

THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

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



Cover Image

Geoff Ham (aka Hamster) at the controls of Hutt workshops new ESV.

Farewells

4

We say goodbye to John Paku, David Lane & Dave Barclay

Legislation

5

The NZCTU on changes to the Employment Relations Act, Labour MP Camilla Belich about the need for corporate manslaughter laws

Delegate Training

8

Our future union leaders across the Bay of Plenty meet to study

Health & Holidays

9

The NZRSWT and your ability to rent their holiday homes

Under the Spotlight

10

Cook Strait safety compromised with withdrawal of MMA Vision

Workers' Memorial Day

12

Napier report back on their commemoration

WIMDOI

14

Our women report back on this year's conference in Rotorua

1951 Lockout

20

75 years on from New Zealand's boldest attack on workers

Opinion

22

Wayne Butson on the case for Vertical Integration in NZ Rail

Around the Branches

25

What has been happening in our union around the country

Action!

The frosty mornings and clear sunny days in Wellington have arrived.

While not an election year for RMTU, there is certainly enough to keep us all busy. We are preparing for our Biennial Delegates Conference in October this year. With the fuel crisis, escalating air fare costs and flight cancellations, it would be extremely helpful if Branches could confirm who their Conference Delegates and Observers are as soon as possible.

Our last Biennial Delegates Conference in 2024 was themed "Anger, Hope and Action". This year we want to focus on "Action". This can be Action at work or more broadly in the community and sectors, the living wage being an example of both at work and in the community. Action can be participating in the RMTU as an active member or delegate, being nominated on to and joining your Health and Safety Action Team (HSAT) or H&S Committee, being part of your local NZCTU regional union groups or Labour Electorate Committees. Action can be attending rallies and marches. Action can be making sure you, your friends and whānau are enrolled early to vote, participation will be essential.

Last month has been a mix of ups and downs.

For Anzac Day, we did the annual wreath laying and speeches the Wellington Railway Station eastern foyer with KiwiRail and this year representatives from Transdev Wellington on Friday 24th

April. It is a brief but meaningful service alongside the plaques for WW1 and WW2 where rail workers did not return. I spoke of the need to remember those that kept NZ running while the men were at war, women worked in the factories and transport. For those driving the trams, they fought for pay equity, even back then and they won that fight. On Anzac Day, I attended the Petone Railway Station event, it was brisk but there was still a large turnout of young and old and all in between. Every year more young people attend this event—Lest we forget.

For Workers Memorial Day, 28 April, I was fortunate to be invited to the Hutt Railway Workshops service. It was a beautiful sunny day and it had a good mix of speakers including our Hutt Shops workers and members. In the afternoon I got a tour of the workshops with the CEO and a board member. It was fantastic to see the progress that has been made at the workshops. It is evident that members are proud of their efforts and outcomes and rightly so. There are some pictures and captions in this edition.

On May 1, the "Fight Back Together—Maranga Ake" May Day of Action saw large gathering nationally. I attended the Christchurch events at Addington Racecourse and later at the Bridge of Remembrance. Large crowds attended both events. There were excellent speakers including some from Maritime Union Australia who had travelled over for the 75th

anniversary of the 1951 lockout celebration later that night.

May 21st/22nd the Annual HSAT Chairs/Sponsor manager forum will be held in Wellington. I get the opportunity to stress the importance of HSAT's in preventing harm, participating in findings after an event and working on mitigations and supporting our injured members, We must remember it was the RMTU's Karen and great friend Hazel that drafted and got agreement with KR of the HSAT Governance Terms of Reference which included this annual forum.

On the downside, the recent announcement that during the dry dock period, when there is only one ferry in operation, KR will use "blue water" ships to move freight between Auckland and Christchurch, you could call

it "KiwiCoastal" It was understandable that after the Kaikoura earthquake the Main North Line and Wellington Port were severely damaged coastal shipping was one of the only options but both are not damaged now. We must be concerned that the freight may not return. KR often speak about wanting to improve productivity, I cannot see any improvement in productivity if the freight is in a ship, quit the opposite.

Finally, we have a discussion article on vertical integration of the network and operation versus a split in this edition. This article is a worthy read and well compiled, thanks Wayne.

Take Care and Be Safe
— Todd Valster 🇳🇿

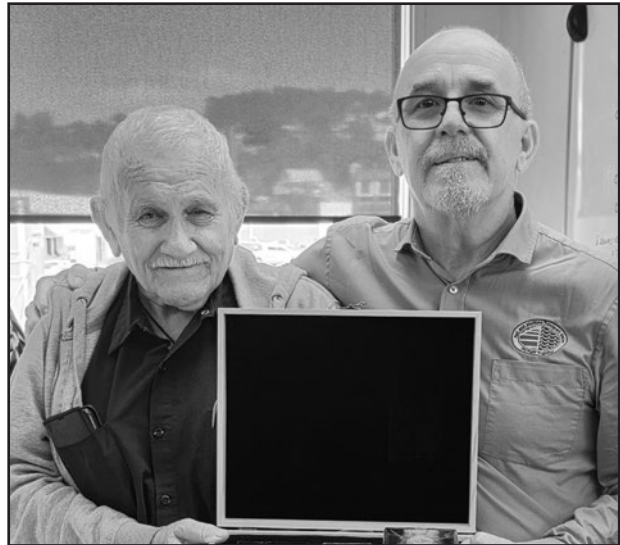
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May Day! L to R—Central Organiser Allan Addison-Saipe, Gen Sec Todd Valster, National President Aubrey Wilkinson, H&S Organiser and Asst Gen Sec Karen Fletcher and Admin/Finance Manager Lara Topping flying the flag following the Bridge of Remembrance event. Allan and Lara were on leave but still showed up.



Left: John received his beautifully crafted authentic DX locomotive model from model maker, Michelle Andrews. Top right: John receives the RMTU gift from Todd Valster. Bottom right: Some of the retirement gifts for John, there was also a book of the rolling stock and locomotives over the last 60 years presented to John.

Farewells

John Paku

“John Paku—40 years + 20 years, our time and a half 60-year Locomotive Engineer”

In November 1965, John started his long career in rail in Dunedin, he worked in 11 different depots over the span of his career.

When we spoke at his retirement function, early April, I suggested the reason John could achieve such longevity was he kept

moving to better places, finally ending in Whangarei. But, of course, it would have been the support of his family that made that happen too. John was not content to just drive freight and passenger services, he also drove heritage trains over a long period.—

A retirement function for John was held in early April at the Whangarei depot. A large gathering

of past and present work colleagues, managers and RMTU representatives attended and many spoke about the great times had working with John and their deep respect they held for him. John’s extended Whānau attended the function as well.

We wish John a long, happy and healthy retirement, well earned!



David Lane

David receives his “RMTU Loyalty Certificate” from Todd at his retirement function in April, have a great retirement, David.

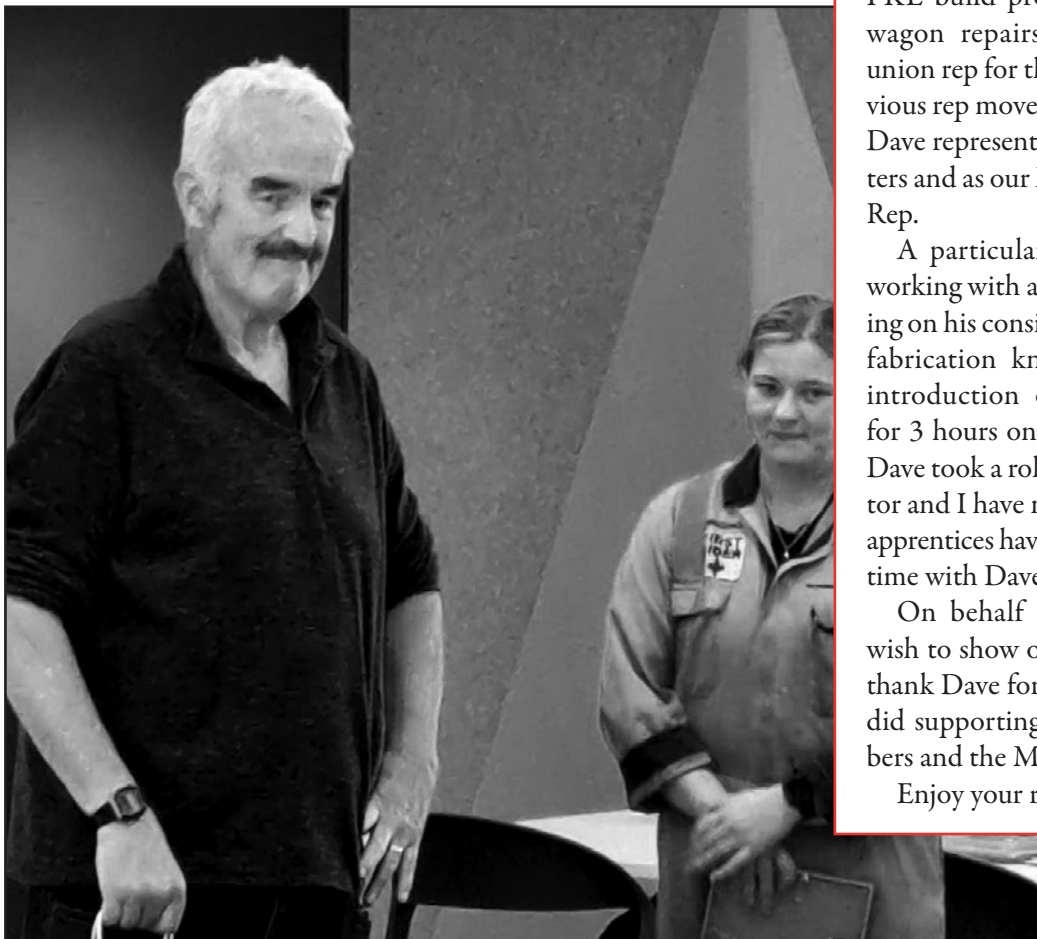
Farewell Dave Barclay

Mechanical Engineer Dave Barclay joined Kiwirail for a second time, this time as a team member on the PKL build project and later coal wagon repairs, he took over as union rep for the site when the previous rep moved on to other duties, Dave represented us on union matters and as our Mechanical Council Rep.

A particular strength of his is working with apprentices and passing on his considerable welding and fabrication knowledge, with the introduction of apprentice time for 3 hours on a Tuesday morning Dave took a role as apprentice mentor and I have no doubt that all our apprentices have benefited from this time with Dave.

On behalf of the RMTU, we wish to show our appreciation and thank Dave for the tireless work he did supporting our RMTU members and the Mechanical Sector.

Enjoy your retirement, Brother!



A Step Backward:

Why the NZCTU is Calling for the Withdrawal of the Employment Leave Bill

The New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU), representing over 340,000 workers, has issued a blunt assessment of the proposed Employment Leave Bill: it is unworkable, inequitable, and should be withdrawn immediately.

While the Bill's stated purpose is to simplify the Holidays Act, the CTU argues it does the exact opposite—adding 50 pages of complexity while stripping away fundamental worker entitlements during a cost-of-living crisis.

The “Simplicity” Paradox

The Government claims the Bill provides “certainty” for employers and employees. However, the CTU points out that the legislation is riddled with repetitive clauses and complex algebraic formulas for transitioning leave balances.

Instead of a “pen and paper” calculation, small business owners may now require professional accounting software just to remain compliant. The CTU suggests the only real winners here will be employment lawyers and payroll providers.

A Shift from Wellness to “Transaction”

One of the most subtle but damaging changes is the redefined purpose of annual leave. The Bill moves from providing an “opportunity for rest and recreation” to merely “paid time away from work.”

- **Loss of Time:** Under the proposed hours-based accrual, a worker who averages 32 hours but is contracted for only 8

might find themselves with only one week of actual leave after a full year of work.

- **Loss of Pay:** The Bill introduces a “Leave Compensation Payment” (LCP). By paying leave at the lowest hourly rate and excluding commissions or allowances, workers face a functional pay cut exactly when they need to rest or recover from illness.

Deepening Inequality

The CTU highlights that the Bill's negative impacts will fall disproportionately on women, Māori, Pasifika, and migrant workers. These groups are statistically more likely to hold “non-standard” or part-time roles.

By tying leave so strictly to contracted hours rather than actual hours worked, the Bill creates a two-tier system where those in precarious employment are further marginalized. Furthermore, the non-accrual of leave while on ACC is described as a “double injustice” for those injured in workplace accidents.

Incentivising the “Race to the Bottom”

The submission warns that the Bill creates a financial incentive for casualisation.

1. **Reduced Liability:** Employers can pay out the LCP weekly, preventing leave balances from building up on their books.
2. **No Penalty for Misclassification:** The Bill removes current protections that penalize employers for incorrectly treating permanent staff as casuals.

This encourages a “work-until-you-drop” culture where workers have little to no accrued time off to spend with their families.

Legal and Constitutional Red Flags

Perhaps most concerning is the “Alternative Remediation Process.” The CTU notes that this framework could:

- Extinguish a worker's ability to claim unpaid holiday pay.
- “Permanently suspend” claims currently before the Employment Relations Authority.
- Operate without the worker's consent.

This raises significant concerns regarding the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, specifically the Right to Justice, as workers may lose their ability to seek legal redress for wage theft.

Conclusion: A Solution Looking for a Problem

The CTU concludes that the Bill ignores a decade of progress. Since the 2014 Holidays Act issues came to light, many employers and unions have already settled on compliant systems and remediation.

To scrap this progress in favour of a “poorly organized and repetitive” piece of legislation would, in the CTU's view, trigger a new wave of mass non-compliance and litigation. Their recommendation is simple: Withdraw the Bill and return to the consensus-based tripartite report of 2019. 🌐

Better Health and Safety needs Corporate Manslaughter law

Everyone who goes to work deserves to come home safe to their families. Tragically in New Zealand our history shows that we have disproportionate workplace deaths. According to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, 17 workers in New Zealand die every week as a consequence of their work. The International Labour Organisation reports that this is three times the UK's fatality rate and nearly twice that of Australia. All workplace deaths are tragic, and almost always preventable.

Following advocacy from Sonja Rockhouse and Anna Osbourne, who lost loved ones in one of New Zealand's most well-known workplace tragedies Pike River, and frustration over the time it has taken for those whose loved ones have died in preventable workplace deaths to obtain justice and accountability, I have placed a Member's Bill in the ballot to hold employers accountable when needless workplace deaths occur on their watch. The Crimes (Corporate Homicide) Amendment Bill would make it a criminal offence for employers to be knowingly reckless or grossly negligent about health and safety risks, when that recklessness or negligence results in a worker's death. This means a fine of up to \$10 million dollars or life imprisonment for those responsible. The intention of the Bill is to bring about accountability for those who know the risks and ignore them, putting workers in harm's way.



Camilla Belich—Labour MP and Spokesperson for Public Service

My Member's Bill works by establishing an offence if the workplace has a relevant duty of care and to examine conduct which exposes a worker to risk of death or serious injury and if there is anything done to address these risks. Comparable jurisdictions are far ahead of New Zealand on this front. The United Kingdom passed Corporate Homicide legislation in 2007, Canada amended its Criminal Code in 2004, and almost all Australian states have corporate homicide laws. In the fifteen years following the UK Act, workplace deaths have fallen, from 0.84 to 0.37 per 100,000. We simply cannot afford to lag behind when it comes to protecting the lives of New Zealand workers.

New Zealand has had numerous tragic workplace fatalities including the Loafers Lodge fire in 2023, the

Whakaari eruption in 2019, the collapse of the CTV building in Christchurch, the Pike River Mine disaster in 2010, the Mangatepopo canyoning tragedy in 2008 and the Cave Creek platform collapse in 1995. While it is not certain if this Bill would apply to any of the above examples, if it had been in place, it would have allowed an assessment to be taken by prosecutors as to whether more could have been done to prevent these tragedies and if the thresholds of gross negligence or recklessness were reached. A determination either way may have assisted families looking for justice and answers. 🌐

■ Written by Camilla Belich MP, Labour Spokesperson for Justice & Public Services



From L-R Rangitaami Gear, Lee Jones, Robert Scowen, Ryan Gagnepain, Nicholas Campbell, Henry Hay

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. 🌐

Solidarity in Action

The RMTU and NZ Railways Staff Welfare Trust

The relationship between the mighty RMTU and the NZ Railways Staff Welfare Trust is both special and unique. No other Union/Trust relationship in Aotearoa comes close to what our organisations have managed to achieve together across three generations. In a world where 'wellbeing' has become a bit of a buzzword, we have produced a wellness, welfare and health offering for rail workers that has not only stood the test of time but continues to modernise and meet the challenges we face today.

One way the Trust has adopted its offering over time is opening a special category of membership for RMTU members who are not employed in the rail industry. Otherwise referred to as ports workers. These workers can join as Group C members and have access to the Trust's suite of holiday units. The annual subscription is only \$55 for these members, accounting for the fact they do not have access to medical benefits.

Our relationship is solidarity in action—two organisations working together, for a collective good, and having each other's backs. Ensuring rail workers have access to affordable primary health care and holiday accommodation across the motu.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi

With your food basket and my food basket, the people will thrive

A whakatauki appropriate for our special relationship, highlighting the power of collaboration, resource sharing, and the pooling of strengths to uplift all tangata (people).

We have generations of rail workers that have gone before us to

thank for a substantial asset base of 65 holiday units from as far North as Orewa and Paihia to as far South as Dunedin and Queenstown.

In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, this offering is more important than ever before.

So how can the Trust work hard to ensure RMTU members can still afford a well-earned holiday in these expensive and uncertain times?



RMTU and KiwiRail Trust board members pictured in Tāmaki Makaurau in 2024 opening three brand new units

We keep our holiday accommodation rates as low as possible, as demonstrated by our weekly rates of \$450 (small) and \$550 (larger) for units. Members have reported to us that this is often what a single night or two costs them on private sites like Air BnB and Booking.com

Any increases to these rates are made reluctantly. Just 1.8% for the 2026/7 financial year. It was not easy to budget for an increase this low, as power is forecast to increase between 4% and 20%, and council rates will have similar rises. The Board, comprised of four RMTU reps and four KiwiRail managers,

is determined to keep rates as low as possible

Claim your medical expenses. A bunch of claimable receipts could provide you with the cash injection required to make ends meet on holiday. Remember you, any eligible partner and/or dependents under the age of 18 can claim up to \$1575 per annum. Full eligibility details can be found here: <https://www.nzrwelfare.co.nz/>

assets/NZ-Railways-Staff-Welfare-Health-Benefit-Scheme-May-2024.pdf

Have a colleague in need? A union member who is facing hard times? A team member facing a difficult domestic situation? The Trust has compassionate accommodation grants of one week's accommodation available. The Board discusses them at its quarterly meetings. Send any nominations or questions to info@nzwelfare.co.nz 🌐

■ By: Michael Stevenson, General Manager of the NZ Railways Staff Welfare Trust

Cook Strait Safety Sacrificed

In November 2025, the Coalition Government quietly pulled the plug on the *MMA Vision*, the open-ocean emergency response tug contracted to help guard the dangerous waters of Cook Strait.

The Government said ending the contract in February 2026 would save about \$9 million. But the decision left seafarers, passengers, and national supply chains exposed to greater risk.

Unions and local council leaders on both sides of Cook Strait warned the move was a reckless gamble with human lives, environmental safety and essential infrastructure.

In late April 2026, reporting indicated where at least some of those “savings” had gone. Money made available after the cancellation of the emergency tug contract was reported to have been redirected towards a \$4.57 million upgrade to make RNZAF Base Ohakea available as a 24/7 alternate airport for international flights. The exact proportion of the tug funding shifted into the Ohakea project was redacted.

Cook Strait is a critical link in New Zealand’s national infrastructure, effectively an extension of State Highway 1 and the national rail network. Yet the Government has left vessels crossing the Strait without a dedicated emergency towage capability.

The logistics of the Ohakea decision reveal the Government’s priorities. RNZAF Base Ohakea had previously been available to airlines as an alternate runway between 5am and 10.30pm. Extending that service to round-the-clock

availability requires recruitment and staff training over an estimated 18 months.

The Government defended the Ohakea funding by saying it would improve the “commercial viability” of flying to New Zealand for major airlines.

Basic maritime safety infrastructure is treated as dispensable, while support for airline profitability is treated as an economic necessity.

This safety vacuum comes at the worst possible moment for New Zealand’s “blue highway.” The domestic maritime sector is already wrestling with a ferry fleet left in a dangerous state of managed decline. The ships linking the North and South Islands are ageing, and recent years have seen a series of technical failures, structural faults, and narrow escapes.

We do not have to look far back to see what a worst-case scenario could look like. The Transport Accident Investigation Commission has released its final report into the near-disaster involving the ferry *Kaitaki*.

During a southerly gale in January 2023, *Kaitaki* suffered a total loss of propulsion and drifted towards Wellington’s rocky south coast. The crew recovered the situation, but the potential was clear that it could have ended in disaster.

TAIC identified six safety issues, including deficient emergency planning, gaps in emergency response coordination, problems with access to specialist maritime expertise—and New Zealand’s lack of robust emergency towage and salvage capability.

By then, the Government had already cancelled the only

dedicated emergency response towage capability available.

This fragility is the direct fallout of Finance Minister Nicola Willis’s short-sighted decision in late 2023 to scrap the iReX ferry replacement project.

By cancelling the long-term plan for new, purpose-built rail ferries, the Government left the country dependent on an ageing and vulnerable fleet until the end of the decade.

However, our local capability has not been completely dismantled.

When the Government pulled its funding, the crew of the *MMA Vision* completed their final emergency response shifts in early February 2026. The immediate fear within the union was that, without the state contract, the vessel would leave New Zealand waters entirely.

However, *MMA Vision* has since secured a long-term commercial contract with OMV New Zealand, beginning after its current charter ends in July 2026.

The crew, employed through Kingston/OSM, held the line. Despite competition from international operators seeking to introduce smaller vessels with degraded pay and diminished working conditions, the union stood firm.

This specialised, high-calibre, ocean-going vessel remains a ready-made platform the Government could re-engage.

The survival of the *MMA Vision* in local waters removes the Government’s excuse that dedicated rescue capability is too difficult or too expensive to source. The ship is here. The trained, highly skilled union crew is here. The only



The Anchor Handling Tug Supply MMA Vision

thing missing is Ministers who understand health and safety is not a luxury.

The MMA Vision is based off Taranaki. So while it exists in NZ waters it isn't useful for an emergency in the Cook Strait. And the pressure remains to have a dedicated ocean going tug based in Wellington.

The report following the Wahine disaster recommended a dedicated ocean going tug in Wellington. Kupe—the ocean going tug was bought in 1971 and sold for salvage in 2018 leaving the strait with no dedicated tug.

The Government must reinstate dedicated emergency response towage funding for Cook Strait. If it refuses to act, and an ageing ferry suffers another catastrophic failure, responsibility will sit squarely with those who chose short-term savings over public safety.

Key takeaways

The Coalition Government ended the MMA Vision emergency towage contract in February 2026, saying the move would save about \$9 million. Reporting indicates money made available after the tug contract was cancelled was redirected towards

making RNZAF Base Ohakea available 24/7 as an alternate airport for large commercial aircraft, although the exact proportion of emergency tug funding used was redacted. TAIC's final *Kaitaki* report identified serious safety issues and highlighted the need to strengthen New Zealand's emergency towage and salvage capability. MMA Vision has secured a new long-term commercial contract with OMV New Zealand, keeping the vessel in local waters and preserving a practical option for reinstated emergency towage coverage. 🌐



A Meaningful Tribute:

Workers' Memorial Day in Napier

Once again, Napier held a successful Workers' Memorial Day event, and we were truly lucky with the weather. The turnout was excellent, with an estimated 200 people in attendance. The crowd included visitors from out of town, as well as members from offsite operations such as C3, ISO log scaling, and Kiwi Rail.

The gathering was strongly supported by several unions, including NZEI, ETU, MUNZ, and RMTU. The atmosphere was enhanced by the sound of the bagpipes, played before and after the ceremony by one of our very own Tug Masters. A Karakia was delivered by TK Hawaikarangi, Chairperson of Mana Ahuriri Trust, former Napier Port Environmental and Cultural Advisor, and now HBRC Kaihoutu Putaiao (Science Leader).

The day held special significance as family members of Herbert "Herb" Maraka unveiled a memorial plaque, exactly 22 days before the 57th anniversary of his death. Herb lost his life in an accident while working on a log vessel back in 1969. It is a testament to the solidarity of the union movement that, at his Tangi in Wairoa all those years ago, two busloads of Waterside workers made the journey from Napier to pay their respects.

Speaking at the ceremony, Herb's niece, Paulette, shared her memories of her uncle. She remembered him as a much-loved son, brother, husband, and uncle who is missed every day. She also expressed her gratitude to everyone involved, particularly Dave Marden (former Branch Secretary) and the Port Company, for making the plaque a reality—a tribute that has been a long time coming. It was an honour to be part of such an important occasion for the family.

Addressing the crowd, the Port Management team—including the CEO, COO, and HR Manager—acknowledged the importance of building a robust safety culture and the vital need for everyone to speak up and report issues.

Another poignant moment came from Phil Taana, Senior Crane Driver. For the first time in the 20 years since his brother Rep passed away on port, Phill spoke during the proceedings. He passionately stressed the importance of reporting any concerns, no matter how small they may seem at the time.

"I know we may not always see eye to eye," Phill put to Management, "but if the end result is a safer workplace, then we are doing something right." "We will remember my brother for placing Napier Port amongst the safest in New Zealand"

With this year's theme being "Some Hazards are Invisible", ex-port employee Roz Muir spoke to the impact that Mental Health and Psychological Safety also has on workers, including her own experience.

Roz was a well-liked member of the Port Planning team prior to her departure and is a prime example of how easily mental health can go unnoticed by so many until, all too often, it's too late.

She stressed the importance of talking to your mates if you notice something might not be right, and the difference it can make even if just for a day at a time.

Chris Vaughn (Branch President) also spoke, addressing a recent high-profile case involving the former Auckland Port CEO, who recently lost an appeal to overturn his conviction regarding the death of a worker. Holding up a news article picture of Mr Gibson, Chris stated firmly: "If he were here today, I would say 'Be a man, take some responsibility, don't be this guy!'"

As always, the service was made possible through cooperation between the local RMTU branch and the port company. Operations were adjusted to minimum manning levels to allow staff to attend, ensuring essential work continued while honouring the day.

WIMDOI 2026

WIMDOI (Women In Male Dominated Occupations and Industries) 2026 was held in beautiful Rotorua, Aotearoa. Represented by 11 different New Zealand unions, and 11 different Australian unions. 125 women from all over Australia and 88 women from all over Aotearoa, New Zealand. Approximately 215 women made up WIMDOI 2026, a conference that has been going for over 30 years. And the

The major takeaways for me were, the promoting of WIMDOI to unions in Aotearoa New Zealand that had never heard of WIMDOI. Selling the WIMDOI spirit to businesses and unions coming on board to support and sponsor their women was priceless. The networking, connection, and the wider sisterhood that the women have walked into has just opened the door to a world of opportunities and possibilities that once were a pipe dream, and now a reality.

Leader of the Labour Party and MP for Kelston, Spokesperson for Auckland issues, Women and Pacific Peoples. Carmel spoke passionately of the rise of misogyny and abuse directed at women in public life and politics. We are seeing more and more of this around the world, as well as with this National-led coalition government we have at the moment in Aotearoa.

Nia Bartley-NZCTU Komiti Pasefika Co-Convenor & Etū Union Executive Board Central



Wāhine attending WIMDOI 2026 in Rotorua

very first time in its history to leave the shores of Australia and come to Aotearoa New Zealand. This WIMDOI for me was like no other, myself and amazing MUNZ (Maritime Union New Zealand) sister, Annette McCauley, worked for 2 years in the making of the organising committee along with 6 other powerhouse trailblazing sisters from Australia. Founding members Max Adlam and Patricia Fernandez, along with Mich-Elle Myers, Lisa Zanatta, Michelle Ingley-Smith and Leanne Holmes supported and navigated Annie and I on this unforgettable journey.

The conference was opened by an incredible welcome by Trina Tui Benfall and Leah Moko Ratana, local wāhine from Rotorua.

The agenda for the conference was full of wāhine toa speakers and the infamous open mike for women to share their stories and experiences. Although quite heavy topics at times the WIMDOI wairua wrapped it's arms around every single one of us to keep us safe.

All the guest speakers and sessions were great and the attendees got a lot out of the content. Highlights for me were Hon Carmel Sepuloni Deputy

Region representative spoke on behalf of Pacific People. Nia's Pacific lens on work, the union movement, and life itself as a Tokelauan Mafine Toa resonated with so many wāhine in the room. Nia's song of her homeland and its people she sang at the beginning of her speech reached and touched the souls of everyone.

Aimee Taylor-Senior Firefighter in Ōtepoti Dunedin, and a delegate of NZPFU spoke on behalf of the struggles the firefighters are facing everyday around the motu. This shameful government is not supporting what matters the most. THE PEOPLE!! Absolutely

outrageous! Firefighters have been campaigning and striking for over 600+ days for better working conditions, wages and equipment and trucks that actually work for them to do their jobs, to look after the people of their cities and communities. And so to that in true WIMDOI FASHION, the committee re-jigged the agenda and in 2 days from the start of the conference we liaised with local firefighter Jeni “The Jedi” Walters from Rotorua and hit the pavement with our 200+ mana wāhine presence, our voices, and our banners and flags and walked in solidarity with our firefighters of Aotearoa New Zealand. The best comment from a local firefighter was “It’s like we hired 200+ professional protesters for our march”. We got you NZPFU”.

Women Leading Campaigns and Podcasts. Tough as Nails and It’s a Bloody Mess by CFMEU and RTBU unions of Australia were absolutely fantastic, something that New Zealand unions need to be looking at as this discriminating, racist National-Led government keeps stripping the people of their rights, Te Tiriti, pay equity, equality and the working class people that keep this country going.

Check out the campaigns: *It’s a Bloody Mess* by the RTBU, and *The Tough As Nails Podcast* on YouTube

The final speaker Sandar Soe of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar (CTUM) although a confronting session, it was 100% necessary for the women to hear.



Rebecca Huack with Professional Firefighter Jeni (the Jedi)

“Despite the violence, imprisonment, and fear, Myanmar workers continue to organise and resist and dream of a democratic future. International Solidarity gives strength to our struggle and reminds us we are not alone”.

Sandar along with many others are deeply involved in the fight for democracy and human rights. As a trade unionist, Sandar’s role was clear, to resist oppression on diplomatic, economic, and political fronts. Sandar faced arrest warrants, threat of imprisonment daily. Hiding became a necessity, as the military raided their homes and offices targeting activists and union leaders. Every day was a battle of survival for Sandar. Until the International Union movement stepped in to support and advocate for Sandar. She was able to find sanctuary in New Zealand. Leaving

her home was heart-breaking as her family, friends, colleagues and fellow activists are still trapped in a cycle of violence and oppression. The sacrifices that they are making reminds Sandar to carry on the fight for her people.

The Solidarity of the WIMDOI women from Australia and New Zealand for Sandar and her continual fight for her people raised \$3000.00 in donations to tautoko, support Sandar and the people of Myanmar.

We are all connected in some small or big way. It starts at the grass roots, supporting each other, our communities, our neighbours, our colleagues, for a safer and better tomorrow.

STRENGTH AND UNITY IS UNION BUSINESS!

AROHANUI—KIA KAHA MY SISTERS AND BROTHERS

Wellington Rail Branch Members at WIMDOI 2026

Four Wellington Rail branch members attended WIMDOI (Women In Male Dominated Occupations & Industries) 2026 conference in Rotorua last week.

One of the attendees had this to say: “It was an amazing, energising, and (somewhat) exhausting week spent learning heaps alongside our Aussie sisters, who crossed the ditch for the first WIMDOI held outside

Australia. The learnings were plentiful! We shared our stories and experiences as women in our workplaces, industries, and unions, and there were many shared struggles and successes. We worked together



RMTU Delegates L-R Nicola Gapper Zoe Smith and Rita Hill Supporting the Firefighters

to unpick the issues, learn from each other, and to plan future actions based on this learning and growth. A woman's place is in her union! Bring on WIMDOI 2028!!"

NZ's Dire Emergency

While at WIMDOI we heard from several of our sisters who spoke about the devastating impact that the current crisis at Fire & Emergency NZ is having on them as professional firefighters.

It was clear these sisters and their colleagues are deeply committed to their role as first responders and the emotional toll on these workers of walking off the job knowing lives are on the line, was obvious. They spoke of counting down the 60 minutes of the stop works, desperate to get back to doing what they love—helping our communities stay safe, but have been left with

little other option than to taking industrial action because negotiations have well and truly broken down, unsafe conditions persist and communities are at risk.

The 220+ strong WIMDOI conference was inspired to tautoko our NZPFU sisters and comrades, and took time to go down to the mid-week stop-work action being taken by the local Firefighters. We chanted and marched our way through the streets of Rotorua, to lend our heartfelt support and draw the public's attention to the struggle of our comrades and their union NZPFU (NZ Professional Firefighters Union), with an employer (Fire & Emergency NZ) who is refusing to engage meaningfully to find a solution to the current crisis affecting our national Fire Service.

The solidarity, support and energy of the rally visibly lifted the morale of our comrades who been feeling deflated as their fight for a safe Fire Service for all of our communities, has drawn out and fades from the public eye. It was a great reminder of how great solidarity, and a good shouty rally, is for all of us!

Please, show your solidarity with our firefighting comrades by checking out the direemergency.nz page and signing the petition requesting an inquiry into the mismanagement of FENZ: <https://www.together.org.nz/direemergency>

(And check out the NZPFU Facebook/Instagram/Tiktok to see some of the highlights—especially the Aussie-style chants!) 🌐

RMTU Lyttelton Port Branch meet with Lyttelton MUNZ Local

On the 15th April representatives from the Lyttelton RMTU Port Branch and local met to discuss a way forward and to work closer together and focus on the potential strength of an alignment. Also at the meeting were the Presidents, National Secretaries of both unions and other senior union leaders.

The dialogue was constructive, time will tell whether we can get back to the strong forces of working together. 🌐



Hutt Workshops

Here are some pictures taken at Hutt Workshops after the Workers Memorial Day Service. As stated in the editorial, Hutt is progressing well, our members can be proud.



Geoff Ham, Team Leader at Hutt Workshops, shows us a new ESM – Heavy Electric Shunt Vehicle



This DL has been through the workshops as part of a programme to improve the reliability of the DL fleet. It has also had an excellent paint job by the team. Spot the difference, the DL's that are painted at Hutt stay yellow because the correct paint is being used rather than matt yellow that goes black very quickly.



Here is an example of the excellent work our members are doing. This new locomotive stand was purpose built by the teams at Hutt from scratch.

Sam Kabui speaks at the Anzac Day service at Petone Railway Station



The wreaths laid after the short service at Wellington Railway Station, one of the plaques in the background



Wreaths laid during the service at Petone Railway Station on Anzac Day

Anzac Day 2026

The 1951 Waterfront Dispute and the Attack on Civil Liberties

The 1951 waterfront dispute was the most significant industrial confrontation in New Zealand's history, lasting 151 days from February to July 1951 and involving more than 20,000 workers.

While it began as an industrial conflict over wages and working conditions, it quickly escalated into a constitutional crisis. The National Government under Prime Minister Sidney Holland used sweeping emergency powers to suppress the Watersiders and their supporters. Central to this strategy were the *Waterfront Strike Emergency Regulations 1951*, which effectively suspended civil liberties and reconfigured the legal framework governing speech, media, and association.

This article focuses on the key legal provisions (often discussed as “articles” or clauses) within these emergency regulations that curtailed freedoms in order to break the strike.

The Holland government declared a state of emergency on 21 February 1951 using the Public Safety Conservation Act 1932, which allowed extraordinary powers when essential supplies or services were threatened. These powers were then implemented through the Waterfront Strike Emergency Regulations, amended multiple times during the dispute.

The regulations were justified by the government as necessary to combat what Holland described as a threat to “orderly government.” In practice, they amounted to one of

the most far-reaching suspensions of civil liberties in New Zealand's history.

Although not always formally numbered in public summaries, historians commonly identify six major areas of restriction in the regulations that directly targeted civil liberties:

Article 1: Prohibition of Support for Strikers

One of the most controversial provisions made it illegal to aid striking workers, including financial aid, food, or other support. Even feeding the children of strikers could be prosecuted. Unions created illegal urban butcheries for dealing with donated carcasses and the wives of Unionists created an underground network to deliver food to starving families. The aim was to isolate workers economically and force them back to work. This provision attacked both freedom of association and basic humanitarian support networks, criminalising solidarity.

Article 2: Censorship of Media and Publications

The regulations imposed strict censorship on all forms of media. Newspapers were prohibited from publishing pro-union viewpoints. Any material expressing support for the Watersiders was deemed illegal. This was a direct assault on freedom of the press, ensuring that the public heard only the government's perspective. Even opposition politicians found it difficult to communicate their views publicly.

Article 3: Ban on Meetings and Public Expression

The regulations restricted public gatherings and expressions of support. Meetings, rallies, or speeches supporting the strike could be banned. Public expression of sympathy for the workers was treated as a criminal act. This curtailed freedom of speech and assembly, effectively silencing dissent in public spaces.

Article 4: Criminalisation of Printed Material

The state extended censorship further by outlawing the production and distribution of union materials. “Illegal” pamphlets and newsletters had to be produced underground. Police conducted raids to seize such materials.

This provision suppressed independent communication channels, forcing unions into clandestine operations and limiting their ability to mobilise support.

Article 5: Expanded Police Powers (Search, Seizure, Arrest)

The regulations granted police sweeping powers. Authority to search homes without normal safeguards, arrest individuals suspected of aiding strikers. Seize union funds and records (and deregister unions).

These measures weakened legal protections and due process, allowing enforcement of the regulations with minimal judicial oversight.



Group of people gathering potatoes at Henderson for the striking waterside workers in 1951.

Article 6: Deregistration and Replacement of Unions

The government used the regulations to dismantle the existing union structure. The Waterside Workers' Union was deregistered; government-backed "new unions" were formed in its place.

This directly attacked freedom of association, replacing an independent union with state-supported alternatives designed to undermine collective resistance.

Taken together, these six provisions amounted to a coordinated legal strategy:

Freedom of speech → silenced through censorship and bans on expression

Freedom of the press → eliminated via strict media controls

Freedom of association → undermined through union

deregistration and criminalisation of support

The regulations also created a climate of fear. Citizens risked prosecution for acts of sympathy, and the normal functioning of democratic debate was effectively suspended.

The legal framework played a decisive role in ending the dispute. By cutting off material support, the government weakened the strikers' ability to endure a long conflict. By controlling media narratives, it limited public sympathy. By dismantling union structures, it fractured worker organisations.

Ultimately, after five months, the Watersiders were forced to concede defeat in July 1951.

The 1951 waterfront dispute is often remembered not just as an industrial conflict, but as a turning point in New Zealand's civil

liberties history. It demonstrated how emergency legislation could be used to override democratic rights. It left a legacy of distrust between unions and the state. It remains a key example of how governments can use legal mechanisms to suppress dissent during crises.

The Holland government's response to the 1951 waterfront dispute went far beyond industrial management. Through a series of legal provisions—effectively six core "articles" of repression—it curtailed fundamental freedoms of speech, media, and association.

These measures were instrumental in breaking the strike, but they came at a profound cost: the temporary suspension of democratic rights in New Zealand. 🌐

Form follows function

Future of Rail—The Case for Vertical Integration

This is a phrase coined by American architect Louis Sullivan in 1896. This debate usually centres on whether the purpose of a thing (function) dictates its appearance (form) or if the appearance can be designed independently (form over function). Whilst Sullivan's phrase has remained the defining, if often debated, principle of modern architectural design I believe it also speaks to organisational or even an industry form. This may seem a strange beginning for an opinion piece which will focus on the shape and structure of the dominant entity of the NZ Rail scene, but it is a much vexed question which has been at the core of the rail debate since the Corporatisation of NZ Railways in 1987. NZ Railways at the time was in essence a single vertically integrated entity in that it owned all the above and below rail assets (including Ferries).

Much has been written about the period of time for rail in New Zealand following 1987's corporatisation, the privatisation in 1993, the sell off's (incl buses, parcels, refrigeration, forklifts, metro's etc), structural decline and outsourcing's of the late 90's whilst sadly some of us lived breathed and, unfortunately, many died to illuminate the stark life lessons of these dark days. What is interesting is that during all this time of privatisation the core rail business headed by Tranz Rail (then after sale to Toll NZ, latterly Toll Rail) remained a single vertically integrated entity and there was weak light-handed co-regulation and oversight of the industry. That is until 5 workplace deaths in 1999, the RMTU going nuclear on H&S, a change

in Government with Helen Clark's Labour team taking the Treasury benches and a Ministerial Inquiry being announced by the Minister of Labour Margaret Wilson on 28 June 2000. Much changed after this watershed moment with the regulatory oversight being strengthened, Rail coming under the national H&S laws and the massive decline in the asset and organisation playing out in the media regularly. Talk about reputational damage!

Ontrack was formed in September 2004 as the trading name of NZRC to own and manage NZ rail infrastructure assets after the Crown purchased them back from Toll NZ for \$1.00. This is when the NZ rail industry evolved away from a single vertically integrated entity or ownership-based control model to a relationship based or market-based co-ordination framework. The purpose of Ontrack was to oversee the maintenance and upgrading of the rail network which, at the time, was seen as shunt yard underfoot and track conditions and 100 year old timber bridges. This move reversed privatisation of NZ Rail assets and was aimed at repairing rundown assets and importantly "allowing competitive access to the tracks". It had its own independent Board but there was two rail company appointed directors. Ontrack embarked on a massive upgrade of its vehicle fleet, buildings, staff and skills, asset maintenance planning in response to investment being made available. As you can imagine tensions arose and the relationship between the Ontrack and the Rail company deteriorated quickly as their interests were suddenly in competition. The rail company

wanted the new funding to be spent on assisting it to operate commercially whereas buying new utes and trucks, painting buildings and repairing timber bridges on branch lines and passing on pay rises from market studies for workers didn't meet the rail operating company's commercial goals. In my view all they saw was funds going everywhere else rather than being spent on the profitable lines so they could make greater profits e.g. the golden triangle.

As all relationships in the industry deteriorated further the pressure on the Government to make change grew. Finally in July 2008 the Government purchased all remaining rail and ferry assets of Toll NZ and created KiwiRail. The RMTU's fight against privatisation commenced in 1993 had finally been won and was the first rail union campaign globally to see a full national rail system renationalised! Heady times indeed. One of my favourite quotes from the renationalisation is a quote from Dr Michael Cullen "Under a National Government in the 1990's, NZ was the first nation to privatise a hitherto national rail system completely, but that move had clearly not worked. From asset stripping to trading scandals, NZ's experiment with rail privatisation failed to produce much needed investments in this critical part of NZ's transport infrastructure. This is a long-term investment in NZ's future".

Following renationalisation we have two State Owned Enterprises, KiwiRail Holdings Limited and New Zealand Railways Corporation (NZRC is limited to holding designated crown railway land and leasing it to KiwiRail)



Wayne Butson—Former General Secretary and RMTU Life Member

who support Government objectives. There is a NZ Rail Plan which articulates the Governments Strategy for rail in NZ but has never locked in the long-term actual dollar funding framework to deliver it. What has continued as a key policy question in the NZ Rail sector has been the function of KiwiRail and open access to the network for others.

A Future of Rail Review was initiated mid-2020 and it categorised KiwiRail as the rail network operator. With its operation being;

- Above-rail, predominately commercial in nature, consisting of rail (freight and tourist) and ferry operations across Cook Strait, and management of a commercial property portfolio with commercial tenants typically in the freight and logistics sectors.
- Below-rail, predominately a public benefit operation, consisting of the ownership, development and operation of the rail network itself, such as

tracks, tunnels, bridges, track and train signals and associated infrastructure.

The completed review in 2023 reinforced that;

- Above-rail investment and operational decisions should be made on a commercial basis with a goal of self-sufficiency by FY24/25
- Below-rail operations are funded on a public benefit basis (NLTF and RNIP) with the support of Crown Contributions and track user charges paid by KiwiRail and Access Charges paid by metro and other users.
- That KiwiRail operate separate above-rail and below-rail financial accounts to “support transparent decision making”.

A big challenge for an SOE when the Government is seeking both commercial and public benefit outcomes for KiwiRail. Does NZTA have a similar burden for our nation’s highways I wonder?

So, we are getting to the nub of what I am trying to explain in this article. How does one entity deliver disparate outcomes for two parts of its operation whilst operating as a single vertically integrated entity is the debate moot. All whilst dealing with open hostility from Treasury, an aggressive trucking lobby and competitors looking to cherry pick profitable services and to operate unrestricted on the network for their own commercial benefit.

The debate centres on efficiency, accountability, competition and long-term investment in a strategic national asset. The RMTU national policy relating to Rail entity structure is for KiwiRail to be retained as a single vertically integrated entity as the Union believes that this is the best form to deliver the function of the NZ rail infrastructure network and operation.

Arguments for retaining KiwiRail as a vertically integrated entity;

- **Operational coordination and efficiency**
 - ▶ A single organisation controlling both infrastructure and operations can optimise timetabling, maintenance and investment decisions without the friction of inter entity negotiation.
 - ▶ Integrated control reduces delays and improves reliability because infrastructure and operations teams work to the same priorities.
- **Lower transaction and administrative costs**
 - ▶ Splitting the system introduces contractual interfaces, access agreements and regulatory oversight all of which add cost and complexity.
 - ▶ A unified structure avoids duplication of corporate functions and reduces compliance overhead.

■ **Strategic national asset management**

- ▷ Rail is a long lived, capital intensive asset. Government reviews emphasise that fragmented ownership can undermine coherent long-term planning and investment
- ▷ KiwiRail Argues that integrated ownership supports resilience, safety and consistent national standards across the 3700km network

■ **Alignment with public policy goals**

- ▷ Rail delivers emissions reduction, congestion relief and regional connectivity benefits. A single entity can more easily align with Government transport and climate strategies
- ▷ Integration supports coordinated delivery of freight, passenger and tourism services

■ **Funding and accountability clarity**

- ▷ As an SOE, KiwiRail can combine commercial financing with Crown investment which the Government has said supports efficient delivery and growth
- ▷ Keeping the NZRC and KiwiRail aligned under the SOE model maintains consistent governance

Arguments against retaining KiwiRail as a vertically integrated entity;

■ **Limited competition and market access concerns**

- ▷ When the infrastructure owner is also the main operator potential competitors may perceive barriers to fair access
- ▷ Vertical integration can discourage new freight or passenger operators who fear KiwiRail may prioritise its own services

■ **Risk of conflicting incentives**

- ▷ KiwiRail must balance commercial freight operations with stewardship of the public asset.

Critics argue these dual roles can conflict especially when maintenance decisions affect commercial performance

- ▷ Some reviews have questioned whether a single entity can simultaneously optimise for public good and commercial returns

■ **Transparency and regulatory complexity**

- ▷ Separating infrastructure from operations can make costs more transparent enabling clearer benchmarking and accountability
- ▷ Integrated structures can obscure whether poor performance stems from infrastructure condition or operational decisions

■ **Potential for under-investment or misaligned investment**

- ▷ If commercial pressures dominate investment may favour profitable freight corridors over broader national network needs
- ▷ Conversely, if public transport pressures dominate then commercial performance may suffer—Raising questions about whether a different entity form would better balance these goals

■ **International Precedent**

- ▷ Many countries (Aus, UK and Parts of Europe) have separated infrastructure and operations to promote competition and clear governance
- ▷ Critics argue NZ's integrated model may limit innovation and private sector investment

Overall Tension and conclusion

The core trade off in this debate is between efficiency and coordination (favoured by integration) versus competition, transparency and role clarity (favoured by separation). So which is more important the purpose of a thing (function) or

its appearance (form) or is it really that important? Recent reviews here in NZ have leaned toward integration with the emphasis on rail's strategic role and the need for stable long term investment. History has indicated that if NZ wants to have all the operation that KiwiRail undertakes then this will never be done on a pure financial self sustainable basis. Some lines and traffics are profitable but other cargoes are better suited to rail and not profitable. Some regions incentivise rail use to take pressure off the roads which is a public good. If KiwiRail was opened to unfettered competition from operators who only operate on the profitable corridors (e.g. Golden triangle) could they continue to operate these other public good operations at reasonable cost?

I believe that the history of the NZ Rail scene and KiwiRail clearly establishes that the best sustainable form of rail operation in NZ is as a single vertically integrated entity, we have seen and lived and died the alternatives.

In this debate I am strongly reminded of a quotation on a plaque that I read on a building in Auschwitz Concentration Camp with an old RMTU comrade John Murfitt during a study tour to Poland, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" by poet George Santayana.

I firmly believe and would argue that we must never repeat the days of vertical separation but, sadly, the debate remains active amongst those that put personal interest, goals and profit above our NZ Inc collective benefit, A belief that I believe in! 🌐

■ **Written by Wayne Butson, RMTU life member and former General Secretary**

Around The Branches

Northland

Greetings all from a very wet and soggy Northland.

We have had two retirements here in the North. A long serving John Paku with over 60 years' service and Henry Nepia over 40 years' service on the railways. This means we are losing over 100 years of experience with their retirements. They don't make them like that anymore!

The Northland Infrastructure Team has been restructured due to budget constraints and funding cuts. Basically, the Special Projects team is going to be disestablished and the three Business as Usual Teams are being scaled back to one

ganger and two track workers for each team. This is a loss of 7 roles. As a result of natural attrition and promotions to other roles we will only actually lose 2 personnel. It will be interesting to see the effects of what a potentially wet winter has on the track because of this reduced funding.

On the flip side, Northland Operations are looking for a Locomotive Engineer and a rail operator for Whangarei. Come join us and enjoy great beaches and fishing close to home, reasonable house prices and good schools. If anyone is interested or would like

more information, please email KiwiRail's HR team.

On the political front, we feel extremely let down by Winston Peters and the National Government for not funding the Spur Line out to Marsden Point. This means we have lost another year in building this new line that will need 4 years to settle once the earthworks are completed. This puts any potential income for Northland another year further out into the future. This impacts North Port's development at Marsden Point as well, as their business is based around the rail line.

Port Taranaki

It's been another steady period on the waterfront, with Port Taranaki continuing to show resilient performance across its core operations. Cargo volumes have held up in a challenging economic environment, supported by bulk movements and intermittent project work, contributing to stable overall business outcomes.

There remains national focus on the future of LNG and broader energy settings, with ongoing debate on supply security, transition planning, and infrastructure. These discussions have real implications for port activity and regional employment. It's important that as these decisions evolve, the impact on workers is front of

mind—particularly around job security, training, and ensuring a just transition that doesn't leave communities behind.

Health and safety remain a core priority across the port. We've continued to reinforce safe work practices, improve hazard identification, and encourage consistent reporting. As always, the real strength of any safety system comes from the workforce itself, and members should be acknowledged for the role they play in looking out for one another and keeping standards high.

From a union perspective, the branch continues to track well. Delegate engagement remains strong, and there's ongoing work to ensure members' voices are heard

across all areas of the operation, with members backing each other and the union continuing to advocate for fair outcomes.

Overall, it's a picture of a port holding steady through uncertain conditions, backed by a skilled and committed workforce, and a union team that continues to stand up and deliver for its members.

In unity.



Memorial Buoy Monument, unveiled last year, in Napier

Hawkes Bay Rail

Greetings from the Hawke's Bay Branch,

With summer now behind us, the 40km heat restrictions have been lifted, and operations are moving ahead positively across the region. It is encouraging news for the Hawke's Bay freight team in Napier, with an increase of an additional five wagons per day being added to the log train, resulting in a significant overall increase in additional tonnage moving through to the Port of Napier.

Remote Control Operator (RCO) training is also underway throughout May across two fortnights, while Freight teams

nationwide are preparing for the upcoming HSAT National Forum.

Our Track teams have been busy addressing mud spots, carrying out spot re-sleeper, ballast discharges south of Napier using the work train, and completing important drainage works.

Meanwhile, the Signals team has been focused on code work in preparation for the end of the financial year.

The Structures team continues to deliver substantial renewal work, including replacing structural timber members on bridges, the replacement of the old hardwood Bridge 15CA in the Manawātū Gorge with a new steel span and

mesh walkway, as well as ongoing culvert replacements. Looking ahead, a new signals gantry will soon be installed on Frederick Street in Hastings, replacing aging infrastructure.

Back at our depot in the Bay, the Property Management Group has been carrying out maintenance and improvement works on our buildings and within the yard.

Thank you to everyone for your continued hard work and commitment.

Until next time—speak up and stay safe.

Palmerston North

As briefly mentioned in the February issue of the *Transport Worker*, the Palmerston North Branch continues its commitment to strong representation, clear communication, and effective advocacy on behalf of all RMTU members across our depot and region. Below is an update on the key areas we are focusing on.

1. Continued Improvement of the Palmerston North Branch

The branch remains focused on strengthening representation, communication, and support for every member. Work is on-going to improve local processes, address longstanding issues, and ensure members have a strong and effective voice in all operational discussions.

Your feedback continues to guide this work. Member involvement is essential to achieving meaningful and lasting improvements, and we encourage you to stay engaged and share your views. A huge thank you must go to Dale Fagan, Ihaka Woon, James Down and Talia Windle for their input and dedication as RMTU Representatives.

2. Keeping Members Informed

We are committed to keeping all employees up to date with issues affecting the depot, the region, and the wider network. Regular updates will continue through meetings, bulletins, and direct communication so members always know what is happening and what the union is doing on their behalf.

If you have questions or concerns, please raise them early. Transparency and open

communication help us respond quickly, accurately, and effectively.

3. Holding Management to Task

On-going employee issues continue to stand out in the Palmerston North Depot. The branch will continue to hold management accountable for addressing employee issues promptly and appropriately. Where matters are not being dealt with efficiently,

4. Conceptual Roster—National Park

Palmerston North Locomotive Engineers had growing concerns that fatigue levels were becoming an ever increasing issue. Our Roster Reps went on to develop a conceptual roster, in consultation with KiwiRail through an HPHE process. The conceptual roster was drawn up by the Roster Planners and sent to Palmerston North for feedback.



Palmerston North Members Commemorate Workers' Memorial Day

the RMTU will escalate, challenge delays, and ensure that staff are treated fairly and respectfully.

We expect timely action, clear communication, and proper followthrough from management on all operational, safety and employment concerns.

Over the past week we've taken a close look at the **concept roster** developed by Chris Wyman, using the roster rules we supplied and the NIMT couplings he created. We want to share an update with members on how this roster stacks

up, what the early analysis shows and where things may head next.

The concept roster is **highly consistent**, with only a couple of very minor rule breaches—an impressive outcome given QRS can't detect these during the build stage. The general shift patterning

is tidy and predictable, which is something many members have been asking for.

What this means for members:

- Fewer violent shift rotations
- Less fatigue

- More predictable work patterns
- Potentially fewer unplanned absences across the depot

This is a significant improvement and one of the strongest arguments in favour of trialling the concept roster. Work in progress

In Solidarity

Hutt Workshops

What an interesting start to the year we have had with all the weather events. We have talked about being prepared both at home and at work, having grab bags and a plan if you need to evacuate. Making sure everyone is aware of your plan and knows what to do and where to meet if you are separated.

We are still sending team members to other depots to help with workloads.

The demolition of the old powerhouse structure has been completed.

Our branch chairman (Jerome) resigned and has moved overseas due to family circumstances. Our vice-chairman Paul Morrison has stepped up to fill the chairman role and one of our delegates Neil Hunt has stepped into the vice chairman role.

Our fortnightly raffles for a \$50 Pak n Save voucher are very popular and tickets sell well every fortnight.

We have a new gate installed at the Bell Rd entrance due to security issues.

Rail weld—we are in the process of receiving our rail shipment.

Workload is steady with some areas busier than others.

More management changes are happening in Rolling Stock now that we have a new Chief Operations Officer. Hutt Workshops is now waiting to see who our Site Manager will be once the role is advertised.

Wellington Rail

Transdev operational staff push back on having their public holiday Mondayised

Rostering for ANZAC Day and the Monday following (Public Holiday observed, with reduced timetable) was problematic for many Transdev staff.

The intent of, and how to apply, 'Mondayisation' of public holidays is clearly outlined in section 45A(1) of the Holidays Act 2003. However, many shift-working staff who regularly work Saturdays recently found

their ANZAC statutory holiday had been Mondayised. This created frustration, confusion and unnecessary pressure on staff to advocate for their rights.

Clarity and collaboration across Payroll and HR groups, with supporting comms to staff, would significantly enhance staff confidence that their entitlements will be upheld within TDW processes.

During the severe weather event on 21 April, a vehicle left the road and crashed through the wooden roadside barrier just south of

Takapū Road Station, and ended up on an obscured bend on the NIMT Up Main track.

Fortunately, passersby were able to assist the uninjured driver out of the vehicle to safety and Train Control were notified in time to alert approaching services of the incident, avoiding any further serious harm.

This is the second incident in the last 12 months, following an earlier incident in July 2025, and raises concerns about the effectiveness of

Across—Clockwise from Top Left: 1. Hutt Workshop's new powerhouse. 2. Sia Kurene with fellow workers (3, 4) commemorating Workers' Memorial Day in late April. 5. Hutt Workshop's new gate.





You can't park there...

the roadside safety barrier in this area.

LNIRIM—No Operator Announcement...

Following GWRC's Sept 2025 announcement that Alstom has been awarded the 35yr \$1066m contract to build the new LNIRIM (Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility) Tūhono fleet, there remains no formal announcement regarding the operator for the services, which will provide more frequent, reliable and sustainable public transport connections

between Palmerston North and the Wairarapa, and Wellington from 2030.

The RMTU has engaged with Alstom during the design phase for the new rolling stock. This early involvement in the process is a win for ensuring worker input into cab layout, ergonomics, and maintainability.

International Conflict, Fuel Prices & Patronage

The ongoing conflict in Iran continues to influence global fuel prices, affecting operational costs and

passenger behaviour. Patronage of services has increased, likely due to rising fuel costs encouraging commuters to use public transport, which is a win for rail.

Staff are also feeling the pinch of increased fuel prices, and while public transport is a preferred option, this is not available to all shift-workers who start before or finish after the regular timetabled services.

There has been a suggestion that Transdev explore the feasibility of an earlier morning KPL service to support staff facing limited

transport options, however only time will tell whether the goodwill is there.

“Get on with it”, but we’re not ready yet...

In early March, Metlink announced the roll-out of the new ‘contactless’

payment method using Visa/Mastercard cards, Apple/Google Pay, and smartwatches. However, because of a technological hiccup which has left onboard staff unable to verify payment, Wellington commuters can ride for free.

Now that this ‘free ride’ is widely known, RMTU delegates find themselves in a hastened process to find a solution, highlighting that it is important to ensure operational, safety, and industrial considerations are fully resolved before public announcements are made.

Nelson

The waterfront was already vibrating like a cheap amp at a biker funeral when the call came through. Forklift on fire! Not metaphorically, not industrial relations are heating up fire! Actual flames! Black smoke clawing as Port Nelson dusky skies. Like the devil himself had clocked in for the morning shift. Now sit right back and I will tell you a tale. Not some cheerful tourist bored fantasy about tidy little ships and smiling executive in hi viz vest, pretending they understand hardship, no this is a wharf side sermon soaked in diesel sweat and hydraulic fluid, and enough caffeine to stop a horse’s heart. The forklift went up hard and fast, the sort of blaze that makes every worker within eyesight suddenly remember where the emergency exits are. But credit where credit is due, the crew and the supervisors moved quick sharp no panic no chaos, just experience kicking in, like instinct. And No stevedore was harmed nobody going home in an ambulance with melted eyebrows, and a compensation form tucked under there arm. And that is the important part. Because behind every incident buried in corporate language and safety memos is a very real truth that every worker knows. Old gear pushed beyond its limits finally bites back. H&S doesn’t live in laminated posters on lunchroom

wall, it lives in maintenance schedules, proper staffing, functioning equipment, and a company willing to spend money before something catches fire.

Meanwhile fruit season has hit Port Nelson, the place is absolutely full noise, the gears stressed, the workers stressed, hell even the seagulls look fatigued! You can hear the cranes complaining if you stand still for long enough. Giant steel dinosaurs creaking against the wind, while management peers nervously at spreadsheets thinking that somehow productivity can outpace physics itself. Everyone wants more through put and quicker turn arounds. Squeeze the machines harder, push the labour harder, keep the wheels turning until something snaps! And speaking of pressure bargaining season now lurks, offshore like a storm front rolling towards the harbour.

But here’s the thing the Nelson executive didn’t wander blindly into this one, after surviving the CTU bargaining course the crew came out sharper and ready for action. Ready to argue the facts, ready to defend conditions, ready to remind the company the waterfront doesn’t move because of motivational poster and executive retreats. It moves because workers show up in the rain, the wind, the dark and the chaos and get the job done. Now the question becomes

whether the company is ready too because the workers are already on board.

And in the background beneath all the noise of peak season and bargaining prep there’s still the slow grind of unfinished business historically agreed commitments still waiting to be resolved while management occasionality develop selective amnesia whenever accountability comes knocking!

So, the union continues the fine art of subtle reminders, which in Nelson usually means persistent conversations delivered with enough pressure to make sure nobody forgets what was promised. No theatrics, no hysteria, just the Nelson executives refusing to let agreements gather dust in filing cabinets somewhere while someone upstairs, hopes the issue quietly dies of old age.

So, comrades we fight the good fight boots on concrete, salt in the air, machines screaming into the night, old gear held together by skill stubbornness and swear words, the port rolls on loud dangerous exhausted and alive, powered not by corporate slogans but by workers who know what keep the whole circus upright another day.

Strap in and stay hydrated.

Marlborough

As we head swiftly through autumn, change has been a distinctive theme in Picton, once more. We have navigated our way through our first peak season with the new two-ship operation since the retirement of the Aratere, in August last year.

With work now well underway, preparing for the new ships due in 2029. The no.2 berth has now been demolished which was preceded by the demolition of the vehicle access bridge which led to the road span for the top deck of the old rail ferries. The removal of this berth has changed the skyline of Picton, having stood in place since 1972.

Whilst the Picton team have adapted well to the new two ship configuration, a few things have become apparent most notably in terms of making time back when the ships are delayed and when one of the ships is on a scheduled lay-by or last-minute repairs resulting in cancelled sailings.

With making time back on delays proving to be more difficult

than with the former three ship operation, owing to the fact we used to have capacity available to shift affected customers whilst with this new operation we struggle to accommodate customers with some being pushed out by more than a few days.

It is even more apparent when either Kaitaki or Kaiārahi are cancelled due to mechanical issues with the ships ageing, it is going to become a more prominent issue for the department until the first of the new ships arrive in 2029.

Plans have been released to the Ferry Terminal Operators, relating to the new temporary berth that is being built for the current fleet whilst the new rail berth is built. This also means massive changes to the lines procedure with discussions starting with how this will look and work for us.

Interislander does have clouds hovering over its future regarding who will be the operator of the ferries in the future. With no concrete evidence stating what will happen,

it is certainly something we are keeping an eye on going forward.

There has also been change to the Picton operation of the Coastal Pacific, with KiwiRail deciding to move the check-in from the old railway station to the Interislander terminal which resulted in a significant loss of passenger seating in the Terminal to accommodate the new check-in. This was mainly in due to an increase in the rent by the owner of the station building. Whilst we were finding our feet with this change, it provided numerous areas of improvement being noted with feedback being sought after by Terminal management since the conclusion of the Coastal Pacific for its annual winter hibernation.

However as we continue to navigate these changes, whether they bring improvements or new challenges, the Picton team remains committed to adapting, improving, and delivering a reliable service for our customers and community.

West Coast

The West Coast has been for the most part been basking in sunshine in the lead up to winter with the exception of a couple of flooding events in the Buller. Locomotive failures in the DX fleet are becoming more regular and it is those on the ground that are really feeling the effects with loco swaps a frequent occurrence at Otira and Arthur's Pass. Fortunately the removal of shunters has not happened and these loco switch arrounds has been

a lot simpler with good shunting practices...who would have thought! Keeping with the theme of Otira, there have been many tunnel issues of late with fan, power and comms failures which has been making good use of the dedicated shunters to keep trains moving.

The Tranzalpine is back full time with the recent announcement of the winter schedule which puts us back to pre Covid times with visitor numbers on the up. This has meant a tweak to the off season roster

but overall business as usual. Two Greymouth LEs have also done the passenger training with more roster tweaks on the way likely.

The retirements are coming thick and fast with straight talking track inspector and union man Gubby pulling the pin and Barry Muirhead taking medical retirement with likely more to follow this year.

The new LE training package has been released and overall seems sensible apart from the removal of the shunting segment which is arguably

one of the most dangerous jobs and knowing what the movements are and what is going on is imperative both on the ground and in the cab though I am only speaking as an ex shunter.

Track improvements continue around the network with a week-long shutdown with track gangs, signal, bridge gangs and contractors all getting stuck into projects

along the Midland, Hokitika, Rapahoe and Ngakawau lines respectively. The Signal upgrade between Rotomanu and Stillwater is taking shape and before too long we will be getting the details of how it will all work though to many it seems like Track Warrant on steroids!

On the political scene Labour has selected Rory Paterson an

ex-school teacher, National has gone with local farmer Katie Milne and NZ First has gone with former Buller Mayor Jamie Cline to contest the recently vacated West Coast Tasman seat so it will be interesting to watch it all unfold. Make sure you are registered to vote and have your say.

Stay safe out there and if in doubt, don't!

Canterbury Rail

start by apologising for my lack of attention in such vital times.

Canterbury Kiwirail is going through one of those transitional periods.

We are all still working trying to keep things running, people retire and a few are hired.

But the lack of any funding is starting to be noticed, rail has seen these up and downs over the last 40 years.

But what we start to see is the lack of funding effects mechanical they are robbing Peter to pay Paul.

They take a part from a Loco that's parked up awaiting work to

keep another Loco running because they are not carrying stock.

The wagon repair depot is being ask to push maintenance checks out beyond what's needed and are always short on staff.

This then effects the condition of the track as what happens next in the rail network is more broken rail and with the lack of funding again, work is being pushed aside instead of being done.

All this is happening in a time when public transport and network should be the answer to get freight and people on to rail.

Thus saving on fuel by moving people and freight.

A good integrated public transport system is needed in all of our growing cities.

What we are seeing is that a lack of funding in vital areas of NZ economy health, public transport our very important wildness areas.

We should all be able to see what happens when these things are neglected by governments that tank the economy.

And then we are open to all the various loonies who are backed by money from offshore, effecting our very important lifestyle in NZ.

Lyttelton Port

Here is a summary of some of the events and issues in our Branch.

Workers Memorial Day, May Day & 1951 Lock out - a bit of background on both

Workers Memorial Day- held last Tuesday, Good presence from Kiwirail, Andy spoke well about how the government is decimating laws that protect workers health and safety at work, and encouraged

everyone to mobilise friends families, neighbours etc to vote, and vote correctly.

May Day International Workers Day Friday

Held at 2 locations, Race course and Bridge of remembrance. Originates from the workers struggle for a 8 hour work day. Number of speakers including Sandra Grey, the new CTU GS. All speakers

focused on mobilising the unions power to ensure this government is a one term government.

1951 Lock out 75 year anniversary commemorations

MUNZ organised events, the last one was Saturday with an album release by Adam McGarth "Wrecker Songs" remembering the 151 day dispute throughout NZ, but with a focus on Lyttelton. The lockout started off as an overtime

ban by the Watersiders union of NZ, after a general wage ordered by the arbitration court of NZ was not passed onto the workers on the waterfront.

The hostile government supported by the foreign shipping owners, locked out all workers who didn't agree to their terms. The community rallied around the workers, with draconian regulations being passed in Government, to force the workers back to work, including seizing union funds, and providing food to locked out workers families being a crime, to mention a couple.

Ultimately the waterfront workers went back to work, without the wage increase.

Amalgamation

We had a briefing from Aubrey and Pierce on what's going on in head offices and what has occurred at branch level.

RMTU Lyttelton and Munz Local 43 met 15 April. National officials also involved. Discussed the unions relationship and ways to move forward.

Agreed outcomes of the meeting were—

- A joint commitment to work together, in good faith, to build solidarity, unity and power.”
- Organise a joint meeting of the MUNZ local 43 members and the RMTU Lyttelton Port branch members, in the coming months.
- Both RMTU and MUNZ delegates will discourage members swapping membership between unions, especially during the current bargaining.

Since then we have been slagged off in the social media, and so I have not sought MUNZ signature on the joint notice”.

Will wait and see what happens next...



Abby Whitley—Otago's Second Female Rail Operator

LPC Policy Mandatory Health Assessment (MHA)

LPC are trying to change the agreed process at the moment. When an additional offsite assessment was required by LPC, the practice was if the appointment was during work time, allow our members to attend these without being disadvantaged, recently LPOC are expecting the Inland port members to go to these appointments and use sick leave to cover any lost time, this is not what sick leave is for, and this change in process is disadvantaging the member who is being required to attend something by LPC.

Drug and Alcohol Human Rights complaint

Reminder—Zero tolerance for drugs at LPC, there is little chance

of any mitigating factors that will allow the union to be able to keep your job if you test positive of any prohibited substances at LPC. Managers now have the ability to show any discretion as the policy makes it a tick box exercise.

What is also of significant concern is LPC now wanting to 'finish their process' meaning any ability to negotiate a resignation without the failed drug test result being on the employment record is a struggle. This means if you test positive, you will lose your job and when you go for another and if that company contacts LPC and ask specific questions relating to drug testing, LPC will be obliged to inform them of the failed test.

In Unity, Stay safe.



The Dunedin Local Industrial Council

Otago Rail

Kia Ora Comrades from Ōtepoti,

As the days become shorter, the leaves fall from the trees and the crunch of frosty mornings under our feet we know we are coming into winter and the low season in the freight world is among us. It's the time to get your delegates and working groups together and solve the issues at the forefront of what we do in the workplace. It's also a time to take an extra minute or two to organise your PPE for the day so you're warm, dry and safe out there on the front line.

Members at Dunedin Railways, or "Dunedin Railway Station" as the business has been rebranded to the surprise of many around the country, are doing their best to keep warm now that winter is hitting. The low season is here with slightly fewer trains running and a focus on rolling stock maintenance.

A viewing car conversion is one of the key jobs happening. RMTU members at Dunedin Railways met recently and now have two elected delegates. Membership numbers are growing slowly but surely. This will give the Branch the ability to represent members more effectively, and as management are often reminded, this is to the advantage of all parties involved.

In March of this year, Dunedin Freight Operations hired their 2nd female Rail Operator, Abby Whitley. We now have 2 women on the frontline and 1 woman Victoria Bower in the business support space AKA Camp Mother that sorts our PPE, phones, IPAD's when we break them, and everything in between.

Team Global Express (TGE) has had a few RMTU members leave TGE and new people come on board. Great time for the delegates

to sign up new co-workers and encourage them to attend branch meetings and the AGM which will be happening in August.

The turnout for the last branch meeting was disappointing as we had a Greens MP come along to the meeting and there were only 3 people that attended the meeting. Not enough for a quorum which is 5 for voting purposes. Let's hope the AGM has a better turnout. Information on the Otago Rail Branch PAID STOP WORK MEETING will come out closer to August.

But until then if you're free Mondays and Fridays between the hours of 1200-1pm get out and support our Firefighters in Ōtepoti. They show up for us, we need to show up for them.

I Kotahitanga
In Unity

COMMITTED TO

LIVING WAGE CITIES

**The RMTU is a living wage employer and recently signed the living wage charter
For more information on the living wage charter scan the QR code**

**Read our Living
Wage Cities
Charter here:**

