

Port unions says health and safety judgement must be appealed

Maritime Union of New Zealand/Rail and Maritime Transport Union joint media release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Wednesday 18 May 2022

Port unions will be pushing for an appeal against a court decision that has seen a stevedoring company walk away from health and safety charges.

A decision in the Napier District Court by Judge Rea last week has seen charges against stevedoring company ISO dismissed.

Workers employed by stevedoring company ISO were overcome by fumes in the log hold of ship Nord Yilan in Gisborne on 30 April 2018.

ISO was charged by industry regulator Maritime New Zealand for failing to comply with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act and for exposing the workers to the risk of death or serious injury.

Maritime Union of New Zealand National Secretary Craig Harrison says the dismissal of the charges is an error.

Mr Harrison says the decision sends a bad message to the industry – that employers will not be held accountable for worker safety.

“It was a miracle that none of the workers involved died and there could have been multiple fatalities. We are struggling to understand the logic behind the decision of the Court.”

He says that ISO have been involved in a number of serious incidents and continue to get let off or treated softly in the courts.

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson says there are some companies in the port industry who will need to be compelled to do the right thing in health and safety because their priority was profit.

“It seems unbelievable this employer has walked away when a number of their workers were put in lethal danger due to what we see as multiple health and safety errors.”

Mr Butson says the unions would like to see last week’s decision in the Napier District Court appealed by Maritime New Zealand.

He says the port unions are working with the Council of Trade Unions to press for fast and effective changes in health and safety in the ports industry.

ENDS

For further information, please contact:

Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson on mobile 027 496 2461

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