



RMTU

MEDIA STATEMENT EMBARGOED UNTIL 2.30 PM,
TUESDAY 26 JUNE 2001

“UNION DECRIE’S LOSS OF PASSENGER TRAINS”

“The Rail and Maritime Transport Union are looking to business leaders, tourist operators and central/local government to work together to retain the *Geyserland Express*, *Kaimai Express* and *Waikato Connection* passenger trains which Tranz Rail has announced today will close”, RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said today.

Mr Butson was commenting on the announcement of the sale of the Tranz Scenic business to West Coast Railway and that the *Geyserland Express* (Akld to Rotorua railcar service), *Kaimai Express* (Akld to Tauranga railcar service) and the *Waikato Connection* (Return daily railcar service Hamilton to Akld) were not part of the sale agreement and would be closed by Tranz Rail.

Tranz Rail currently runs 9 passenger services as part of the Tranz Scenic service and have sold 6 to West Coast Railway and of those 6 West Coast is looking to close a further 2. More than 50% of the current long distance passenger services will either cease to operate or are under severe threat.

Mr Butson said “that at a time when we are hearing daily of the traffic chaos which exists on Auckland’s motorways it is bizarre for Tranz Rail to announce the closure of the *Waikato Connection* daily return commuter service between Hamilton and Auckland.”

“With the loss of the *Geyserland Express* the last train to use the Rotorua Branch will cease to operate and therefore the future of the line is in considerable doubt. If the tracks are pulled up then the line will be gone for good”.

“Tauranga is one of New Zealand’s fastest growing centres so it seems incredible that a fast, comfortable daily railcar service cannot be economically viable when the road link to Auckland is one of the busiest and most congested in New Zealand.”

“The best way of ensuring the long term sustainability of New Zealand’s current rail system is for the Government to step in an *Take Back The Track* and this is what the Union has been advocating since Michael Beard’s announcement to sell off Tranz Rail in October last year.”

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