

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union
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Large scale KiwiRail redundancies will hurt restoration efforts

It would be a big mistake to shed staff at a time when considerable work remains to be done to restore New Zealanders' rail track and infrastructure asset, the union for rail workers says.

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union is participating in a joint series of meetings with KiwiRail management, for staff to hear KiwiRail proposals for 170 to 220 redundancies to contribute to spending cuts of \$200 million.

Wayne Butson, RMTU General Secretary, said that KiwiRail workers had listened politely to the KiwiRail management presentation, but were overwhelmingly against the proposals.

"Major investment and considerable work remains to be done if we are to restore New Zealanders' track and infrastructure asset to its pre-corporatisation/privatisation standard of the early 1990's. Now is not the time to be shedding staff while this work takes place," Wayne Butson said.

"Workers fear that this current initiative by KiwiRail may herald another major departure of key rail skills to Australia where the rejuvenation of rail transport is a Government priority."

Wayne Butson said the union was making sure KiwiRail workers had the opportunity to put forward all options for achieving cost savings whilst retaining key skills and trades, and were keeping a close eye on the proposals to make sure they were not a contracting out strategy by stealth.

He said that if any redundancies eventuated, they needed to ensure the future of the KiwiRail workforce was not put at risk.

"Our union has KiwiRail members who have worked on beyond the normal retirement age owing to the skills shortage and their passion for the industry. Volunteers should be called for across the KiwiRail business if there are redundancies and the redeployment and relocation provisions of the staff collective agreement should be fully utilised also."

"KiwiRail Infrastructure and Engineering is a part of the SOE where there has been job growth with high recruitment which has seen a lot of young people employed, especially young Maori workers. The future of the KiwiRail workforce needs to be looked after and retained," Wayne Butson said.

Further staff meetings are being conducted in Marlborough, Otago and Southland ending on Friday this week.

The RMTU would be making no further comment until the completion of the staff/members briefings on Friday, Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

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