

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union
Embargoed until 2pm.
Tuesday 2 April 2013

KiwiRail TranzCoastal Suspension 'Misguided and Shortsighted' Says Rail Union

Today's announcement that KiwiRail will suspend its Christchurch-Picton passenger service, the TranzCoastal, over the winter months is both shortsighted and misguided, says the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU).

'Since the Christchurch earthquakes of 2010 and 2012 KiwiRail's Christchurch based passenger services have suffered a decline in customer numbers, but this summer has seen the reversal of that trend, and it does not make sense to stop running this train over the winter,' said RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson.

'What Christchurch needs right now is a demonstration by Government owned companies like KiwiRail that they have faith in the rebuild and the resurgence of the tourism business in Christchurch. KiwiRail's TranzScenic passenger services are iconic and together provide a blue chip tourist attraction all year round,' he said.

'There are plenty of businesses in the South Island who benefit from the tourist dollars that services like the TranzCoastal bring in,' he said.

'To suspend the service over the winter months is short-sighted, it sends a signal to tourism operators overseas that our own Government lacks faith in the rebuild of Christchurch and the resurgence in tourism in the South Island and beyond', he said.

'We acknowledge that passenger numbers will be down over the winter but it is misguided to suspend the service as KiwiRail will lose ground that it will need to make up in the Spring,' he said.

'Our union is pleased that no redundancies will result from the suspension of the service but we would have been much happier to see it continue to build on the momentum it has gained this summer as we enter the winter months,' he said.

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