

Rail and Maritime Transport Union media release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Friday 3 April 2020

### **Lyttelton Port workers resist introduction of casual workers during COVID19 crisis**

Workers at the Port of Lyttelton are resisting the introduction of casual cargo handlers due to concerns about COVID19.

RMTU South Island Organizer John Kerr says there is concern about a Lyttelton Port Company (LPC) proposal to "bring in 24, and possibly up to 40, new casual cargo handlers."

He says the LPC has done good work in protecting workers from cross infection, including separating work groups into 'bubbles' to minimise the risk of COVID19 infection.

"However, introducing casual workers to the port is a risky move at this time," says Mr Kerr.

He says casual workers are not obliged to accept work on a day to day basis, and the proposal could introduce new workers into workgroups with no guarantee they will turn up for the following shift.

Multiple casual workers could be introduced into workgroups, increasing the risk of cross infection, he says.

Mr Kerr says the compromise solution is to employ fixed term relief staff on a guarantee of six shifts per fortnight.

This would ensure the new staff would be allocated to stable workgroups, which catered for the need for extra labour, while minimising the risk of cross infection for workers.

Mr Kerr says the RMTU shares the goal of keeping Lyttelton Port open and operating safely.

"We need to ensure that our essential workers are protected as much as possible, both for their own safety and to guarantee the flow of vital supplies to the country."

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