

City Council backing Dunedin Rail commuter trial

Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Friday 15 May 2020

The commitment of the Dunedin City Council to a future for rail in Dunedin has been welcomed by the Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling campaign.

A motion supporting the campaign was put to the DCC Planning and Environment Committee meeting Thursday 15 May by Mayor Aaron Hawkins, which was overwhelmingly supported by Councillors.

Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling campaign spokesperson Dave Kearns says meetings are taking place with local MPs, councillors and technical staff to advance the commuter rail trial proposed by the campaign.

Mr Kearns says the only thing getting in the way of progress now is the DRL Board and senior management.

He says it is strange the DCL Board and senior management have not adjusted to the changed situation, with the CEO today stating in an email he was continuing to move towards 'mothballing' DRL.

"Someone needs to give them a call as they obviously aren't following the news."

Mr Kearns says the redundancies and 'mothballing' need to be put on hold immediately, as the announcement of a further 8 weeks of wage subsidies from the 2020 Budget would give adequate time to set up commuter services.

"It is clear the DRL Board has to be replaced as soon as possible as they are not acting in the best interests of DRL or Dunedin."

Mr Kearns says the announcement of a major injection of capital into rail as part of the post-Covid 2020 Budget is a very encouraging development.

The Minister of Finance Grant Robertson has stated he is not a fan of austerity and says "the way we will get through this is by investing in people, in businesses, and communities."

Mr Kearns says the message from the community, local Government and central Government is clear, and the DRL Board and senior management needed to get on board.

Wording of motion for DCC Planning and Environment Committee meeting Thursday 15 May 2020, moved Hawkins, passed 13 for – 2 against

That council;

1. Continues to see a future for rail in Dunedin;
2. Supports the Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling campaign as a vehicle for promoting that;
3. Continues to advocate for improved funding and policy settings for rail, and to explore funding and service delivery models for rail in the city where appropriate;
4. Requests a report in time for Annual Plan deliberations costing a feasibility study for a commuter rail pilot using Dunedin Railways Ltd assets, in time to be of use for the Regional Public Transport Plan; and
5. Explores funding options to offset the cost of this.

ENDS

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