

Attn: Transport reporters

Media Advisory: Rail and Maritime Transport Union Monday April 19, 2010

Road safety compromised by drivers' long hours and low pay

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) is backing calls for an investigation into truck drivers' pay, and says that road safety will always be compromised when low pay and contracting arrangements force drivers to break the law to make a living.

Yesterday the Sunday Star-Times highlighted the pressures that owner-drivers face, with low pay leading to long hours, speeding and fatigue. Labour MP Darien Fenton has called for an enquiry on the links between poor pay and road safety.

"Our members also hear horror stories about long working hours leading to compromised safety conditions on the road," RMTU General Secretary Wayne Butson said.

"Most truck drivers in New Zealand are owner-drivers, and although their business arrangements are that of self employed, they are entirely dependent for their income on the big logistics firms, where they have no real bargaining power over their remuneration."

"This leads to all the unsafe practises that yesterday's article highlighted, such as disregarding maintenance requirements, being on the road for longer than is allowed and skipping on breaks."

"Our road safety will always be compromised while we have driver contracting arrangements that force people to break the law to make a living, and we are supportive of an enquiry on this matter."

Ends.

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