



Media Release

Rail & Maritime Transport Union 20 September 2017

Union Welcomes Investigation into Graffiti Attack on Train

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) welcomes yesterday's announcement by the Transport Accident Investigation Commission (TIAC) of the opening of an enquiry into the attack on an Auckland passenger train by a graffiti gang at the weekend.

"The RMTU represents drivers and on-board crews that staff Auckland passenger trains and we are very concerned at what happened to this train last weekend," said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

"The incident certainly warrants investigation, given that passenger and public safety should be the highest priority for anyone responsible for the operation of a passenger rail network", he said.

"Our members are telling us that the presence of the on-board Train Manager played a vital part in preventing the incident becoming more serious by ensuring the doors remained secure and calming passengers as the attack took place," he said.

"We expect the investigators will fully examine the role played by the Train Manager and as well as measures that could prevent such incidents in the future," he said.

"This is particularly important given that Auckland Transport and the franchisee that operates the trains on its behalf, French owned multi-national Transdev, is bent on removing on-board train staff, beginning next year. Auckland Transport are planning to deploy so –called 'Transport Officers' around the network instead of having permanent crew on trains. These people won't have the necessary powers to intervene in the event of incidents such as the one that occurred at Baldwin Avenue station on Sunday, nor is there any guarantee they would be on the platform or train at any given time. We think serious questions have to be asked regarding the wisdom of this as Auckland Transport seems to be adopting a piecemeal approach to passenger and public safety. Their recent announcement of a boost in the number of planned Transport Officers while refusing to maintain permanent on-board Train Managers, demonstrates a lack of forethought" he said.

"Experience overseas, as recently as last week during the attempted terrorist attack on a London underground train, demonstrates that on-board crew are vital in managing threats to public safety, to contemplate removing them is irresponsible at best and negligent at worst" he said.

"We look forward to the publication of TAIC's findings when the investigation is complete," he said.

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