Rail & Maritime Transport Union November 2026

THE ACTIVIST

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Message from the Gen Sec

Kia Ora,
We had our Bienniel Delegates Conference in Wellington, the 20th - 22nd of October. Attendance wise, this was our largest Conference to date. For 44 of the Conference Delegates or Observers (around 50%), this was their first RMTU Conference, this is encouraging for the RMTU to see potential succession in the future.
This was also our National President, Aubrey Wilkinson's, last Conference as Aubrey is not standing after his term ends in 2027. Conference was a great opportunity to thank Aubrey and his whānau at the Conference Dinner in the evening of day 2. Aubrey gave a heartwarming speech and presented a 'korowai' from him and his whānau to the RMTU along with a book to record the special events we take the 'korowai' to. Conference 2026 will be reported in the December edition of The Transport Worker.
The rail investment plan that was released last week by NZ First is promising, let's hope that regardless of who is elected, rail continues to get support and grows.

Stay safe out there.
Todd Valster



Wishing a happy retirement for Takina -Au (Taki) Wakely



The RMTU wishes Taki a well deserved happy and healthy retirement after 50 years working onboard the Wellington passenger rail network. Taki proudly accepted the RMTU's korowai to wear during the speeches. The korowai is worn during significant milestones and important events.

This is for the information and guidance of RMTU members only

Union warns Kiwirail new rail health assessment could lead to standdowns.

The Union has told KiwiRail we're concerned more workers will be stood down deemed "temporarily unfit for duty" if they introduce the 2024 NTC Australian Standard for Health Assessment of Rail Safety Workers. The proposed health standard includes additional screening for sleep apnoea and neurodiversity conditions such as ADHD.

In October the Australian Rail Union, the RTBU told RMTU conference Delegates the introduction of the sleep apnoea screening test called 'STOP BANG' led to 400 Loco Engineers stood down from duty. The STOP BANG test measures neck circumference, BMI and takes into account age, gender and whether a person snores. If a worker has 3 or more STOP BANG symptoms they'll be referred for a sleep clinic for assessment. The RMTU estimates a third of all LE's in NZ are male over 50 years, suggesting the introduction of STOP BANG could lead to a high number of LE's stood down.

The union wants KiwRail to agree to supporting workers if they are stood down from duty by providing medically appropriate alternative duties and maintaining normal pay without deduction to sick or annual leave whilst people wait for medical appointments such as sleep clinic assessments as part of their rail medical.

Our sister rail unions in the UK and Australia have negotaited provisions to protect workers against disadvantage. Without resolution this could become a discussion item in the MECA discussions next year.

Tell us your experience of being 'temporarily stood down' from duty

The RMTU wants to talk with rail members who've recently been stood down deemed "temporarily unfit for duty" following a rail medical assessment. We want to know whether you were paid as normal or required to use sick leave or annual leave, or provided with medically appropriate alternative duties. Members told the union the process is ad hoc and inconsistent across the country. The RMTU has raised the inconsistency and lack of policy with Kiwirail and asked for a meeting to discuss. Kiwirail has agreed to respond to the union in due course. If you have experienced being temporarily stood down due to a rail medical assessment, please email RMTU's Karen Fletcher at kfletcher@rmtunion.org.nz or call 027 600 6581

KiwiRail Loco Engineers vote on new rostering rules for relief links aimed at reducing fatigue and improving worklife balance.

KiwiRail Loco Engineers will shortly receive an email or text from the RMTU asking them to ratify the proposed changes to Relief link rosters. The changes include increased recovery time of 3 nights off following a blocks of night shifts, mandatory 3 nights off recovery. Changes also include flexibility for Kiwirail to take on new work using relief links.
LE's are encouraged to check their contact details are up to date with the RMTU so they receive the voting information from the union in the week starting November 9th.

Kiwirail Annual Leave Deductions

Over the last couple of weeks Kiwirail and the RMTU have been roadshowing around the country talking about annual leave deductions.

This follows a dispute that has been on going for six years, it is specifically about what the comapny deducts from our members leave balances when they take annual leave.

It does not affect sick leave, alt days or other types of leave.

This issue affects people who work shifts over eight hours and have lumpy rosters. A big failing of the Holidays Act is that it never accommodated shift workers. We also had a clause in the Collective Agreement which is not compliant with the Act specifying that a day is eight hours for the purpose of leave.

The proposed remedy is to represent and deduct leave in weeks and parts of weeks, instead of days. The remediation will result in existing members who are employed by Kiwirail who are owed leave having their leave balances increased. The calculation for existing employees will go back to 2008, which is the start of Kiwirail.

Employees for members who have left will be paid out at the leave value when they left going back to 2015.

As this is a change to members terms and conditions this will need to be ratified by the members. This will only be done when we have finished road showing and have addressed any questions that have been raised.

This vote will be an electronic vote as we no longer use mail votes. **Make sure we have your up to date details in our database, we need your cellphone number and email address.** Kiwirail employees can access the video presentation, an FAQ page and leave calculator on the KiwiRail Sharepoint: at

https://kiwirail.sharepoint.com/sites/HUB_HumanResources/SitePages/RMTU-Annual-Leave-Deduction.aspx

Please also contact your local organiser if you have any questions.



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. Or you can scan the QR code below to update your contact details.

RMTU's logo translated into Te Reo Māori

In October RMTU conference delegates were introduced to the RMTU's new logos translated into Te Reo Māori . The decision to create Te Reo Māori translations of these important RMTU messages is in keeping with our union's comittment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.









The RMTU requested the guidance of Te Kupenga Mahi for advice on the appropriate Te Reo Māori translation of the RMTU's two logos "Safety First" and "Stronger together". The process of translating English into Te Reo Māori requires consideration of the overall meaning of the words rather than a straight word for word translation. Te Kupenga Mahi offered the Union the following translation based on being correct in terms of Te Reo Māori and secondly to keep it as brief as possible so it can fit on the logo whilst still maintaining the integrity of the Reo.

Stronger together- "Kia kaha ake tātou". The words broadly translate to "Let us be strong together". 'Safety first' is translated to 'Me Mātua Marutau Tātou', meaning "first and foremost let us be safe".

The RMTU branches are encouraged to use the Te Reo Māori or English versions of the logo (or both together). Kia kaha te reo Māori!

Acting General Secretary

NMC members, Ian Walker, Josh Goodwin and I (Todd) will be travelling to South Korea for the International Centre for Labor Solidarity Conference. We leave Monday 9th November and return Monday 16th November. The Acting General Secretary during my absence is Karen Fletcher.

AOR Walk times challenged

Following union action and the hawkeye of our Delegate, Auckland One Rail has agreed to correct the Waitematā walk times, reinstating the 7-minute allowance between platforms and break locations. Concerns over Wiri walk times have also been acknowledged, with a full review now scheduled ahead of the February roster change. To recognise the ongoing issues, AOR has agreed to add an extra five minutes to every November shift and participate in a joint review of the walk-time matrix. This is a clear example of members speaking up staying sharp and the RMTU delivering results.

Seasonal Stress!

With Christmas just over seven weeks away, the pressure is on. This year has brought significant changes and challenges for many, especially with the opening of CRL in 2026. Auckland members have worked hard to ensure a smooth launch, and it's understandable if you're feeling tired or burnt out. Please take care of yourself and always make safety your top priority. Take your breaks; there is no shame in asking for what you're legally entitled to, and breaks are part of that. Report anything that feels off, and remember that it's OK to speak up and ask for help!!! With Christmas approaching and the cost of living rising, many are feeling the pressure to make the holidays special for their families. Remember, it's important to speak up and reach out for support when you need it.



AOR- Book-on supervisors: more than a sign-on desk

Auckland One Rail has been at it again proposing to cut 16 Book-on Supervisors across four depots in Auckland. These workers are the first port of call for Train crew and drivers on the busy Auckland network they provide valuable support functions to staff with access to speed advice and TSR's. Book-on supervisors help keep the depot safe and running. They check contractor permits and inductions, coordinate access and maintenance, support emergency evacuations, and help staff get urgent messages. When gates fail or plans change at the last minute, they respond. They also keep essential supplies stocked and support staff concerned about getting safely in and out of the depot late at night.

This work goes well beyond booking staff on. It provides practical, on-site support for safety, welfare and day-to-day operations. Removing the role would not remove the work—it would leave essential responsibilities needing to be covered. Book-on supervisors are worth keeping: protect the role, recognise the work, and keep that support at the depot.

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RMTU is advertising for two new Organiser positions in Wellington and Dunedin-see job ads below. Closing dates for applications are 24 November.



Industrial Union Organiser Jobs in All Wellington, Job Vacancies - Nov 2026 | SEEK

Find your ideal job at SEEK with 26 Industrial Union Organiser jobs found in All Wellington. View all our Industrial Union Organiser vacancies now with new jobs added daily!

SEEK New Zealand



Industrial Union Organiser Jobs in Dunedin Central Otago, Job Vacancies - Nov 2026 | SEEK

Find your ideal job at SEEK with 5 Industrial Union Organiser jobs found in Dunedin Central Otago. View all our Industrial Union Organiser vacancies now with new jobs added daily!

SEEK New Zealand

TAIC report released on electric shock incident in Parnell, 4 September 2024



On 4 September 2024 two rail maintenance workers (one KiwiRail and One Contractor) were injured, one seriously, due to an electrical arc flash whilst working under the electric overhead lines in Auckland. TAIC said in their report that "Track protection and electrical isolation limits did not align. Live overhead equipment remained within the worksite." TAIC recommended
KiwiRail enable workers to verify their protection. The isolation team had tested the electrical isolation, but it extended into the worksite and the line maintenance team who had travelled from another location lacked testing equipment and had no way to confirm that the line was not live at its work location.

TAIC also recomended Kiwirail adopt consistent location references. They said that some documented traction asset locations differed from their actual locations by 460 metres. The inquiry did not directly attribute the accident to that discrepancy, but identified an additional safety risk. KiwiRail accepted this recommendation. To read the report click **here**

TAIC opens new rail inquiry following Otira derailment

The TAIC Commission has opened a new inquiry following the derailment of a coal train inside and outside the Otira tunnel on 3 November 2026.

Derailment highlights importance of dedicated Otira based crew

The derailment highlights the importance of having a dedicated rail crew based in Otira. The team are required to use compressed air (CABA) during emergency situations in the tunnel. Their work is high pressure and specialist and requires experience and fitness to work in the tunnel and manage unexpected incidents.
The RMTU is opposed to Kiwirail's restructuring proposal to scale down Otira based operations and remove the dedicated Otira based team. Kiwirail's restructuring document says trains will run from Greymouth and Christchurch instead of Otira. The news comes as a blow to LE's and rail operators who fought to have a dedicated Otira crew following an Otira tunnel safety review. The tunnel is a unique environment and not all LE's are willing or able to operate in it. They believe having specialist staff is the safest and most efficient way to operate in the tunnel. Members predict that losing the dedicated crew will make the operation less robust due to complicated couplings and more room for error and disruption. The RMTU is concerned about the negative affect the proposal has had on staff moral. LE's have told the Union they're considering taking up the Australian Rail operator Horizons offer of employment and moving to Australia. Lets hope that doesn't happen.

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RMTU Union fee increase

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Inc
www.rmtunion.org.nz

5 November 2026

Kia ora,

The RMTU Biennial Conference Oct 2026, resolved that the membership subscription payable by members of the Rail & Maritime Transport Union be increased to the following:

- $9.80 per week for full-time members
- $19.60 per fortnight for full-time members
- $42.60 per month for full-time members
- $1.50 per day for daily casuals (no change)
- $4.90 per week or $9.80 per fortnight for part-time members working less than 20 hours per week
- $4.90 per week or $9.80 per fortnight for trainees/ apprentices until paid at or above Living Wage.

Would you please implement the increase from 1 December 2026.

Please note: Employers deducting additional Local Branch Fees on top of the membership subscription above will be contacted separately regarding the total fees payable.

Thanks for your help.

Yours sincerely

TODD VALSTER
GENERAL SECRETARY

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Worth a listen- Podcast
https://www.publicinterest.nz

Public Interest

Politics Updated Twice Weekly
Making sense of politics, power and the economy in Aotearoa NZ.

New research finds New Zealand's wealthiest families pay less than half the effective tax rate of ordinary New Zealanders – and the gap is growing. New research finds that the very wealthy paid an effective tax rate of just 8.1 percent on their economic income between 2021 and 2024, compared with 17.4 percent for the median-wealth New Zealander. And despite changes intended to make the system fairer, the gap has grown wider. To listen click here

Need a coffee?



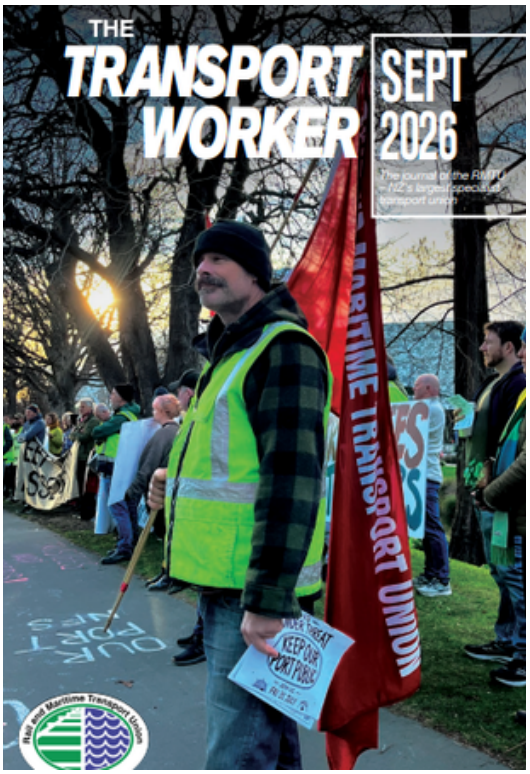
Make yours a Solidarity coffee where $10 from every 500g bag of Solidarity coffee sold goes direct to UnionAID for project work. unionaid.org.nz



In case you missed it go to the RMTU website. **www.rmtunion.org.nz.** or click on the image below.

If you're in Timaru- Victor Paea is celebrating his 50 years in rail on the 26th November





Stay Safe out there