

Media release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union
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KiwiRail safety audit missing vital link

Rail workers are stunned with KiwiRail's decision to block worker representatives from several important sessions of an upcoming rail safety audit.

KiwiRail's rail safety audit gets underway in Auckland tomorrow.

"KiwiRail appear to have learnt little from the Pike River Royal Commission if its approach to inclusive health and safety is anything to go by," Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"It has been established custom and practice to include the voice of workers at all levels since a Ministerial Inquiry in 2000 into the health and safety of railway workers, which saw the current audit system/process commenced."

"The Ministerial Inquiry came about because five workers died in twelve months leading up to May 2000. Eleven died between 1995 and 2000."

"Health and safety only works when there is a collaborative approach by the three legs of effective workplace H&S management (the employer, regulator and worker representative) all working toward shared and mutually agreed goals."

"Our union represents 85 per cent of KiwiRail workers. We are acknowledged within New Zealand as being a strong and effective voice for improved workplace health and safety. KiwiRail actions are misguided at best and outright hostile at worst."

"But the most distressing aspect of this is the foolishness of excluding worker voices at the table on health and safety. It is at odds with best practise, and is out of step also with proposed health and safety reforms currently before Parliament, which followed the disaster at Pike River," Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

For further comment:

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