

Media Release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union
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Safety concerns remain for rail workers

Concerns are growing among rail staff about the impact of KiwiRail's proposed staffing cuts, following a slip in the Buller Gorge last week.

KiwiRail is proposing to cut 170 to 220 jobs from its Engineering and Infrastructure division to contribute to spending cuts across the SOE of \$200 million.

Locomotive engineers and other operating staff have deep concerns about the impact any cuts could have on their and the public's health and safety, Rail & Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"The Buller Gorge Road closed to traffic last week because of a washout. There have been ongoing track problems in the Buller Gorge. Last time there was a slip the train hit the washout first, and thankfully neither the locomotive engineer was hurt nor the train derailed."

"The slip is in a bad place to get at and will take some fixing. Last time, there were restrictions on the temporary track laid to get around the slip for a very long time until it was fit for normal running."

"Members of our union work in a dangerous industry. Rail workers need to know that their safety will not be compromised by staffing cuts to KiwiRail's Engineering and Infrastructure division, to carry out essential work like that which will be needed in Buller Gorge."

Wayne Butson said workers would present alternatives to KiwiRail's job cuts proposals, and hold KiwiRail to its commitments to health and safety.

Ends.

For further comment: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson on (027) 496-2461