

Media Release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union
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Taskforce must serve as blueprint for health and safety

Today's independent taskforce report must serve as a blueprint for the future of workplace health and safety, the Rail & Maritime Transport Union said today.

Today the Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety released its report to the government.

"This report has been carefully and methodically put together and deserves to be implemented in full," said Wayne Butson, RMTU General Secretary.

"The recognition in the report that health and safety will only work effectively with the full participation of workers, employers and government is welcome."

"Members of our union work in a dangerous industry. They want to know that their workmates are free to return home safe and well at the end of their day."

"As Hazel Armstrong's book published this week has shown, when laws are shaped to protect the employer, and light handed co-regulatory safety models implemented, there are devastating consequences. The sorry tale of fatalities in rail in the 1990s will never be forgotten by many rail workers."

The report calls for more effective coordination between the new health and safety body and the transport agencies that regulate health and safety in their areas.

But Wayne Butson said it would be better for rail to be removed from the NZ Transport Agency and reside in the specialist health and safety entity.

"It is very difficult for NZTA to be both the regulator and enforcer of health and safety in rail."

"Rail operators require an [approved safety case](#), but the approval of these may provide a defence to the employer in the event of a prosecution. Annual audits by NZTA review the compliance with the approved safety case, not workplace health and safety."

"It is far preferable for rail to sit alongside other industries in the new specialist health and safety agency," he said.

Ends.

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