

Media release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU)  
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## **Rail workers join wall of opposition to work rights cuts**

Rail and port workers have joined other workers in opposition to proposed employment law changes.

Large union rallies got underway in Wellington today, to be followed next week by Christchurch and Auckland.

Wayne Butson, General Secretary of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, said that rail and port workers were particularly concerned by the proposals around multi employer collective agreements (MECAs).

“The rail MECA is the largest in the rail industry and covers over 3,000 workers at NZ Railways Corporation, Ontrack Infrastructure and KiwiRail,” he said.

“Rail workers fought hard to achieve this document. Losing the ability to negotiate across an industry, with employers having the option to just outright reject participating in a MECA, will undermine wages and conditions.”

“The government is quite prepared to facilitate competition amongst employers for a race to the bottom with wages and conditions with these changes, and they should be more honest about this.”

RMTU members were also opposed to a proposal to allow employers to walk out on bargaining, instead of being obliged to conclude negotiations in good faith as they are now, and proposals to dock pay for partial strikes, Wayne Butson

“Industrial action is very much a last resort for workers, and it is a decision they don’t take lightly. Allowing for pay to be docked for low level industrial action, and by how much at the employers’ discretion, is just part of a push to tilt the balance of power in the employment relationship further towards employers.”

“Our members are angry with these changes and will be supporting the rallies in numbers,” Wayne Butson said.

1500 workers attended the [rally in Lower Hutt this afternoon](#).

Ends.

For further comment:

Wayne Butson, General Secretary, Rail and Maritime Transport Union, on (027) 496-2461.