

THE ACTIVIST



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June 2026

Message from the Gen Sec

May was a great month to be Union. We started the month on May Day, international workers day, with Nationwide rallies organised by the NZCTU as part of the "Fight Back Together - Maranga Ake" campaign. On May 27, the six unions that are Labour affiliates meet in Wellington to prioritise the policy and legislation to present to Labour later that day. We then went on to the "Living Wage Cities Assembly" to hear from workers that are now getting the living wage and what a difference it has made and others that are financially strapped and below the living wage. The night finished up with the signing of the living wage charter. The theme was "Living Wage Cities Thrive".

The following day was the quarterly NZCTU National Affiliates meeting. The day was split between the normal meeting and a special "People's Budget" session at the National library. In addition to the participating unions, community leaders were also present. The "People's Budget" session was to identify priorities for an incoming Labour government, the listed priorities were then delivered to Labour on the parliament steps along with hundreds of protesting students!

There was some good news in the budget with rail funding secured for the next 4-5 years but this funding must be spent wisely. Sean Robertson, Upper North Island RMTU Organiser resigned June 2nd. We will be advertising for his replacement shortly.

Stay safe out there.
Todd Valster



Picton Load Marshal Rocky Lefo



Standing with Sally, Rocky and Nikko.

Please support this family as Rocky is currently fighting terminal cancer and give a little to help them, please follow the QR code to donate.



Rail Regulator- Waka Kotahi granted new legislative powers

Waka Kotahi/NZTA inspectors have been granted the function of issuing 'safety improvement notices to rail companies. Previously only Worksafe NZ had the legislative power to issue improvement notices to rail participants. The change was introduced in AMY following the passing of the Regulatory Systems (Transport) Amendment Act 2026.

Other changes include enhanced powers by Waka Kotahi to compel rail companies to provide information following an incident. To be clear the changes do not affect workers rights to silence when being interviewed by the regulator.

Kiwirail sentenced for electric shock incident

KiwiRail pled guilty to charges from Worksafe following the electrocution and serious harm of a Kiwirail traction worker and contractor. The workers were inspecting the Auckland overhead lines when the incident occurred.

KiwiRail was fined \$290,000 and 42,000 in reparations to the injured workers.

Following the incident Kiwirail has improved and introduced blue lights at isolation limits to give workers a strong visual cue they are at isolation protection limits.

The RMTU's 'Transport Worker' June edition will be making its way to lunchrooms by the end of the month. you can also find it on the RMTU website

Interislander

In May the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) released their report into the Kaitaki ferry loss of power in 2023. The ferry was carrying 864 people at the time of the incident. After losing power it drifted within a mile of the Wellington south rocky coastline in severe southerly conditions. The TAIC report found the incident was both foreseeable and preventable. A single degraded rubber expansion joint, which had exceeded its service life, was the trigger for the total loss of propulsion and subsequent blackout.

The TAIC report highlights that while the crew successfully recovered the situation, the ship came "too close to grounding" during a strong southerly. It also identifies six systemic safety issues, including inadequate emergency planning, a patchy common operating picture for responders, and the failure of Maritime NZ to establish a Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT).

The June edition of the Transport Worker has an article on how the incident highlighted the need for dedicated emergency response tug vessels for the Cook Strait.



TAIC report – Auckland SPAD was a close call

The SPAD occurred on 1 February 2025, Train 170S was operating as a regular freight shunt service between Wiri and the Port of Auckland.

At about 12.07 pm, it passed a signal at stop. The signal had been set to stop to protect a passenger train crossing onto the same track ahead of the freight train. The locomotive engineer applied the emergency brake before the signal, but the train still stopped about 50 metres beyond it. The passenger train cleared the track and continued without incident. TAIC Chief Investigator of Accidents Louise Cook said the close call shows the importance of layered safety defences. “This was close enough to matter. The train stopped in time, but in railway terms, only just. It’s the kind of event rail safety systems are designed to stop before it gets that far.”

TAIC found that three factors combined to reduce the crew’s ability to stop the train before the signal. The freight train crew were not sufficiently familiar with this complex area of operation. The locomotive engineer also became distracted and recognised the need to stop too late. And there were limited trackside cues to help the crew monitor their approach to the stop signal. “This isn’t about one mistake; it’s about what happens when several risk controls are weak at the same time,” said Ms Cook. To read the report click [here](#)

Marsden Point One Slip, Serious Consequences

A Tauranga-based RMTU member is recovering after a serious fall while carrying out container lashing work at Marsden Point.

What began as a routine shift ended with significant injuries and weeks away from work.

The incident is a stark reminder that waterfront work remains high-risk and that safety can never be taken for granted. Every hazard identified, every concern raised, and every safety improvement made has the potential to prevent the next injury.

As workers, we know that health and safety is not just about policies and procedures. It is about making sure every worker has the equipment, training, and support needed to do the job safely.

When incidents happen, our focus must be on supporting injured workers, learning the lessons, and preventing it from happening again.

We wish our member a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him back on the job when he is ready.



SOUTH ISLAND UPDATE

Collective agreement Bargaining

Port Otago MUCA has been ratified. It was along haul however we stuck to the task and got there.

C3 Dunedin Bargaining,

We are finalizing detail on BPA and hope to go to members to ratify new CA soon.

LPC

The Logistics Officers Collective Agreement is ratified. The LPC main Collective Agreement, we have had several days of bargaining and we are making progress however we feel this will be a marathon not a sprint.

Port of Tauranga Bargaining

We have met and and exchanged claims last week. We only had a few claims in regards to real wage growth, rosters and a couple of others. The Port has asked that we wait until the end of June to progress bargaining when the current roster trial has ended and feedback has been discussed.

Union Representation

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



Kiwirail- South Island update I

Ongoing evaluation of Otira operation phase 1 is complete, further testing is to be carried out, Otira/Greymouth Signals restructure, feedback given and awaiting response from KR management. This issue is still live, my view is that for safety reasons we need permanent staff based at Otira.

Midas Place toilet block upgrade is now complete.

Bargaining Initiated for Dunedin Railways and QM at Timaru. So only 4 CA bargains currently in play.

Log reduction forces changes in Bay of Plenty

Principles in the forest industry are advising Companies in the Bay of Plenty of the short term reduction of logs that they will process and cart in to the port by both truck and rail. This has meant that KiwiRail, C3 and Qube have started to engage with us to discuss their options during this time. We are working with them to come up with ideas and proposals on how we can keep up all of our members firstly employed and secondly engaged in meaningful work.

With C3 and KiwiRail we are looking at if there are any other tasks that our members could upskill in to create meaningful work during this down turn.

Qube are proposing large redundancies. We will be very involved in discussions and feedback with all 3 companies.

Electronic Voting

Just to remind our members that we have moved to electronic voting, we realise that this may be a challenge to our members as this is a new way of doing things. The reasons for the change are:

The members asked for it, this was passed at National Conference in 2022 and confirmed in 2024.

NZ Post, unfortunately the mail system has become increasingly unreliable, and we have struggled over recent times to get paper ballots to members and returned in time.

Cost, this has become huge in recent years with cost of balloting the entire union ballooning to over \$35k, we can do electronic votes for a fraction of the cost.

You can all support electronic voting by making sure you have the correct details on our database, if you have changed your e-mail address or cell phone number recently, please let us know you can e-mail [here](#).

Union Communications

As we negotiate these tricky modern times with changing technology, AI tools and smart phones.

The RMTU is changing too, we are keen to embrace these modern tools and to stay ahead of the game in this changing rule. Some of these changes have seen the RMTU staff utilise more modern software and we have had a big upgrade in our cybersecurity in order to protect everyone's private details.

The next step will be upgrading our ageing database to a modern cloud-based system, that will be more secure provide modern database management tools to enable better storage of information and communications.

The next step will be to create a social media presence to better communicate what is happening within the union to inform and comment on future developments.



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.](#)

Please note that the RMTU's preferred method of communication going forward will be phone or e-mail, voting will be electronic and we will be utilising electronic media.



RMTU signs Living Wage Cities Charter

General Secretary Todd Valster recently signed the Charter for a Living Wage city in Wellington along with other unions, faith and community groups all committing to make Wellington a living wage city.

The Living Wage considers basic expenses, and gives breathing room for rest, activities, or saving for a rainy day. It's good for collective wellbeing, and our economy.

The Living Wage is an hourly rate. Set apart from the minimum wage, it's worker and whānau focused. Paying the Living Wage rate is voluntary. Employers who pay the Living Wage want to make sure their workers get enough money to live with dignity.



Todd Valster signing the Living wage charter



For more information on the living wage. check out the website [here](#).



Don't forget to check-out the Transport Worker magazine this month for the next installment in our series on the '51 Waterfront dispute, we will look at the changes the government made to the law and how they restricted basic human rights. This leads on from last issue which looked at what happened, in future issues we will look at the role of women and the support networks they created. The last issue of the year will look at the lasting impact of the dispute and its effect on the contry.

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 an You need to update your details every time you move house.

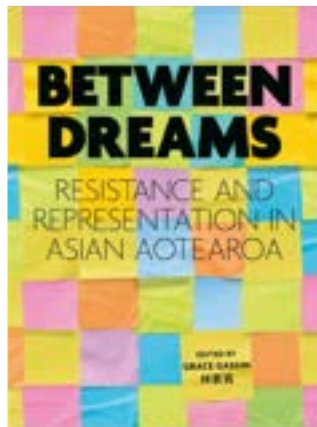
Between Dreams

In 2023, I was fortunate to be approached by my colleague Elle to contribute to a book written by Grace Gassin, which explores the struggles and dreams of Asians in New Zealand. I had the opportunity to participate in the section that discusses the Union and my journey to becoming a Union organiser.

Although unions exist in China, many migrants don't pursue union involvement after arriving in New Zealand. I have to admit, until I became involved myself, union was a foreign word and concept to my family.

In the book, I was asked about how I became a Union organiser, my family history, and our involvement. I highly recommend reading it—especially since it features an adorable photo of me in it. See Te Papa's website for [information](#)

RMTU Organiser
Shirley Horne



Stay Safe out there.



Please sign the Firefighter's petition. Fire fighters want to know how their employer FENZ is spending the money.

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.