

THE ACTIVIST



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July 2026

Message from the Gen Sec

Mānawatia a Matariki — Happy Māori New Year!

June was another busy month for the RMTU. Karen, Leighton



(NMC), Nicola (Wgtn Rail Branch Secretary) and I attended the RTBU NSW Locomotive Division Conference in Sydney. We will inform on this conference in the next Transport Worker. The ITF Rail Section Steering Committee meeting was in June as well. It was held in Argentina and online, 16 hours behind, so it was a rare night shift for me. The second planned potential amalgamation discussions meeting with MUNZ in April had to be postponed due to a state of emergency being declared in Wellington. A new date was set for June 26th, this meeting went ahead but again the weather gods let us down with hundreds of flights cancelled so the many of the team, both MUNZ and RMTU, had to participate online. We are due to meet again at the end of this month. We also had the 2026 Labour Congress in Wellington in the last weekend of June. The RMTU was represented, at this congress by Aubrey, Karen, Allan and I. It is fair to say there is a lot of work to be done before the election in November.

Stay safe out there.

Todd Valster



Khandallah rail collision



On Saturday June 6 at about 7 pm there was a serious incident on the Johnsonville where the train was directed down a run off road and struck a stop block at Khandallah. The train was carrying about 8 passengers who received minor injuries. Both the crew have reasonably serious injuries and off work while they recover. The incident is subject to an investigation by TAIC, NZTA and the employer. As it is part of an ongoing investigation we are not at liberty to discuss the event as we do not wish to influence the investigation. The RMTU is looking after all our members that were involved in the incident, providing support and representation. It would seem that not everyone was able to respect the investigation process with a lot of information released in the media as it is quite a high profile case.

Not one more life ! Why changing the Government is needed to save our health and safety rights.

Despite widespread opposition to the Government’s “reform” of health and safety, the contentious Bill passed it’s third reading by Parliament, done under urgency and ignoring the universal condemnation from Unions, industry leaders, professional associations and ACC who says it will drive-up injuries and cost.

Disappointingly NZ First Leader Winston Peters told the crowds who were protesting against the Bill that his party was against the Bill but despite that would vote for it due to their coalition agreement with National and Act. The only silver lining is the law won’t come into effect until April next year, under a new Government, hopefully.

Labour has committed to dropping the bad law. The NZ Council of Trade Unions-Te kauae kaimahi launched a petition signed by thousands to persuade the Government, to ditch the Bill that will weaken workers legal right to a safe workplace and take NZ’s already woeful health and safety record backwards.

The petition was led by Pike River families Sonya Rockhouse and Anna Osbourne. It was presented at Parliament on 24 June .



Show your support to ditch the Health & Safety Amendment law [bysigning the petition here](#)



Pike River families- Anna Osbourne and Sonya Rockhouse present the petition at Parliament urging the Government to reconsider the widely condemned changes to Health and Safety law



[Radio NZ article found here](#)

Moves to improve Ports accountability to Workers, Unions, Iwi and Community.

Labour MP Lemauga Lydia Sosene has introduced a Bill that will (if successfully passed) improve transparency of information and public access to information from the Port companies and their subsidiaries.

The Local Government (Port Companies Accountability) Amendment Bill is a New Zealand Member's Bill. It passed its first reading on 20 May 2026 and is currently under review by the Transport and Infrastructure Committee.

The Bill aims to make port companies fully subject to the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA), allowing the public including the RMTU and members to request information regarding major port decisions. The Bill also requires Port companies to act as good employers and exhibit environmental and social responsibility by considering the interests of the local communities they operate in.

The RMTU has written a submission in support of the Bill. To read the submission click [here](#).

The Bill passed its first reading on May 20, 2026 and is currently before the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee.

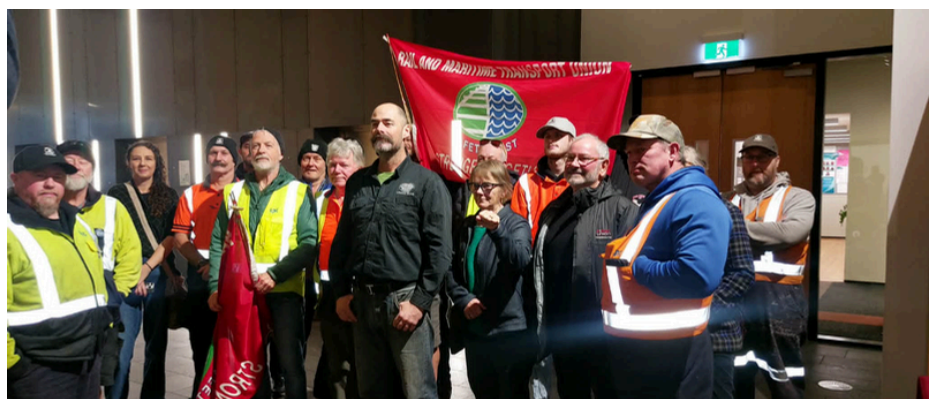
RMTU meets Christchurch City councillors following DP world's bid to lease and operate Lyttelton port.

The RMTU and MUNZ are very concerned about the implication of the recently tabled DP world led proposal to lease and operate the publically owned Lyttelton Port.

The bid known as the Tōnui proposal is led by Dubai based conglomerate DP World and involves three Ngāi Tahu Rūnanga.

RMTU members, represented by Lyttelton Branch Secretary Mark Wilson, addressed the Christchurch City Council's finance and performance committee to urge them to safeguard jobs. They urged councillors to use their elected power to insert a clause in the council's investment arm's 'statement of intent' to say the council supports the provision of a directly employed workforce at Lyttelton Port. He reminded the councillors they have the mandate to make the change and protect the port.

[See Press release](#)



RMTU Branch Secretary Mark Wilson (centre) and supporters at the Christchurch City Council meeting



Mark Anderson, LPC Carpenter, has retired after 49 years membership



Graham Norris, LPC skilled General hand, also retiring after 40 years membership, he urges us to "Stay Strong"



Kevin Gubb, KR West Coast Track Inspector and outstanding union leader retired May 1st.

Here he is receiving is certificate of appreciation by local John Valvoi. Kevin represented RMTU members locally on the Coast but also nationally on the Networks Industrial Council and wage rounds. A huge thanks to Kevin, he's a legend. Have a great retirement.



Another great union delegate retired on International Workers Day, May 1st. Garesh (Gary) Sukha retired after 46 years in Rail and the union. Gary was a great delegate for his team and also represented RMTU members nationally in the KR Freight Industrail Council and wage rounds. We wish you all the best, Gary. Hard to get a smile of Gary when taking a picture. Here he is receiving his certificate of appreciation.



Four wise retirees from the Wellington CT Site. Over 200 years of service and union membership

Log Volume Reduction Causes Major Consultation in the Bay of Plenty

The ongoing reduction in log volumes across the Bay of Plenty is having a significant impact on the region's supply chain and transport sectors.

As a result, major employers including C3, Qube, and KiwiRail are currently consulting with the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) regarding future workforce arrangements.



KiwiRail has proposed roster changes to accommodate the reduction in train services, including the suspension of weekend operations.

Members are considering alternative roster options as part of the consultation process. Discussions are also underway with employees who have accumulated high leave balances, with an emphasis on providing opportunities for them to reduce these balances during the downturn.

C3 has proposed a similar approach, encouraging employees with high leave balances to take leave where possible. The company is also consulting on roster changes within its planning and checkpoint teams.

Qube, however, has taken a more significant step, confirming a substantial number of redundancies.

Several RMTU members have opted for voluntary redundancy and are looking forward to retirement or pursuing opportunities overseas.

For many others in Tauranga, the situation is deeply concerning, particularly given the current challenges in securing alternative employment.

The RMTU is continuing to work closely with affected members to ensure they understand all available options and receive the support they need during this period of uncertainty.

In addition, C3 Warehousing is currently undertaking a separate restructuring process. The proposal includes moving employees to a 4-on, 4-off roster pattern with 12-hour shifts, and consultation with affected workers is ongoing.

Port of Tauranga Variations

The RMTU has successfully ratified two variations with members this week.

The first variation was agreed with the Cargo Services team and includes the creation of a new Senior Cargo Services Co-ordinator position.

The second variation was ratified with the Mechanical and Engineering team. This agreement includes the introduction of a new Fitter Team Leader role and incorporates the Advanced Trade Certificate allowance/rate that was negotiated during the most recent round of bargaining.

While these are positive developments, bargaining work continues across the business.

Several working groups are still progressing through their respective claims and discussions with the company.

Negotiations for the Terminal Collective Agreement remain on hold pending the outcome of the roster trial.

Once the trial concludes and the relevant data has been gathered and reviewed, the parties will return to the bargaining table to continue discussions.

Thank you to our delegates for your hard work to get these over the line.

NZ Council of Trade Unions offer Election Education – Delegate forums.

Click on the dates below to register

Delegates whose unions are affiliated to NZCTU Te Kauae Kaimahi can join us in a series of one-hour free online sessions designed to support and strengthen their work. A range of causes are available, so there's something relevant for different roles and interests. If you're a delegate, talk to your organiser to about signing up for a session that fits your kaupapa.



What this Government has taken from Workers 5 August, 10-11am

Join John Crocker, CTU Legal Counsel as he outlines all the anti-worker legislation that the current government has passed in only one term.

Worker Voices on Social Media 8 July, 6-7pm | 11 August, 3-4pm

Join Stella Whitfield, CTU Social Media and Campaigns Advisor for this online workshop that aims to empower union members to use their voices on social media. We'll be looking at developing the skills and the confidence needed to tell our stories online this election year.

Campaigning Skills 16 September, 6:30-7:30pm

Join Sandra Grey, CTU President for an online session on 'Campaigning skills'. We will be developing participants skills using simulated scenario.

Cost of Living

16 July, 12-1pm | 6 August, 6-7pm

Join Craig Renney, CTU Chief Economist, as we look at how the cost of living has changed over the past three years. We will examine how wages have moved, how different groups of people are impacted, and what can be done to help. The presentation is designed to be as accessible as possible, and will give those who join the ability to better understand what is likely to happen to the cost of living over the next few years.

Why Campaigns

26 August, 6:30-7:30pm

Join Sandra Grey, CTU President for an online session on 'Why Campaigns'. We will be exploring the rationale for union campaigns looking at recent NZ examples including equal pay, health and safety, and fair pay agreements.

Developing Campaigns

2 September, 6:30-7:30pm

Join Sandra Grey, CTU President for an online session on 'Developing Campaigns'. We will be exploring our organising responses, examining specific issues facing women, Māori and Pasifika; and learning from successful case studies.

Union coverage

- ASMS - [Severe specialist doctor shortage at Palmerston North Hospital](#) | 1News
- PSA - [Health NZ shelves major hospital restructure](#) | RNZ
- NZNO, PSA - ['No pulse, no pulse': The frantic moments as staff failed to revive patient found in ED toilet](#) | Stuff
- NZNO - [Waikato Hospital ED death: Mum and daughter describe chaos as staff tried to resuscitate man](#) | RNZ
- NZNO - [ED death: Mum and daughter describe scenes of 'absolute chaos'](#) | 1News
- NZNO - [Witnesses describe chaos as man collapses at Waikato Hospital emergency department](#) | NZ Herald
- ASMS, NZNO - [Why ED wait times are so long - and how that ramps up the risk of death](#) | Stuff
- NZNO - [Waikato Hospital emergency department witness says staff 'set up to fail' on night man died](#) | NZ Herald
- NZNO - [Leak forces repairs at Middlemore Hospital's ageing maternity block](#) | NZ Herald
- ASMS, NZNO, PSA - [Health budget shortfall: Unions warn of up to \\$600m funding gap](#) - [Newsroom](#) (paywalled)
- PSA - [Union warns of multibillion-dollar hit from National's KiwiSaver pledge](#) | RNZ

Employment issues

- [Health and safety bill passes third reading, Labour promises repeal](#) | RNZ
- [When the rule of law was torched overnight](#) | Newsroom
- [Council leisure centre worker wins \\$15k payout after unfair dismissal over secret side-hustle](#) | Stuff

KiwiRail/RMTU Safer Shunting Working Group

Terms of Reference (excerpt)

The purpose of the Safer Shunting group is to ensure shunting risks are clearly understood and that appropriate corrective actions are taken to manage them so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes bringing together representatives from RMTU, KiwiRail, and relevant subject matter experts to collaboratively manage harm risks linked to shunting hazards, improve safety outcomes through people-versus-plant principles such as separation, movement, and safe zones, and develop a future-state shunting strategy.

Since the creation of the working group (2022) we have seen a reduction on year of 30 collisions which is a 69.77% reduction.

Terminal Safety Campaign – RMTU Delegate lead. Visiting 18 terminals over 6 weeks.

6 Focus points.

- Range of vision and Disconnect / Attach process
- Alighting from moving vehicles and Radio Communication
- 10 Second Rule and Piloting

The group has been involved in reviewing rule changes and processes during the past 4 years. Well done to this Safer Shunting working group,

Auckland Traction HPHE

Following the 2024 traction incident at KiwiRail Auckland, the management team recognized that a significant shift in traction culture was essential to prevent future incidents like the electrical shock event.

By the end of 2024, Kristy Ferguson was brought in to interview staff and collect feedback on effective ways to improve the traction team's culture. Throughout 2025, KiwiRail focused on implementing internal changes with this group. After considerable effort, the new approach was finally launched.

Special thanks to Alex Twigg for providing guidance and ensuring the team stayed focused on the steps necessary for successful culture change.

Remembering Bernie Snook

Bernie Snook was a proud RMTU member and a Locomotive Engineer based at the Hamilton KiwiRail Depot. Throughout his career, Bernie was a committed unionist who worked tirelessly in support of his fellow members. Bernie served as an elected delegate on the RMTU National Management Committee and was also elected to the KiwiRail Industrial Council (KIC). Bernie passed away on Saturday, 27 June 2026, aged 66, following a long illness. Rest in love, Bernie. You will be sadly missed and fondly remembered.



Dual License to Operate - Remote Control Operator Agreement. KiwiRail & RMTU

This Union/KiwiRail agreement supports the implementation of Wabtec Remote Control Locomotive (RCL) equipment within KiwiRail Terminal Operations. Due to the similarities between the existing Arataki 1 and 2 remote-control systems, KiwiRail does not normally permit operators to hold dual Licences to Operate (LTOs). As the Wabtec RCL Operator Control Unit (OCU) is materially different, selected operators may be authorised to hold dual LTOs for the duration of the Wabtec RCL implementation project.

Selection Criteria

Operators must be approved by unanimous agreement of the: • Terminal Manager • Occupational Competency Manager • Wabtec RCL Terminal Trainer To be eligible, operators must: • Hold Remote Control Operator (RCO) certification for a minimum of two years. and not currently on any support process.

Conditions of Dual LTO

Authorisation Approved operators must use the Wabtec RCL whenever it is available. If the Wabtec RCL is unavailable due to equipment failure or training requirements, operations will revert to manual shunting. Agreed staffing levels must be maintained during manual operations. Where this is not possible, the operator may be authorised to operate the previous remote-control system. **Duration** Dual LTO authorisation is a temporary arrangement and will cease once the Wabtec RCL implementation project is complete at the operator's terminal. Signed by the parties. 3rd July 2026

TAIC report: Rangitata Bridge collapse prompts lessons for network-wide infrastructure risks- [Click here to read the report](#)

A bridge collapse on the Rangitata rail bridge on KiwiRail's Main South Line has exposed weaknesses in how scour risk is identified, managed and responded to across the rail network.

In a report published by the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TAIC) they say KiwiRail's systems for bridge inspection, asset management and severe-weather response did not adequately translate known risks into operational controls.

Floodwater scoured away riverbed material supporting the pier, causing it to collapse. No train was on the bridge at the time, a member of the public on the adjacent road bridge reported the damage.

Chief Investigator of Accidents

Louise Cook says the

Commission's report has lessons

for rail infrastructure across

New Zealand as severe weather events become more frequent. She said "Bridge 57 is a reminder that severe weather can quickly turn a known risk into a serious hazard,". *"KiwiRail knew this bridge was vulnerable to scour. The problem was not just the weather. It was the lack of clear, bridge-specific controls to match that risk."*

The Commission found KiwiRail's inspections did not consistently record riverbed profiles and their audit processes were not picking up the gaps. KiwiRail's asset-management system ranked scour risk across the national rail network, but did not prescribe the mitigation measures or operational controls or instructions to staff to follow for bridges identified as high risk.

The report highlighted a large gap in procedures and staff training. It said the track inspector had received no training in how to inspect a bridge under a river-flow event or to identify signs of scour. Their assessment was based on their historical knowledge, as opposed to a scientific and statistical basis that could have been implemented had a risk-based asset management approach been implemented.



Repair work on the Rangitata rail Bridge in April 2024

TAIC (Transport Accident Investigation Commission)



TAIC are investigating an incident involving the disablement of a passenger train in a tunnel on 30 May 2026. The Christchurch to Greymouth service, was travelling through Tunnel 9 on the Midland Line about 10km north of Springfield, when it stopped, unable to proceed. Reportedly it remained in the tunnel for about an hour and then exited. None of the crew or the 103 passengers were reported to be harmed.

UK train collision tragedy, train driver killed and over 100 passengers hospitalised

On June 19, a rear-end collision occurred on the Midland Main Line south of Bedford, UK. The driver of the trailing train was killed, 162 people were injured, and 100 hospitalised.

The RMTU has expressed our sadness and deepest condolences to our UK sister Union the RMT. The accident investigation is underway to understand what caused the incident why safety systems failed to prevent the collision.

In case you missed it check out the June RMTU Transport Worker Magazine, found on www.rmtunion.org.nz.



The RMTU Transport Worker June 2026



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.](#)

Union Representation



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

Stay Safe out there.

