

Media Release: Rail & Maritime Transport Union
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For sale signs at Hillside workshops totally avoidable

Putting Hillside workshops up for sale would never have been needed if the government had a focus on keeping New Zealanders in jobs, the union for Hillside workers said today.

KiwiRail has today announced the sale of its Hillside rail engineering workshops in Dunedin.

This follows the reluctance of the government and KiwiRail to use recent procurement of new rolling stock to support local jobs, Rail and Maritime Transport Union General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

“KiwiRail’s decision to not bid for either the \$500 million contract for Auckland’s new trains, or for 500 flat top wagons, was resoundingly rejected by Dunedin workers, business leaders, the city council and others as taking a very short-sighted view of procurement,” he said.

“These moves led to 44 Dunedin workers at Hillside losing their jobs.”

Wayne Butson said that the government’s lack of any agenda for Kiwi jobs had been laid bare today.

“If government procurement settings do not support local industry, then we simply won’t keep good manufacturing jobs in New Zealand. This government is sitting on its hands, while one of KiwiRail’s most significant assets is privatised.”

Wayne Butson said that Hillside workshops made too important a contribution to the Dunedin economy and workforce to be closed, and the union would work proactively with prospective buyers to ensure a smooth transition, including the retention of its highly skilled staff.

“Our union has been in this situation before, with Tranz Rail and Toll, and have a track record of working with new buyers of rail assets.”

“Hillside should be a strong vibrant centre of engineering excellence. Hillside has a cohesive, motivated workforce, and we look forward to working with an owner with the determination and vision to make it succeed.”

“The taxpaying public, the local business community and workforce have the most to gain if Hillside flourishes and these green collar jobs and skills remain in South Dunedin,” Wayne Butson said.

Ends.

For further information: RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson on (027) 496-2461.

Note: Wayne is in Dunedin today, and returning to Wellington on a flight between 4.30pm and 6pm.