

Port workers back port health and safety plan

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Unions representing port workers say a new port health and safety plan is a good start to making New Zealand ports safer workplaces.

The Port Sector Insights Picture and Action Plan was launched at Centreport in Wellington today.

The plan was the result of the collaboration of the Port Health and Safety Leadership Group which is made up of unions, ports and stevedoring companies, the Port Industry Association, Maritime NZ and WorkSafe. The PHSLG advises the Minister of Transport.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Acting General Secretary Todd Valster says the plan brings together a range of information on what is behind serious harm incidents in ports.

He says good progress has been made by the PHSLG and part of the success was that workers voices were being listened to.

Mr Valster says Maritime New Zealand has played a proactive role in developing the plan.

He says some key employers in the industry are showing better leadership on health and safety as well.

“This plan gives us another tool to make New Zealand ports safe workplaces.”

Maritime Union of New Zealand National Secretary Craig Harrison says some of the key aspects of the plan are locking in fatigue guidelines and an Approved Code of Practice for port operations.

He says unions have been advocating for these actions for many years.

Mr Harrison says there have been many examples of port workers being killed or seriously hurt on the job in recent years and change could not come soon enough.

“We have many large exporters and importers in New Zealand who we would like to see look at their supply chain practices and demand high standards from their stevedoring contractors.”

Mr Harrison says there is strong appreciation from port and maritime workers for the programme that Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety, and Minister of Transport, Michael Wood has driven forward recently in port safety.

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For further information, please contact:

Rail and Maritime Transport Union Acting General Secretary Todd Valster on mobile 0274454691

Maritime Union of New Zealand National Secretary Craig Harrison on mobile 027 422 5238