

Auckland rail workers consider further action as Transdev and Auckland Transport ignore safety concerns

Auckland rail workers are again voting on taking industrial action as their employer insists on cutting staff on commuter trains, despite serious health and safety concerns.

“Transdev and Auckland Transport aren’t budging on driver-only operation, which will severely compromise passenger and public safety,” says John Kerr, Rail and Maritime Transport Union organiser.

“They want to make locomotive engineers – the people driving the trains – also responsible for passenger assistance and security. Rail workers know this just isn’t safe, and they won’t accept the risk to our passengers.”

An incident last Sunday at Meadowbank station, where a toddler was clipped by a train, illustrates the risk. “Without a train manager there, the driver would have been left alone to assist the injured child, call emergency services, and manage the public,” says John Kerr.

Rail workers have been in collective bargaining with French-owned multinational Transdev, since May. They went on strike in early December, but held off further action out of consideration for passengers at a busy and stressful time of year.

“We hoped that Transdev and Auckland Transport would see sense after the huge outpouring of support we had from commuters,” says John Kerr. “Unfortunately they have not.

“They’re trying to divide and conquer by offering drivers more money. But drivers know they can’t keep passengers safe if their attention is divided between monitoring train signals outside and watching the in-train security cameras. What are they supposed to do if a passenger needs assistance? They can’t leave the train running with no one at the controls.

“That’s why we need train managers on every train. They’re first responders in medical emergencies; they ensure all passengers, including those with disabilities, can safely board and disembark; they’re a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. With train managers on board, the public can feel safe knowing a skilled, uniformed member of staff is never far away,” he said.

“Strike action is the only tool we have to make management listen. We apologise to the public for the inconvenience, but we won’t put them at risk and we know we have their support for that.

“We call on Auckland Council and central government to step in and tell Transdev to keep our passenger trains safe.”

The ballot will take place over the next two weeks.

ENDS

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