

Media Release: Rail and Maritime Transport Union
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National's ACC cuts will rip off workers

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union says latest moves to cut back on ACC cover for injured workers amount to the stripping back of a public asset ahead of privatisation.

"ACC works for injured Kiwis, and we want to keep it that way," RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said today, following the release of a select committee report considering ACC legislation changes.

"The National government is attempting to portray ACC as in financial trouble and in need of major reform, despite advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers and others about how efficient and cost effective a scheme ACC is."

"National simply proposes to shift the real costs of accidents and injuries from employers to New Zealand workers and their communities, to make ACC more attractive to Australian insurance firms if they get their way and privatise it."

"We already know that workers and society bear the brunt of workplace injuries as it is, and the changes outlined in the select committee report will only make it worse." (See note).

Mr Butson said the RMTU had particular concerns about moves to:

- cut cover for part time and seasonal workers,
- permit ACC to disregard a workers' previous income when assessing return to work
- deem workers vocationally independent when they're ready for 30 hours work, down from 35 hours
- force holiday pay to be counted and abated against weekly compensation if a worker loses their job, and
- weaken hearing loss provisions

"This bill is the latest in a series of attacks on ACC by National. It is not necessary and should be stopped now," Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

For further comment: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson on (04) 473-6693 or (027) 496-2461

Note: The former National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Committee estimated that of the total financial cost of occupational disease in New Zealand about 47% of the costs fall on each of workers and society (i.e. about 94% in total) and less than 6% on employers. See: <http://www.nohsac.govt.nz/techreport4/index.php>