training sessions – bringing together workers from C3 Limited, Port of Tauranga, Qube Ports NZ, and KiwiRail.

What stood out wasn't just the training itself, but the strength of connection built between delegates across different sites and employers.

Delegates shared experiences, worked through real workplace scenarios, and built a clearer understanding of how to support members on the job.

Feedback from participants showed increased confidence to speak up, engage with members, and take a more active role in union work. Many highlighted the value of learning from each other and building relationships across the wider transport and logistics network.

This is how we grow union strength – not just through knowledge, but through connected, confident delegates across our workplaces.

New TAIC investigation opened

TAIC is investigating two derailments that involved the same freight train on the Main South Line the night of 16 April 2026. Reportedly, the first occurred near Allanton and the second in the Dunedin rail yard. Both derailments reportedly involved the train’s rolling stock, which remained upright but sustained serious damage. There were no injuries.



TAIC releases report on Shunt Runaway rail collision

TAIC published its Final Report on the shunt Runaway rail-vehicle collision and near miss with rail crew, Port Otago, Dunedin, 23 January 2025 at 1.25am. TAIC said “the incident showed how quickly a job can turn from routine to dangerous” and is calling on KiwiRail to improve its safety culture at Port Otago, its training for shunt staff, and its remote-control equipment. To read the TAIC report [click here](#).



Figure 4. Remote-control pack as worn by an RCO

SPADs—possible confirmation bias and recommendation for engineering controls to prevent SPADs says TAIC



The SPAD incident occurred at 0530 on 2 August 2024 near Morrinsville. The freight train went through two red signals entering into track that was occupied by a HiRail vehicle. Collision was avoided due to the HRV being on a section of double track. TAIC said the incident was a “preventable chain of events, signals misread, calls missed, rules not followed”.

The Commission considered previous SPADs both in NZ and internationally, including the Ladbroke Gove catastrophe in the UK. TAIC said “it is virtually certain that had ETCS (European Train control system) been fitted and operational, the train would **not** have exceeded the overrun area (buffer zone) where a collision could occur.

They recommended Kiwirail utilise engineering safety controls to prevent SPADs. The report also discussed a human factors concept known as ‘confirmation bias’. They said It is likely the LE was expecting clear signals, (based on the information they had at the start of the shift). The report suggest confirmation bias predisposed them not to notice that the signals were yellow over red or all red (stop).

To read the TAIC report click here

Be ready to vote on 7 November-Election day

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



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

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

Union Representation

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



Is it tough right now for people to get a job? Is it worse than the official numbers suggest? Economist Craig Renney breaks it down in his latest podcast episode. [Click here](#) to see the [podcast or go to the RMTU website](#)



[In case you missed it check out the RMTU Transport Worker Magazine.](#)



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.](#)

Stay Safe out there.

