

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media statement: 21 December 2016

Train drivers condemn KiwiRail's return to "dirty diesel"

The union representing the country's rail workers is condemning KiwiRail's decision to replace the current electric locomotive fleet on the North Island Main Trunk Line with an overseas-made diesel locomotive fleet.

"KiwiRail shouldn't cut corners. No one wants to return to outdated diesel locomotives," said Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) General Secretary Wayne Butson.

KiwiRail will phase out the existing electric locomotives over the next two years and replace them with a further eight Chinese-made and diesel-powered locomotives.

"Our train drivers want to reinvest in a clean energy electric fleet. The public is behind us on this too. But KiwiRail is cutting corners and making a decision that's going to hurt us in the future. The decision feels pre-determined."

"Our models show that reinvesting in an electric fleet is better for KiwiRail's wallet in the long term and it's better for the planet. The current electric fleet saves 8 million litres in fuel each year and the price of upkeep is only \$1.13 per km, but the Chinese-made diesel locomotives will guzzle the gas the electric fleet saves and the likely cost of upkeep will be \$2.27 per km."

"Diesel-powered locomotives are the past, not the future," said Butson.

"It's a no-brainer really. If we upgraded the electric fleet we could do it in a local workshop employing local people. Instead KiwiRail is sending money offshore to buy more 1970s technology that has proven unreliable time and time again. This is going to cost us in the long run."

"KiwiRail says the electric fleet operates like a rail system within a rail system, but just like the electric fleet the new diesel fleet can't operate on all North Island rail lines either. Our rail system already uses multiple wagon classes, multiple locomotive classes and follows multiple operating rules for different train operations and signalling areas. That's how a good system works. We don't need to switch to an entirely diesel-powered system. That means going backwards," explained Butson.

"Our members have always made it clear they prefer the electric fleet because they make for a smoother ride, they're quieter, more powerful, and the best option for the rugged Central North Island section and our clean green environment."

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About: KiwiRail's announcement can be found here: <http://www.kiwirail.co.nz/news/450/78/KiwiRail-announces-fleet-decision-on-North-Island-line.html>