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RAIL AND MARITIME TRANSPORT UNION MEDIA RELEASE

Rail union slams Auckland rail operator's "profit before people" attitude

The union representing Auckland train crews is slamming the company running Auckland commuter trains, the French-owned Transdev, for excluding workers from a critical safety audit on the basis its health and safety system is "commercially sensitive."

"Transdev wrote to us yesterday saying that worker representatives would be stopped from fully participating in an safety audit being done by the regulator, the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA), as the company's health and safety management system has so-called commercially sensitive information that only certain staff can have access to," said Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) General Secretary Wayne Butson.

"While we are being offered an opportunity to meet the auditor, worker representatives are being excluded from the full audit. This flies in the face of the letter and spirit of the new health and safety legislation and our agreement with Transdev around worker representation by marginalising the people who actually drive and staff the trains."

"More importantly, to exclude workers on the grounds that health and safety systems are 'commercially sensitive' strongly suggests a 'profit before people' attitude amongst Transdev's management. That's totally unacceptable given they are charged with safely transporting thousands of Aucklanders around the city every day," said Butson.

"Experience overseas demonstrates that such a mind-set greatly increases the risk of serious incidents."

"We have never experienced such a view being so openly expressed by a rail operator in New Zealand until now. We have written to Transdev expressing our concern and lodged a formal complaint with NZTA. If Auckland's rail network is to be as safe possible then we need to nip the 'profit before people' attitude in the bud and get the skilled staff who actually work on that network to fully participate in the safety audit," said Butson.

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