

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union

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Reduction in job losses a small victory for common sense

A reduction in proposed redundancies at KiwiRail is welcome, but the significant jobs cuts that remain represent a failure of government policy on rail, the Rail and Maritime Transport Union said today.

KiwiRail will today begin a series of meetings with staff on a restructure to its Infrastructure and Engineering division.

In July it suggested job cuts as high as 220, with more next year, but this number has come down to 158, RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

“Our union pushed KiwiRail to take volunteers for redundancy and to not fill vacancies, and this has meant that the total number of compulsory redundancies is down to 29. That’s still too many, but it’s better than what we were facing.”

“We’ve fought hard to save as many jobs we could. With rotting Peruvian sleepers and hundreds of wooden bridges beyond their centenary of service, the last thing KiwiRail should be doing is laying off skilled workers.”

“We’re glad that KiwiRail listened to us and that some workers have had a reprieve but the reality is that these cuts go too deep, and rail workers are still unhappy that 158 jobs are going.”

Vital work won’t get done or will be delayed and that will compromise safety and performance. We’ll see more temporary speed restrictions in place and a greater potential for derailments and other critical incidents, with customers and staff paying the true cost of the cuts.”

Wayne Butson said KiwiRail was the victim of Government policy that is just plain wrong.

“We have an opportunity to create employment and build a world class integrated transport system using rail and instead we’re running it into the ground.”

“It beggars belief that in the 21st century a country like ours is reducing its planned expenditure on environmentally sustainable transport like rail, and expecting it compete in an open market with a road transport industry subsidised to the tune of billions of dollars.”

“The result is that the Turnaround plan is just that, it is a plan that turns us backwards rather than being blueprint to take the industry forward,” Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

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