

Media release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU)
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KiwiRail annual report highlights unrealistic expectations

Financial independence for KiwiRail should not come off the back of large staffing cuts and putting safety standards at risk, the Rail and Maritime Transport Union said today.

KiwiRail today released its annual report. It is in its third year of a ten year 'Turnaround Plan' established under the National government which expects it to be self-sustainable by 2020.

"The loss of 181 skilled rail workers is a significant blow for the network, and the government should explain to the public why it has put KiwiRail in this position," Wayne Butson, RMTU General Secretary said.

"We are hearing weekly from our members about the impact these cuts are going to have on safety, especially in areas of the network where there are already skeleton staff to cover maintenance and repairs call-outs. We haven't been satisfactorily assured that the staff cuts will mean KiwiRail can still maintain the network safely."

"What rubs salt into the wound for rail workers is that these staffing changes are not being made to support any strategic decision for the future of rail. They are the direct result of the faulty Turnaround Plan the government has required of KiwiRail, and are nothing more than an accounting exercise to reduce costs."

Wayne Butson said today's billion dollar announcement of road funding exposed the double standards that operate for road transport and rail.

"Trucking companies make profits and operating growth like KiwiRail does, but they don't have to fully fund roads or reserve money for natural disasters and network repairs like KiwiRail does."

"The Turnaround Plan is based on the faulty premise that KiwiRail should become self-sufficient and compete in an open market with a road transport industry subsidised to the tune of billions of dollars."

"In order to achieve this plan, KiwiRail wants to lay off 181 skilled rail staff. Something's not right here," Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

For further comment:

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