

# THE ACTIVIST



**Published Regularly - ISSN 1178-7392 (Print & Online) 5 February 2010**

## **16 FEBRUARY MARCH AND RALLY FOR ACC ANNOUNCED**

The leadership of the bikers 'bikeoi' to Parliament in November last year have teamed up with the ACC Futures Coalition (*RMTU is a coalition member*) to organise a march and rally on 16 February opposing the Government's attacks on ACC and supporting a model based on the scheme's original principles.

"When we came here last year we were concerned about unfair levies," said Brent Hutchison, organiser of the bikeoi. "We said we would be back, and now we will be – together with other groups who are feeling the impact of what the Government is doing to ACC. In November we were chanting 'who's next' and now we know. It is the worker in the dangerous job, the seriously injured person who is to be forced off ACC weekly compensation on to a benefit, the victim of sexual abuse, the worker who is forced to use up all their holiday pay before being entitled to full weekly compensation and the worker who is deemed to be suffering less than 6% hearing loss. It is all New Zealanders who are next because we all rely on ACC as our backstop, and we will be there on 16 February to tell the Government to leave our scheme alone."

"New Zealanders do not want their scheme to be cut back and privatised," said Glenn Barclay, spokesperson for the ACC Futures Coalition. "In 2008 Merrill Lynch advised their clients in Australia that they stood to make \$200 million a year from a privatised ACC. That is public money that will go to mainly Australian private insurers. Not only that, but a privatised system will be more expensive, less reliable and less able to address system-wide issues such as injury prevention."

"This is a short-sighted policy", said Barclay, "and we are asking New Zealanders to come along and show their opposition to these attempts to undermine our world-leading ACC scheme."

The bikers and the ACC Coalition are pleased to be working together on this event. The bikers will head to Parliament at 12 noon to listen to some of their own speakers, while others will march from Westpac Trust stadium at 12 noon. The route is along Featherston St, Brandon St, and Lambton Quay, to reach Parliament at 12.30pm. The march organisers are trying to arrange for a delegation to meet ACC Minister Nick Smith on the day.

"Our message is that ACC works for all Kiwis and we won't let the Government rip us off," said Mr Hutchison and Mr Barclay.

## **TOLL TRANZ LINK WAGEROUND REMIT CALL**

All branches are requested to forward remits from Tranz Link members to national Office from their branch. The remit call will close on 1 March 2010.

The core negotiation team for the RMTU shall comprise Jacqueline Poole (Chch), Jack Hingaia (Southdown) and Todd Valster (Organiser). The Union will be serving initiation notice for the renewal and renegotiation of the CA on the employer soon. Watch for the employer notice in response to the notice in your workplace shortly thereafter. Under the ERA the employer must advise all workers that an initiation notice has been received from the RMTU.

*This is for the information and guidance of RMTU members only!*

## IT ONLY HURTS WHEN I LAUGH - UNIONS RUN ACC ADS AT SEVENS

A union ad campaign on giant screens at this weekend's Wellington Sevens will take a light-hearted route to a serious message about ACC, the CTU revealed today. The adverts, featuring the fictional misfortunes of 'Borat' in his fluorescent mankini, aim to inform revellers about the very real threat to ACC protection from the Government's plans to cut entitlements and privatise the accident compensation scheme.

"Our ads will keep with the fun of the occasion for fans watching on the screens around Wellington while giving a gentle reminder that the financial protection from ACC that they take for granted is under serious threat from this government's policies," said CTU President Helen Kelly.

With the strapline "That's gotta hurt - but cuts to ACC will hurt more", the adverts will play between games televised on giant screens at the Westpac Stadium concourse, Queen's Wharf and Courtenay Place. The campaign was paid for by unions who are backing the march and rally at Parliament on Tuesday 16 February which will also involve the bikers' lobby, health professionals and concerned members of the public.

The adverts can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/NZCTU](http://www.youtube.com/NZCTU).

*The RMTU is a contributor to the cost of the ads.*

## HUTT WORKSHOPS OPEN DAY

The Open Day is to be held at Hutt Workshops on 28 February 2010. The open day is between the hours of 11am and 4pm. (Alternative date due to weather is 7th March 2010)

Entrance to the site during the open day is via the Bell Road gate only! No access from Elizabeth Street. Gold donation on the day with the proceeds being forwarded to the recipients chosen by the Lions Club. So far it is Wellington Free Ambulance and one other.

A flyer is being developed and will be distributed as soon as available.

This is a major chance for the workshop to highlight the work they currently do and what they are capable of doing. There will be displays from several suppliers e.g. Fletchers, BOC gas, Steel and Tube etc.

Ontrack have offered the new tamper, heavy rail vehicles and the like for a static display. They are also trying to get the KA and a few other steam locomotives to also display. There will also be a display board of union info and it will highlight the work of the RMTU Hutt branch, the delegates and H&S reps do.

The Lions Rotary Club is doing the volunteer work of car parking, organising entertainment etc

**SO IF YOU'RE IN THE WELLINGTON REGION MAKE SURE YOU DIARY IN AN ATTENDANCE!**

## SHARP RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT DEMANDS GOVERNMENT ACTION

The sharp rise in unemployment in the December 2009 quarter to 7.3 percent (the highest in 10 years) raises great concerns for the 168,000 unemployed, and for the continued recovery of the economy, said CTU President Helen Kelly. The rise brings numbers seeking work to the highest level since 1993 and considerably exceeds most predictions which were around 6.8 percent. "It raises real fears that, with unemployment still rising, we will see a peak well above 7.5 percent and unemployment lingering on at high levels for several years," said Kelly.

"The Government must refocus on jobs. Its growth agenda to be announced next week must have a strong emphasis on creating jobs and supporting workers and their families through these difficult times. This should include strong support for increasing skills acquisition and transition between jobs for those out of work. The numbers show that it is much too early to cut back on spending to stimulate the economy. We may be emerging from the recession but many New Zealanders have yet to experience this and need support."

Jobless numbers (those either officially unemployed, available but not seeking work,



or actively seeking but not available for work) rose by 72,200 people during the year and now stand at 275,900.

Long term unemployment is an increasing worry. During the year, the number of long term unemployed (people unemployed for longer than 26 weeks) more than doubled to 40,500 or 25.5 percent of all job seekers.

Māori and Pacific workers continue to be hit hard. Unemployment rates for Māori now stand at 15.4 percent or 24,900 people (up over the year from 9.8 percent) and Pacific peoples 14.0 percent or 12,300 people (up from 7.8 per cent a year ago). Youth unemployment (15-19 year olds) now stands at 26.5 percent or 45,300 people.

## FIRST ISSUE 2010 - TRANSPORT WORKER

Please send in all contributions, branch notes, pictures, gossip or funny stories to [wbutson@rmtunion.org.nz](mailto:wbutson@rmtunion.org.nz) or fax to 04 4710896 or post to Box 1103 Wellington.

**WE NEED THEM NOW!**

## KIWI RAIL GROUP – VEOLIA MECA UPDATE

To MECA or NOT Ballot papers, as required by the ERA 2000, will be leaving the Unions National Office 12 February going to all members who are covered by the Collective Agreements within Ontrack NZRC, Ontrack Infrastructure, KiwiRail Mechanical services (previous United Group), KiwiRail Freight (Previous Toll) and Veolia Transport Auckland. It is essential that members cast their vote quickly and send the completed ballot paper back in the reply paid envelope supplied. **Only the ballot papers returned will be counted!** We need a strong vote in favour to demonstrate to the employer how serious we all are to become "stronger together".

Please note that each trading company is a separate ballot and so each company ballot must be carried in order for the members within that company to be included within the MECA bargaining. Any company ballot not carried will cause the Union to be

required to initiate for a single Collective agreement for that enterprise.

We have sought a written assurance from KiwiRail that KRMS will have full backdating of any settlement to 1 April 2010 and await receipt of that confirmation. We have a verbal assurance to date.

## THANKS JEANNETTE! - CTU

Helen Kelly, CTU President, said today that the union movement has enormous appreciation of the contribution made by Jeanette Fitzsimons during her time in Parliament.

Kelly said: "Jeannette is a champion for the environment, a strong supporter of the role of unions in sustainable development, a voice of reason on climate change, and was a leader of the Greens during the period of a Labour-led government when they needed the Green Party votes in Parliament to ensure that many initiatives for social justice and in support of workers went through Parliament. On top of that the Greens promoted many of their own positive initiatives for workers."

The CTU worked closely with Jeannette on a programme on worker participation in energy efficiency projects. This was included in the 2008 Budget but was unfortunately scrapped by the new government.

Kelly added that Jeanette is not only extremely knowledgeable but also one of the nicest people in politics and always put the causes she supported ahead of any personal ambitions. It is typical of her to step down at this time and in this way to allow a new Green Member of Parliament to make their mark before the 2011 election.

## TAS BULL RAFFLE DRAWN

This year no RMTU member won the raffle so the Aussies' are happy! The full results are;

1<sup>st</sup> - (Ticket no. 01928) Lory Farrugia - MUA Vic Branch Life Member

2<sup>nd</sup> - (Ticket no. 02458) John Oxley - MUA Vic Branch Life member

3<sup>rd</sup> - A Newcastle Branch member.



## IMPORTANT RMTU DATES FOR 2010

<b>Workers Memorial Day</b>	28 April 2010
<b>RMTU Ports Forum</b>	4-5 May 2010 <i>subject to alteration</i>
<b>Annual Conference Remits Due</b>	31 July 2010
<b>42<sup>nd</sup> ITF Congress</b>	5-12 August 2010
<b>Annual Delegates Conference</b>	12-14 October 2010
<b>White Ribbon Day</b>	25 November 2010
<b>Transport Worker Branch contributions deadlines for printing</b>	<b>Issue 1</b> – 11 February 2010 <b>Issue 2</b> – 5 May 2010 <b>Issue 3</b> – 4 August 2010 <b>Issue 4</b> – 3 November 2010
<b>Branch AGM's (Election Officers &amp; Conf Dels)</b>	To be held in the month of <b>August 2010</b> as per rules & standing orders. <i>(Please liaise with your Industrial Officer and other local branches to ensure Gen Sec attendance).</i>
<b>National Management Committee Meetings</b>	<b>NMC 1<sup>st</sup> ¼ Meeting</b> 10 March 2010 <b>NMC 2<sup>nd</sup> ¼ Meeting</b> 9 June 2010 <b>NMC 3<sup>rd</sup> ¼ Meeting</b> 8 September 2010 <b>NMC 4<sup>th</sup> ¼ Meeting</b> 8 – 9 December 2010
<b>National Affiliates Council</b>	25 February, 27 April, 26 August & 25 November 2010

## GOVERNMENT LICENSE PROPOSALS UNFAIR - YOUTH UNION MOVEMENT

The New Zealand youth union movement, Stand Up, is calling on the Government to consider young people, especially young workers, before increasing the cost of driver licenses.

Stand Up Convener James Sleep says the Government's latest announcement is yet another move which will have a negative impact on the mobility of young people.

"With the Government's expressed interest in raising the driving age, along with a hike in ACC levies, this is yet another cost that young people will have to bear," said Sleep.

Sleep says the Government's proposed changes are simply unfair, and may in fact cause young people to opt out of paying for additional driver training such as defensive driving courses because they simply can't afford it.

"Many young people across the country rely on their license and car to access work, education and community activity. The Government's proposed license price hikes will only make it harder for young people to do so," Sleep concluded.

## STOP THE CELL OFF OF PRISONS RALLY

"It is the States responsibility to provide Humane and Safe containment of prisoners"!

Tuesday the 9th February in front of Parliament at 1.30pm

## NZEI – NATIONAL STANDARDS

The Government says National Standards will help our children do better. It claims the Standards will raise the achievement of Māori, Pasifika and children with special education needs, along with the overall performance of our education system.

These claims are wrong. There is widespread concern about the Standards from parents, educational experts, principals and teachers that the Standards are untested. There is growing support for the Standards to be



trials before they are implemented nationwide.

Why are educational experts, principals, teachers and many parents so worried about National Standards?

Untested: The Government is rushing to implement the Standards without any evidence that they will raise achievement. National standard regimes in other countries have failed and are being abandoned. New Zealand children are already achieving very well compared to other countries.

Demoralising: Not all children come to school equal. Some children have strengths and talents in parts of the curriculum, but not in literacy and numeracy. Labelling these children as failures will damage their motivation to learn.

One Size Fits All: National Standards encourage schools to march children through fixed annual levels for reading, writing and math's based on their age. In fact, children develop at their own pace, with wide variation in their progress.

Unnecessary: Schools already use a wide variety of assessment tools to identify children's progress and already know which children are struggling.

Inaccurate: Overseas, national standards regimes have led to the manipulation of data, inaccurate classification of students, inconsistent moderation of standards across schools, and reduced flexibility in the curriculum. Let's not repeat the debacle of rushed NCEA implementation.

Misleading: Media publication of National Standards data in the form of school league tables will create incorrect and unfair perceptions about 'good' and 'bad' schools. This will reinforce prejudice about low decile schools that may in fact be very effective in raising student achievement.

#### **National Standards won't work – what will?**

- More highly qualified and experienced teachers for children with the greatest learning needs.
- Support for teachers to boost effective teaching and improved understanding of students' diverse learning needs.

- Support for principals to provide strong community and professional leadership.
- Opportunities for all parents and whānau to talk about their child's progress and learning needs.

Talk with your child's teacher. It's the best way to find out how your child is getting on at school.

For more information go to [www.handsupforlearning.org.nz](http://www.handsupforlearning.org.nz)

### **16 RAILROAD DEATHS IN 2009 RENEWS THE CALL FOR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY**

<http://www.ble.org/pr/news/newsflash.asp?id=4938>

The Federal Railroad Administration is calling on all railroad workers to give heightened attention to safety in 2010 following 16 on-the-job fatalities in 2009. According to a January 26 letter from FRA Administrator Joseph C. Szabo, the 16 railroad worker deaths represent a "tragic toll" and he urges all current workers to "think about rules compliance and consider its impact on ensuring a safe return home after each tour of duty."

Among those killed in 2009 were two Brotherhood of Loco Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) members - Andrew R. Reed and Josh Osborn, both just 27 years old. They were working in the cab together for the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern Railroad (IC&E) when their train hit a misaligned switch near Bettendorf, Ill., on July 14, 2009.

"This tragic toll is more than just a number," Szabo wrote. "It represents human lives; a father not there to walk his daughter down the aisle, a mother not there for her son's first day of school, an employee nearing retirement who did not live to enjoy the fruits of his labor."

In the letter, Szabo encouraged all rail workers to avoid distractions and maintain complete situational awareness while on duty. "We must break down the barriers that keep us from achieving rules compliance, like taking a shortcut or yielding to pressure from a supervisor to unsafely expedite a move," he wrote. "We must take the time to ensure

each rule is complied with, and mentor fellow co-workers."

If managers pressure workers to rush through jobs and skip rule compliance, then they should be immediately reported to the FRA, Szabo said.

"If you are pressured by a supervisor to expedite a move by turning your back on the rules, report it," he said. "FRA will work diligently to ensure that the focus on rules compliance is consistent with each carrier's organization."

BLET National President Paul T. Sorrow extended deepest sympathies on behalf of the BLET to the families of all railroaders killed on the job last year, especially the families of Josh Osborn and Andrew Reed.

He also thanked Administrator Szabo for his commitment to safety, and urged all BLET members to heed this latest safety message.

"Joe Szabo is a former railroader and union member, so he knows what railroaders go through on the front lines and in the trenches," Sorrow said. "I encourage all BLET members to keep safety in the forefront of their minds each and every day, and to call out managers who seek to put profits ahead of safety."

**The same applies here in New Zealand so please make sure that we all do our jobs correctly – there is only one way of behaving at work – comply with the rules!**

## **MEDIA RELEASE: MANA COACH SERVICES ATTEMPT TO SUE TRAMWAYS UNION**

Mana Coach Service is attempting to sue the Wellington Tramways Union for an article published in a union newsletter in mid 2009 (see the article below).

Mana claim that the article breaches the terms of settlement of a confidential mediation at the Employment Relations Authority (ERA). However the Tramways Union believes the content of the article was already on the public record and not restricted by the confidentiality of ERA mediation.

The article relates to Mana Human Resources Manager Marau Russell trying to bully a driver into leaving the Tramways Union. The Tramways Union believe this has been common practice by management at Mana Coach Services.

NOTE: Geoff Norman ex Tranz Metro Wellington is the General Manager of Mana Coach Services.

The NZ Transport Agency (the NZTA) is asking for comment on proposed changes to driver licensing and driver testing fees. We have released an *Information Paper* which gives an explanation of the context and effect of those proposals.

## **DRIVER LICENSING AND DRIVER TESTING SYSTEMS - CONSULTATION**

The NZTA is responsible for managing the New Zealand driver licensing and driver testing systems. The NZTA's licensing agents issue and renew an average of more than 35,000 driver licences each month. Its Contact Centre handles nearly 700,000 driver licensing enquiries a year.

The law requires the NZTA to recover the costs associated with driver licensing and driver testing from licence holders. The fees were last reviewed in 2001 and, since then, the cost of providing licensing and testing services has become greater than the fees collected. The Information Paper sets out proposed changes to existing fees, and the introduction of new fees, to address this issue in a way that is equitable to all current and future licence holders.

### **Accessing the consultation material**

The Information Paper, with supporting material, is available on the NZTA's website at [www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/driver-fees-review](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/consultation/driver-fees-review) or by telephoning the NZTA Contact Centre on 0800 822 422.

### **Making a submission**



Submissions can be made online (via an online submission form), via email [info@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzta.govt.nz) or by post and should reach the NZTA by 5pm on 26 February 2010. Further information about making a submission can be found in the Information Paper.

## WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY REVIEW RELEASED

The Minister of Labour Kate Wilkinson has released the review of the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015.

The 10 year strategy was launched in 2005 and Cabinet decided then that there should be a review after three years' operation to determine effectiveness and any change required to ensure the strategy continues to be relevant and effective.

The review's findings confirm the strategy is soundly based and it is clear that we are doing a lot of things well and progress is being made. At the same time, more needs to be done at ground level and the review identifies new activity in areas where significant improvements in New Zealand's health and safety performance can be achieved. There is general agreement on the health and safety issues that need to be addressed. They include:

- improved focus and delivery for occupational health issues
- workplace capability and guidance (especially for small businesses)
- sector-based approaches, especially in high-risk industries
- competency standards for health and safety professionals
- worker participation in workplaces, including health and safety representatives

To address these issues the report recommends the development of a national action agenda that clearly articulates the priorities that will be addressed over the next three years; and establishing clear accountability processes for monitoring and

reporting progress to the Minister. The Department will be working with the health and safety sector to develop the action agenda and will present a draft to the Minister of Labour by the end of June.

The review report is available on the Department's website at <http://www.whss.govt.nz/>.

If you have any queries please contact us at [whssreview@dol.govt.nz](mailto:whssreview@dol.govt.nz)

## PAY RISES SLOW, BUT STILL COMING THROUGH

Though employment and hours worked are still falling, pay rates continue to show signs of upward movement, said CTU Economist and Policy Director Bill Rosenberg as Labour Cost Index and Quarterly Employment Survey figures were released today.

"Continuing these upward movements is essential if New Zealand wages are to move to parity with Australia, and we are to come out of this recession with a positive outlook," said Rosenberg. "There is little evidence of a pay freeze. Instead there have been modest pay rises."

"However there is cause for concern that employment is still falling, and unemployment has far from peaked. In the year to December, the number of full-time equivalent employees fell 2.5 percent and filled jobs fell 1.7 percent, hit hard by the decline in manufacturing and construction. Paid hours continued to fall. For many workers and their families, the recovery is not yet in sight. In these circumstances it would be doubly short sighted to allow wages to stagnate and risk the loss of stimulus to the fragile recovery that has started to occur."

Average wage rates rose by 4.0 percent in the year to December. The average ordinary time wage is now \$25.37 - a fall of 0.2 percent from \$25.42 in the September quarter but a rise from \$24.40 in December 2008. This further underlines the unfairness of the 2 percent increase in the minimum wage announced by the government last week.

The Labour Cost Index shows lower increases - 1.8 percent in the year to December quarter compared to 2.1 percent



in September for salary and ordinary time wage rates. The rise was 0.4 percent over the December quarter.

However, of those that received a rise, the median rise was 3.7 percent and the average increase was 4.4 percent, less than last quarter (4.8 percent) but still a significant increase.

Rosenberg added that he thinks there will be growing pressure on wages in the coming year.

### Do You Know...

In the last 5 months of 2009 there were 30 fatalities in the work place in NZ. That is 30 families that had one less family member to celebrate Christmas and New Year with – a very tragic and sobering thought. In whatever you are doing in 2010, make safety part of your day to day living. Whether at work or at home if you are not doing the job safely you are not doing the job right.

### MINIMUM WAGE MISERLY INCREASE – PROTESTS

The National Government has shown their contempt for low paid workers in New Zealand, by throwing 25 cents to those on the minimum wage.

Half a million workers in NZ earn less than \$15 an hour, and people simply can't make ends meet on such low pay. The day before Valentine's Day, join your fellow workers in nationwide pickets of your local National Party MPs offices. They have shown that they have No Love for the Workers - No Quarter from National!

So far the planning is for pickets to staged in-

- Auckland, Hamilton, Dunedin, Wellington, Invercargill, Whangarei, Rotorua

Txt Joe at 029 44 55 702 to participate. The pickets are organised by the Campaign for a Living Wage. spread the word! Invite all your facebook friends.

### BITS AND BOBS

- Timaru's Muff Road signage is to be upgraded in an attempt to deter its theft.
- House prices increased by \$2000 to \$416,167 in Wellington, decreased by \$8,500 to \$479,175 in Auckland and decreased in Christchurch by \$4900 to \$340,975.
- Port of Tauranga is trialling a new lighting system to protect timber exports being exported to overseas market from unwanted bugs. Normal lights attract bugs like "bees to a honey pot" whereas the new lights are meant to deter bugs.
- On a seasonally adjusted basis, permanent and long-term (PLT) arrivals into NZ of migrants exceeded departures by 1,800 in the month of November 2009. For the year to November 2009 PLT arrivals (86,500) exceeded departures (66,500) by 20,000. A dramatic rise in net population gain.
- In 2008, 178,506 students (or 37.5 percent of those enrolled) were borrowing under the student loans scheme.
- Wahine Memorial – The ships forward mast was installed in January at Korohiwa Bay, where many of the 53 casualties were found. The Wahine sank after hitting Barrett's Reef at the entrance to wellington Harbour almost 42 years ago.
- Lyttelton Port has applied for resource consent to deepen its navigation channel by 4 metres. Yet another example of every port positioning itself to service bigger ships. Bigger ships aren't going to call at every NZ port that is digging out its channel.

Let's Be Safe Out There & Remember.....

**"WE'RE STRONGER TOGETHER"!**

