

Rail Union condemns Te Huia Auckland ban

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media release FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Monday 17 July 2023

The Union representing rail workers says an order from rail regulator Waka Kotahi that effectively shuts down Te Huia from Papakura into Auckland is over the top and makes no sense.

Waka Kotahi issued a Section 28 notice under the Railways Act last week to KiwiRail which prohibits the Hamilton to Auckland regional passenger train service, Te Huia, from entering the Auckland suburban passenger network.

Waka Kotahi believe Te Huia needs to be fitted with an additional safety feature – the European Train Control system (ETCS) – before it can travel through the Auckland suburban passenger network.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Todd Valster says this is an unjustified reaction by the regulator to recent operating incidents that are still under investigation.

He says the only trains currently fitted with ETCS in New Zealand are the Auckland suburban passenger electric multiple units.

Mr Valster says the Wellington to Auckland passenger train, Northern Explorer, is not fitted with ETCS and it runs through the Auckland suburban network, nor are the freight services that travel the Auckland network fitted with ETCS.

He says the entire Wellington suburban passenger network services and the Lower North Island regional passenger services are not fitted with ETCS either.

“Why is Te Huia being singled out for this unworkable decision?”

Installing an ETCS system is not a short term project, and threatens the existence of the Te Huia service, he says.

He says the solution is for Waka Kotahi and KiwiRail to work together to find a workable solution that addresses concerns but keeps Te Huia in full operation.

Mr Valster says rail workers involved in recent operating incidents are professional drivers and recent media coverage has been very derogatory towards them.

He says the media and regulator need to understand these incidents are still under investigation with causation not yet established.

“Our rail workers do not go to work to have operating incidents but when an incident occurs, it is very distressing for them.”

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

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