



*Rail and
Maritime
Transport
Union*

DELEGATES HANDBOOK

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SECTION 1

The Delegate Role

A Crucial Job

The Delegate makes the Union.

The Delegate is the vital link in the structure of the Union.

More than any other Union Official it is the Delegate who makes the Union live in the workplace.

Often you are the first contact members have with your Union.

Your conduct and competence therefore contribute greatly to their impression of the RMTU.

Your actions contribute greatly to the strength of the Union. Organisation, education and action are the three vital components of the RMTU organising model.

In this section we explain what an effective Delegate does and how to go about doing the different tasks.

What the Job Involves

You have been elected Delegate by RMTU members at your workplace.

The Job involves: -

Recruiting new members.

Acting as a communications link.

Organising members to participate actively in the Union.

Monitoring compliance with the Collective Employment Contract and health & safety standards.

Assisting Branch Officers in dealing with management.

Assisting individual members with personal grievances.

Assisting injured members with ACC claims.

Recruiting New Members

Recruitment of new members is vital to the continued strength and growth of the Union. Staff do not automatically join the Union so an important part of your job is to ensure that all staff are encouraged and given the opportunity to join. Following are a number of suggestions on how to recruit members.

Some Suggestions

Try and recruit all the workers in your workplace. Aim for 100% membership at all times.

RMTU membership is voluntary and all staff can become members by signing an application form, which also authorises the automatic deduction of subscriptions from wages or salary when given to the administration clerk. All workers can be members of the Union whatever their employment status. It doesn't matter whether they are salaried or wage workers, casuals, contract workers, part-

timers or full-timers, junior staff or management staff.

To get 100% membership in your workplace you will need to:

- Know exactly who is a member. You should know this from personal contact but your Branchy Secretary can give you a computer printout of members. Make sure you get it regularly and check it.
- Always have a supply of application forms and useful brochures with you or in your desk or bag.

Always introduce yourself to new staff as the Union Delegate. First impressions count – make sure you give a good impression of RMTU. This means making them feel welcome, helping them get over any nervousness, being friendly. At this first meeting find out:

- Whether or not the new staff members has joined the Union.
- If they have any questions about RMTU.
- If there is any pamphlet or information about the Union that they would like from you or the Branch.
- If you can be of any assistance as they fit into their new job.

Get to know your administration clerks and encourage them to refer new staff to you when they put them on the payroll. Make sure they have a good supply of application forms.

Checklist

- Do you have 100% membership in your workplace?
- Do you know who the non-members are?
- Have you got plenty of application forms and the pamphlet on why they should join RMTU?
- Do you regularly get a printout of members?
- Do you check it for its accuracy and send it back to the Branch Secretary, RMTU to update their records?
- Do you introduce yourself as the RMTU Delegate to new staff?
- Do you make sure you are welcoming, friendly and helpful to them?
- Do you encourage all new staff to join the Union?
- Do you address staff induction courses run by your workplace?
- Do you foster a good sympathetic relationship with the administration clerk and encourage the referral of new staff to the RMTU?

Communications Link

A constant communication flow between members and the Branch and national union leadership is crucial to the democratic health and effectiveness of the Union; and it is not easy to get right.

The Delegate is the vital link in this information

flow to and from members.

This means that you will need:

- To seek your members' views on particular matters (make sure you give the majority viewpoint – but also listen to the minority viewpoint and give that too).
- To organise prompt delivery of Union publications and newsletters to members in your workplace.
- To organise a “union noticeboard” in your workplace to put notices and newsletters.
- To be well informed on your members' attitudes on issues. When matters arise at Union meetings you need to be able to say confidently “The members at my workplace think that . . .”
- If there are matters that you want to raise at a RMTU meeting on behalf of your members, make sure you ask the Secretary to place the matter on the agenda before the meeting.
- If you want a RMTU meeting to make a decision, then you will need to move a motion. The meeting will discuss your motion and vote on it. It's a good idea to discuss the motion and procedure with the chairperson of the meeting.

Checklist

If you are going to raise a matter affecting your members at a RMTU meeting, ask yourself the following questions:

- Have you got the majority and minority views of your members on current issues clear in your mind or on paper?
- Do you deliver newsletters and other Union publications promptly to members?
- Have you organised a Union noticeboard in your workplace?
- Do you keep the Union leadership informed of your members' concerns on current issues?
- Do you understand meeting procedures so that you can raise your members concerns formally at Union meetings?

Organising Members In Your Workplace

Organising is about empowering members to achieve change in their workplace.

Organising, education and action are the three vital components of the RMTU organising model which:

- Strengthens bargaining.
- Helps present a visible and credible threat of effective workplace action.
- Fixes workplace problems.
- Generates recruitment.
- Develops workplace leaders.

The Delegate's job is to organise members around issues of concern in your workplace, and around issues of common concern on a wider Union and community basis.

The Organising Method

1. Meet with your members and discuss the current issue.
2. Get members to suggest ways they might be able to do something.
3. Recruit volunteers for specific tasks. Talk about how they might do it and how long it might take.
4. Later on ring them up or call in and see how they are progressing. Be supportive.
5. Don't take the task off them and do it yourself – even if it would be quicker.
6. Repeat the process for every issue that arises and develop collective action to achieve agreed objectives.

And Remember

- Listen.
- Don't make assumptions.
- Don't argue.
- Be honest and don't evade the tough questions.

Monitoring the Contract and OSH

Your conditions of employment are laid down in:

- Your Collective Employment Contract.
- Acts of Parliament and regulations on health and safety, training, employment rights etc.

- Sometimes in Company manuals and local agreements.

The Delegate's enforcement role is to be familiar with all of the above and to monitor your workplace to ensure that they are all complied with.

The RMTU National Office and Industrial Officers will provide you with the resources, training and advice to help you to do this.

Helping RMTU Officers Deal With Management

You will find that as Delegate you will be called upon from time to time to represent your group of members at a meeting with management. This could be because:

- Members' are dissatisfied with a management decision.
- Some working conditions are unsafe or do not comply with agreements or the law.
- An individual member has a problem at work.

Here are some guidelines to help you:

- You should always contact your Branch Secretary and/or Chairperson and discuss the issue with them before taking any steps. They will decide whether there is any need to get advice or assistance from a National Industrial Officer.
- Make sure you have the support of the majority of the members concerned.

Never meet with a manager or Supervisor alone. You should usually have the Branch Secretary or Chairperson with you but if they are not available and you cannot wait until they are, take another Delegate or members with you to take notes.

- Take notes at the meeting (date, time location of meeting (date, time location of meeting, who was there, decisions made).
- Never leave a meeting without confirming what has or has not been agreed. “Could I just confirm that we have agreed that . . .” It is very useful to write down the agreement on a piece of paper before leaving the meeting. Even confirm it in a letter afterwards.

Report the results of the meeting to the members concerned. Never ever fail to report that a meeting has occurred.

Personal Grievances and Disputes

Delegates may be able to play a very important role in early preparation of a personal grievance for a member or a dispute involving several or all members in your workplace.

A personal grievance may arise where a member claims:

- Unjustified dismissal.
- Unjustifiable actions of the employer to the employee’s disadvantage.
- Discrimination.

- Sexual harassment duress in relation to Union membership.

A dispute is a disagreement about the interpretation, application or operation of an employment contract although there may also be disputes about other matters.

The role of the Delegate is to gather the information and establish the facts as accurately as possible. This may involve getting written statements from members and witnesses. Branch Official should be alerted as soon as possible and if the Branch Officials agree that the PG or Dispute has substance a National Industrial Officer should also be advised.

National Office has laid down written procedures for the handling of PGs and Disputes and the Branch Secretary has a current copy of these.

Checklist

- Always contact your Branch Secretary/ Chairperson before you meet management.
- Make sure you have got the facts right.
- Make sure you have copies of Agreements, etc.
- Make sure you are accompanied by a Branch Officer (or another Delegate at least).
- Have an agreed clear objective before you go into the meeting.
- Never agree to anything without first making sure it is what the members want.
- Consult a National Industrial Officer if advice or assistance is needed.

SECTION 2:

Union Support

Resources To Help You

Delegates are not expected to know everything. The Union provides a range of resources designed to make your job easier and more effective.

Help is provided in three ways:-

- Seminars and courses.
- Written guides and information.
- Professional advice and guidance from Branch Officers and RMTU National Office.

In this section we look at these three forms of help in more detail.

Delegate Seminars

Ongoing training and education programmes will be provided to help you learn the skills of the job and to educate you about the issues that will be facing the members. These include:-

- Basic training for new Delegates.

This is an excellent opportunity for new Delegates to gain confidence and skills and to meet each other.

- Health and Safety Training.

Ask your Branch Secretary what is available.

What About My Employer?

It is RMTU policy to get official recognition for all Delegates. In some cases there are informal arrangements for time off.

Publications

In Section 1 we stressed the importance of keeping members informed. Here is a brief description of some of the publications you will receive or are available to you.

The Transport Worker – the RMTU Journal

Every member is entitled to a copy. It is essential they receive it as it is the primary means of communication with all members.

Really try to deliver this personally and draw attention to any articles of special interest to the individual member but don't hold up distribution.

This is a great opportunity to be talking about RMTU affairs to members – don't see it as a chore!

Share the job with others. If there is more than one Delegate in your workplace, then share with them. Also there will often be members who are keen to assist in this work.

First read the Journal – then you can talk with the members individually about the material in it.

Report excesses or shortages to the Editor.

The Editor is also keen to get stories of local interest so be on the alert for any and send in contributions. They can be just a few notes, which can be followed

up and made into a story.

Delegates' Newsletter

This is a newsletter sent periodically to you. It is designed to be readable and to keep you informed on what is happening and where to go for further information. From time to time it will contain small posters and questionnaires or checklists.

Watch out for any item that will interest your members – make sure that you show it to them.

The Activist

These are regular newsletters on current issues sent to you for distribution to members and Noticeboards.

Special Reports

These are special, more detailed reports. You probably won't see them all unless you are a Branch Official. If there is one of particular interest to you and your members then ask your Branch Secretary.

RMTU Updates

These are leaflets normally sent to particular groups of members. They are often sent out in the middle of negotiations or disputes. It is essential that you distribute quickly any relating to your members.

Information Leaflets

These are special printed leaflets designed for you to give to any member who wants more information on any subject. Ask your Branch Secretary for them. You should keep copies in your Delegate's Kitset.

If you have suggested topics for further leaflets please write and tell the National Office, P O Box 1103, Wellington.

Other Publications

RMTU produces other publications such as the Rules, Policy Document etc, which should be contained in the Kitset, you receive from RMTU National Office. If you have not received a Kitset or have one that is incomplete contact RMTU National Office.

Dan Long Library

Situated in Wellington the Dan Long library is the largest trade Union library in the country. It is open to members and specialises in books on the trade Union movement in NZ and overseas. It also has resources on a wide range of issues such as health and safety, pay equity, industrial democracy etc.

Union Specialist Services

The Union actively promotes the general welfare of members and ensures access to specialist services including:-

Legal Services – the RMTU has employment law expertise, which will be utilised, where necessary in support of legal cases of benefit to union

members, personal grievance cases, ACC cases, etc.

Political – the RMTU will endeavour to influence the law affecting members and will make submissions to Parliament and work with Government agencies and other organisations on issues such as the Employment Contracts Act, ACC, Superannuation, Industry Training etc.

The Railways Staff Welfare Trust – run jointly with NZ Rail management. The Society provides a wide range of benefits and holiday housing for Tranz Rail employees.

Health Insurance – many port members already have access to health insurance negotiated through collective contracts. A union scheme, UNIMED, is available for RMTU members.

Death Benefit – a death benefit of \$1,000 is payable by the RMTU on the death of a current member and \$500 on the death of a current member's spouse.

PSIS – RMTU members are eligible for members of the Public Service Investment Society, which offers travel, financial and other services.

Superannuation – the RMTU is represented on the Trust Boards of the NZ Harbours Superannuation Plan and the Locomotive Engineers' Trust Fund.

Employee Assistance Programme

The RMTU is a joint partner in the Railway Employee Assistance Programme and has represen-

tatives on the EAP Council that oversees the programme.

People To Help You

Delegates do not work in isolation. Your strength comes from working together and supporting each other. It is important to maintain regular contact with other Delegates, not only in your workplace.

The experience of others is often valuable in solving problems. You can contact other Delegates by attending your Branch meeting or a list of other Delegates may be obtained from your Branch Secretary.

In addition to networks that Delegates operate themselves there are more than 21 Branches and Sub-Branches around the country.

Checklist

- Do you meet regularly with other Delegates?
- Do you know where your National Office is and have the telephone and fax number for the Industrial Officer responsible for your area?
- Do you know your Branch Secretary and Chairperson?
- Do you know specifically what support and services your Branch and National Office is able to provide on a regular basis?
- Do you consult regularly with your Branch Secretary?

SECTION 3

Know Your Union

RMTU : Getting to Know It

In this section we give you summary information about the Rail & Maritime Transport Union – what it does, how it is organised and how it works, including how policy is set. We also explain where to go for further information.

RMTU : What it Does

RMTU is a Trade Union. It does everything that you would expect a Trade Union to do – and it does it very well!

This means it:

- Organises workers into strong groupings to be able to negotiate effectively with their employer.
- Provides membership representation on joint union/management working parties.
- Negotiates with employers on a wide range of issues including:-
- Pay and conditions of employment.
- Health and safety issues.
- Staffing levels.
- Redundancies.
- Equal employment opportunity plans.

- Contracting out of work.
- Organising members taking industrial action where necessary.
- Takes disputes on behalf of members.
- Assists individual members with problems and personal grievances.
- Makes submissions to Parliament on bills/laws concerning topics of importance to members, such as accident compensation, industrial law, and pay equity.
- Responds to attacks on Railway and Port workers by politicians and others.
- Provides services to members including access to the PSIS and Welfare Society and Union Medical Centres.
- Grants university scholarships to children of members.
- Administers the Locomotive Engineers' Superannuation Trust Fund.
- Provides the Journal and other free publications for members.
- Makes grants and donations where appropriate to organisations and persons working in ways consistent with RMTU's objectives.
- Affiliates to other organisations working to the same goals as us.

The formal objectives of the Union can be found in Rule 4 of the Union's Registered Rules.

RMTU and its Affiliations

RMTU is affiliated to:

- NZ Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU).
- International Transport Workers Federation (ITF).

It is not affiliated to any political party.

NZ Council of Trade Unions

The NZCTU is an organisation, which brings together Unions from every area of the workforce and acts on their behalf on issues affecting workers as a whole.

RMTU is active on the CTU at all levels from the national to the district level.

Through the NZCTU we:-

- Get involved in discussions with the Government and employers on economic, social and industrial issues affecting workers.
- Get access to specialist advice and services.
- Work with other Unions on common issues.

How RMTU is organised

Following is a description of how RMTU is organised. The Rules of the Union are its constitution and each part of the structure is defined in the Rules together with a statement of its powers and functions.

National Conference

This is the supreme policy-making body in the Union and normally meets every year through it can be called together for special meetings when required.

It is made up of Delegates from Branches (or groups of Branches in a region).

The Conference reviews the previous year's activities, assesses the future and sets goals and policy programmes for the next year. Papers relating to these are circulated to Branches for discussion prior to the Conference. Branches can also submit remits to the Conference.

National Management Committee

The National Management Committee consists of:

- The President.
- The General Secretary.
- The Vice-President.
- Sector Members.

Its task is:

- To meet three-monthly and discuss and oversee the implementation of policy decisions and management of union resources.
- To carry out and enforce observance of the union Rules.
- To protect the interests of union members.

Branches

All RMTU members are members of Branches. There are more than 21 geographical Branches and Sub-Branches from Northland to Southland.

Each Branch has a Branch Committee elected annually for the Branch. The objects of each Branch are defined in the Union Rule Book. The Branch Committee is responsible for the operation of the Branch.

The Branch Committee consults members of the Branch through Delegates and when required will call special Delegates' meetings.

National Office Staff

The General Secretary manages the permanent staff of the Union. These staff attend to the administration of the Union and through Industrial Officers provide industrial support and advice for members and Branches. This staff operates from a National Office in Wellington and a Regional Office in Christchurch.

Policy Information

Union policy is made by proposals being debated at the Branches and then being voted on at the National Conference.

There is provision in the Rules also for the holding of a national ballot of the membership on any issue.

Principal Policies

The Union has a wide range of policies, which are updated regularly. A copy of the Code of Policy is available from your National Office or Branch Secretary. Generally policies are clustered around broad goals, namely:

- The effective organisation of members into a strong, well-resourced, democratically representative organisation, which maximises membership participation.
- The pursuit by negotiation of the best and occupationally safest terms and conditions of employment for our membership.
- A recognised and respected participative role for the union movement within the community.
- Active participation in the national and international trade union movement.

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