

THE ACTIVIST



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Unite against COVID-19

Level 4 - New Zealand is currently at Alert Level 4. [More information on our alert level](#)

Your Union staff and delegates continue to work hard on your behalf to ensure that all members are treated lawfully and fairly during these unusual and uncertain times we find ourselves in. I want to give a huge shout out to our delegates and activists who are continuing to give their time, talent and energies to helping and assisting their fellow members at this time. Be assured we are in this together and we could not get through these times without your help and assistance. We are all truly grateful!

The industrial staff are all working from home with laptops and mobile phones and it is very much business as usual. Debby and Chelsea are also at home and have laptops and so membership data, accounts etc continue to be processed.

The vast majority of employers have acted responsibly and fairly in line with the Prime Ministers request for us all to be kind to each other but sadly there are some rogue employers that are not heeding the Government advice and request. We are continuing to work with these employers to get better outcomes for our members. It is becoming apparent that there will be companies that may not survive this lockdown and reports are appearing in the media of companies going into liquidation and receivership.

We have been endeavouring to keep members up to date on information by using the Union Facebook pages, text message groups and Activist Alerts etc. If you want to stay in touch with the latest info please join these groups.

We know this is an uncertain time for us all and stress levels will be on high however if we support each other and reach out when we need help then we will all get through this level 4 lockdown together. In almost all cases we have certainty with employers as to how they are dealing with the first four weeks of the lockdown and we are beginning to have dialogue in the event that level 4 is extended.

We are lucky in that the vast majority of our members are in the Transport Supply Chain or Public Transport and so maintenance of our workforce capacity will be essential when it is time to get NZ moving again.

The Government is beginning work on identifying infrastructure projects that can be commenced quickly so as to inject life into the economy and Transport will be at the forefront of their thinking. Whilst roads will be there, we are also

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

lobbying hard to have rail and ports infrastructure included on the list.

We are adapting to new ways of working and yesterday it seemed that I spent all day sitting in virtual conferences on skype, zoom or Microsoft team. There will, in my view be positives from this period of lockdown and that will be greater use of technology to assist us all in our daily work and hopefully less travel. KiwiRail's RSAS group have especially grasped the technology and there are regular video links to worksites where members get to have their say with bosses.

This issue of the Activist we will do a regional roundup of matters of interest and import to members.

NATIONAL

RMTU WEBSITE UPDATE

The home page of the union website – www.rmtunion.org.nz has a Coved -19 section and is being regularly updated with both employer and Ministry of Health generated information as it comes through.

KR MECA WAGE ROUND - UPDATE

Members employed by KiwiRail Group will be aware that the KiwiRail MECA expires 30 June 2020. We have called for remits with a closing date of **Tuesday 31 March 2020** and advised that **No late remits would be accepted.** This has all changed with Covid 19. We will monitor the situation with the virus and continue to receive remits until after we revert to level 2 lockdown in NZ.

When we emerge into level 2 or even 1 we will be entering an environment with a very different NZ and KiwiRail than it was prior to Covid. The financial damage being wrought on company balance sheets cannot be

ignored in the good faith bargaining environment which we live in.

The Employment Relations Act provides for Collective Agreements to live on "on their tenor" for a period not exceeding 12 months from date of expiry. If they are not renewed by this date then all members covered by the Collective go onto Individual Employment Agreements based upon the Collective. This

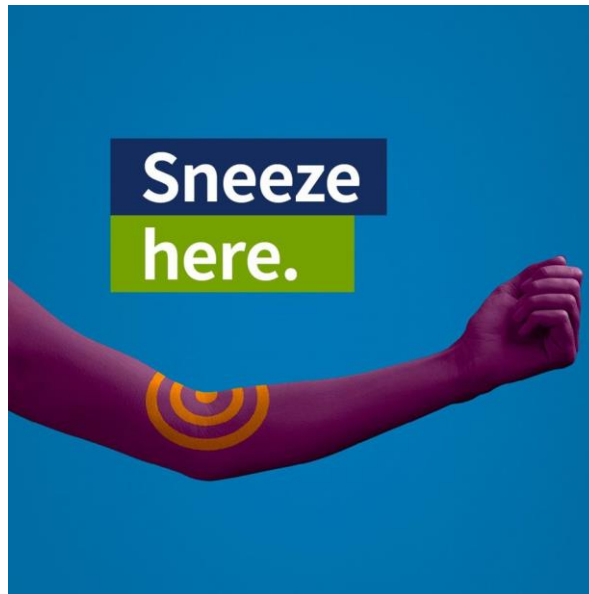
means all collective provisions die with the Collective, this includes clauses around consultation, delegate rights, health and safety management to name a few.

This is a situation that we must avoid and so we will need to assess whether, given the remits/claims from both parties, it is likely that a renewed Collective can be settled and ratified prior to this time trigger occurring.

A natural constraint on bargaining is of course the employer's ability to pay and Union remits by their very nature always require the employer to pay more and so the financial picture will be of utmost importance.

There is also the issue of strike action. As this is the only tool that we have to impose pressure on the employer we will have to see whether strike action will be supported by the community post Covid 19. Industrial disputes are very difficult to win without public support. We have seen during this Covid 19 lockdown the wins that supermarket workers achieved with strong public support. We also saw the benefits of strong public support during the recent Auckland and Wellington Metro bargaining.

This said we also believe that it is not in KiwiRail's interest to let the MECA languish as it presents uncertainty for their business and customers as well and so we believe that there will be a mutual desire to ensure that the productive working relationship is maintained whilst the company and the country are in recovery mode which may see



a short term renewal of the MECA to enable us to work together to rebuild the company balance sheet and cement rail's reputation and place in the transport logistics supply chain of this great country!

We would appreciate indications from branches and members as to how they feel about the subject matter of this update.

TOLL NETWORKS

Toll Networks work has dried up to a level that is well below the 30% required to access the Government announced wages subsidy. Toll's response has been to apply for the subsidy and divide their workforce with workers taking alternate weeks off. Members are still being paid their full wage for an 80 hour fortnight. Anyone over 70 or with a compromised immune system is being put off and being paid their base rate for an 80 hour fortnight. Toll continues to monitor the situation.



CLEANING SURFACES AGAINST COVID 19

Droplets containing the Covid 19 virus are too large to stay in the air for long, so they quickly settle on surrounding surfaces. The virus has been found 'live' on plastic and stainless steel surfaces for up to three days

Surfaces or objects that are frequently touched by others should be cleaned before and after a person touches them – clean it first (e.g. handles, levers, steering wheels in pool vehicles, door knobs, shared desks and phones).

Cleaning products

- Use a disinfectant that is antiviral.
- Surfaces need 10 seconds of soaking with the disinfectant for it to work.
- For phones, radios and other more delicate surfaces, soak a disposable

towel or cloth and wipe the surfaces thoroughly.

- Use clean cloths or disposable towels to wipe surfaces.

The most effective antiviral sanitisers are:

- Products containing Hypochlorite
- Activated Hydrogen Peroxide
- Standard Bleach
- Products containing an alcohol i.e. ethanol or isopropyl
- Methylated spirits can also be used

Hand sanitiser should contain at least 60% isopropyl alcohol to be effective.

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE MECHANICAL INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

There is now a place on the Mechanical Industrial Council for a women's representative. This is a position will represent women working in RSAS

at KiwiRail, nationwide. This position was available at the last round of elections but no one put forward a nomination. It is an important position as KiwiRail look to employ a more diverse workforce and provide women with a voice within this group of workers. The RMTU has been approached by members who now want to represent their fellow workers and, therefore, we are going to run an election for this.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from the RMTU website and need to be sent to head office by 1700hrs 3 April 2020. If more than one nomination is received then postal ballots will be sent out shortly after the closing date and we will look to have the position filled by April if no ballot and mid May if there is a contest for the position.

ONLINE HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING AVAILABLE

Due to the inability to run face to face training during lockdown, Worksafe Reps are offering two of their training courses online for H&S Reps and Managers

Online Stage 1 (initial) Health and Safety Rep training

This online course equips HSRs with the skills to promote a safer and healthier place of work and also covers Unit Standard 29315. Successful completion of the unit standard (via the assessed quiz and fillable PIN) allows an HSR to exercise their powers to issue provisional improvement notices (PINs) and direct unsafe work to cease.

Team Leader/Manager /Supervisor H&S training

The aim of this course is to provide Team Leaders, Managers and Supervisors with skills knowledge and competency that will assist them to provide health and safety leadership and compliance with the Health and safety at Work legislation. This is a non-assessed online training course.

For more information go to <https://worksafereps.co.nz/health-and-safety-courses-online/> or ring 0800 336 966



NORTHERN REGION

TRANSDEV AUCKLAND

One of TDAK's responses to Covid-19 has been to isolate train managers in the back cab. They step out at stations and then return to the safety of the cab when doors are closed making sure they keep the required social distance. Auckland Transport had a stockpile of hand sanitisers, but these were requisitioned by the Government for front-line Health workers leaving TDAK short. TDAK have been trying to make sure the Cabs and lunch rooms have hand sanitisers and look to have sourced some that won't be here until next week. Alongside this TDAK have gone to

Sunday rosters but paid at their master roster hours and Train Managers are now being put on stand-by in exactly the same way drivers are. TDAK are also providing 10 days special leave for those that have to either self-isolate or who contract the virus. Those who are 70 or over or who have compromised immune systems have been put on special leave. There is also Meanwhile, those who can, will be working from home. The RMTU delegates have been doing a sterling job working with the company for the good of the members.

CAF

Where TDAK and KiwiRail are trying to do the right thing in difficult circumstances, CAF have failed to show real concern for their employee's health and safety and the seriousness of the crisis. CAF are doing the bare minimum. No special leave for self-isolation or becoming ill with the virus. Workers are expected to use sick leave and annual leave. The company will magnanimously allow people to take annual leave in advance if they remain sick, or run out of both annual or sick leave. This is a company that increased its global revenue take by 27% and an increase of 21% in profits over the last year. They have been slow to react and even now continue, in our opinion, to call staff in for work that isn't essential.

NORTH TUGZ

North Tugz are also doing the bare minimum. The Company claims that it cannot apply for the subsidy because it has not dropped 30% in terms of the work. There are reports from workers that the guidelines around basic Covid -19 precautions are being breached. We are following up these allegations.

CENTRAL REGION

NELSON PORT BRANCH

Excellent communication from the branch leadership to Port Nelson and Nelson based

C3 members with daily up-dates to members since the start of the lockdown. Issues are being escalated promptly to management. It has become apparent that the Government wage subsidies is easier to obtain for businesses that have completely shut down than those businesses that remain operating. The main issue be the 30% threshold for the subsidy.

TARANAKI PORT BRANCH

Port Taranaki has advised that there has been no impact on Port Operations but that is subject to change. The company is now seeking to alter the Wharf Services (Rope Shed) roster to lengthen the time on and off which is a U-turn from the past.

WELLINGTON PORT BRANCH

Most of our members at CentrePort are still working and with new work on the horizon, it is set to get busier. It appears CPL has decided this is an opportunity to re-interpret the 3 union Collective Agreement and threshold for skilled cargo handlers, a battle ahead.

MARLBOROUGH BRANCH

Overtime allocation is a hot topic for some of the Port Marlborough members with a meeting prior to the lockdown and a discussion paper presented to PMNZ with the options.

Our Interislander members are getting used to new ways of working with no traveling public except for essential workers. One ferry is laid up (The Kaitaki) and the Aratere is freight only sailing. The onboard crews are doing two weeks on the ship and then two weeks off. Yesterday was crew change day and everything is reported to have gone well.

There are now new requirements for identifying the essential workers travelling with driver license or passport checks and recording who is travelling via I-pads.

SOUTHERN REGION

DUNEDIN RAILWAYS MEMBERS HIT BY COVID 19 CRISIS

All our members at Dunedin Railways are adjusting the fact their work disappeared overnight when the border closed and the lockdown was imposed.

The Employer moved very quickly and after paying the first week's wages as per the hours rostered, contacted the RMTU with a proposal to put people on 80% of their normal wage while staying at home. Dunedin Railways would offset part of the cost of doing this by taking up the Labour led government's wage subsidy.



Our delegates Julian Evans and Courtney Kilner moved quickly to open up communication via text, e-mail and a Facebook group and ran this idea past the membership. The response was unanimous support for the proposal once we ironed out a few minor details.

Great work by our delegates and a good example of an open and communicative employer. No-one is under any illusions that the next few months are going to be very difficult indeed for Dunedin Railways but for a few weeks our members have incomes and some

certainty.

LYTTELTON PORT TO RISK 'FRIENDLY FIRE'?

Lyttelton Port is vital in ensuring the flow of goods our community depends on is sustained. That may be self-evident but sometimes we need to remind ourselves of

the fact and the current crisis does underline the point somewhat.

The RMTU and LPC management share the common aim in ensuring that the port remains open and operating safely. LPC has done some excellent work separating work groups to minimise the risk of cross infection; looking after people who are high risk or need to care for dependents; and keeping people away who can work from home.

At the time of writing management appear to have lost sight of our common aim however. They are proposing to introduce forty casual cargo handlers into the workforce 'to maintain the supply of labour'. We have objected on the grounds casuals are not obliged to accept work offered on a day to day basis so the risk is that people are being introduced into the 'bubbles' of workgroups, with all the attendant risk that involves with no guarantee they will turn up for the next shift and be available to keep the port running.

There is a simple compromise. Under the terms of the collective agreement, relief staff can be employed with a guarantee of six shifts per fortnight on fixed term agreements. This will ensure a degree of stability that will allow LPC to allocate staff to workgroups thereby minimising the risk of cross infection and will provide enough labour to maintain operations.

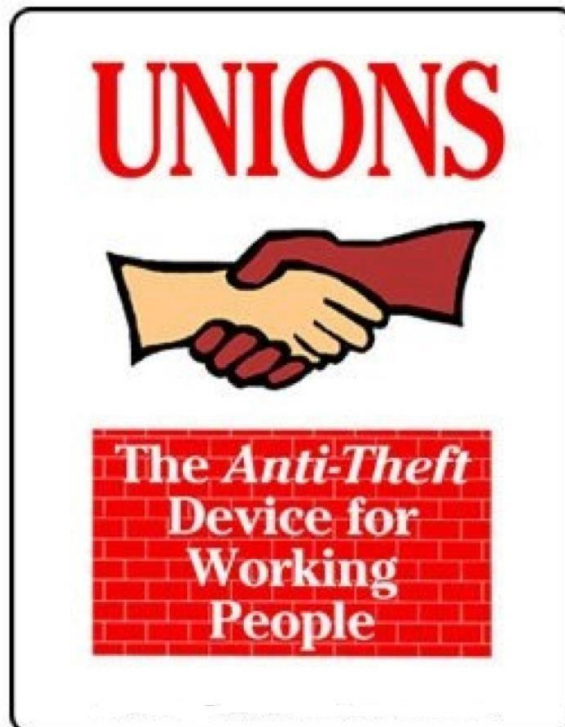
If we are to win the war against COVID19 we will need a reserve army. We do not need to take casualties from 'friendly fire'. Employing casuals risks the latter.

PORT OTAGO CONFIRMS FIRST CASE OF COVID19

Port Otago has had its first confirmed case of COVID19. Our understanding is this was in the marine team. Details are scanty but given the nature of marine work, with people working in small crews the risk of widespread cross infection should not be high.

Of course, the problem is marine crews are a vital part of the port's operation – take out pilot and tug crews and the port ceases to function.

The fact we have had a confirmed case will hopefully act as motivation to anyone who doesn't think the threat is serious and that our physical distancing and hygiene rules are there for a reason.



PORT OF TIMARU & QUALITY MARSHALLING TIMARU

Timaru seems to be operating relatively well and without the challenges that either Port Otago or Lyttelton are grappling with. This is probably due to the facts that the operation is working on a smaller scale; there are long standing and robust relationships between the workforce and management; and we have good, well trained delegates on the ground.

Once again, we must acknowledge the work done by our Branch Officials and delegates on behalf of members – they have all the problems that everyone else has to deal with in these times but still step up to advocate for members. Thank you to you all.

HILLSIDE REVITALISATION & THE POST COVID19 WORLD

Readers will be aware that Hillside is the beneficiary of a Provincial Growth Fund (PGF)

grant to KiwiRail that was released before the COVID19 crisis broke.

The scale of the latter is evident when one realises the government spent more in a week on the fallout of the borders closing and the lockdown than was allocated for the PGF for three years!

Keeping that in mind we must not forget though that there will be life after COVID19 and rail will be a big part of New Zealand's future. Our Branch officials in Dunedin are becoming increasingly concerned that KiwiRail and the consultants they have engaged are not working in the true spirit of High Performance Engagement in that comments like 'it's time to move on' are being made when something controversial is raised.

There is a great deal to play for here and the RMTU and its members were a key player in advocating for the future of Hillside. We must be fully and meaningfully involved in the planning of that future.

A formal complaint was laid and a contract cleaner stood down after the latter was spotted using a cloth that had been contaminated cleaning a men's urinal to wipe down tables at a Christchurch Depot. Yes, you read that correctly. Management moved fast but it beggar's belief that this should happen in these times of heightened awareness about hygiene.

Sugar soap doesn't cut it when it comes to cleaning vehicles. To be fair, KiwiRail Depot managers have been using their initiative to source sanitiser etc but members are right to put their foot down if what's provide isn't up to standard.

Middleton, Greymouth, Timaru and Dunedin Freight Depots are engaging in healthy competition to have the best COVID19 notice boards and information displays. Our South Island Yard Rep on KIC and National Management Women's Rep Rebecca Hauck is understood to have played a part in making the Dunedin Depot's notice board an outstanding example of the genre.

Members who are at home but being paid to be available for duty are reminded that they should ensure they are fit for duty if called upon. It's not a good idea to say you aren't able to work if you are called to fill a gap.

NEWS

HAMILTON TO AUCKLAND COMMUTER TRAIN LAUNCH DELAYED

The lockdown for Covid 19 has ended hopes of a commuter rail service between Hamilton and Auckland launching in August as construction is currently on hold for key aspects of the service. However, there is a spinoff benefit with the Government asking for projects to help stimulate the economy after the lock down, the Waikato Rail governance group has put forward plans for the Waikato commuter rail network to begin ground work and launch within the next two years, a project which had no set start date. The metro rail network would link Hamilton with other Waikato towns including Morrinsville, Te Awamutu, and Ngaruawahia. KiwiRail has been given the go ahead to start teeing up staff for the service, rather than waiting around for a firm start date. The Hamilton to Auckland train trip would take a commuter travelling into Auckland central business district 2 hours and 20 minutes, swapping to Auckland Transport's electric rail at Papakura. Hamilton to Papakura would take 88 minutes. A single return train would operate on a Saturday. Times are still being confirmed but departures are currently set at 6am and 6.30am from Hamilton and 5.30pm and 6.30pm from Papakura. The service will start in Frankton, stopping at Rotokauri and Huntly before heading on to Papakura.

ADVANCE PAYMENTS TO SUPPORT CONTRACTORS

Advance payments will be made to transport construction industry contractors to retain the workforce and ensure it is ready to quickly gear up to build projects which will be vital to New Zealand's COVID-19 economic recovery, Transport Minister Phil Twyford announced today.

He said keeping the workforce required to build the pipeline of infrastructure projects is critical to our recovery.

"The decision to bring payments forward will provide financial relief through the four-week lockdown period to enable suppliers to retain



their workforces, ensuring they can quickly re-start work and be in a strong position to respond to any future Government infrastructure packages," Phil Twyford said.

"While we've put the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders first by going hard and early with our response to the pandemic, we are also planning for the post-lockdown economy.

"Making sure we can build more critical infrastructure as soon as possible will help stimulate the economy and help New Zealand make up its infrastructure deficit.

"The Transport Agency is also continuing planning and design work so that more projects are ready to move to construction as soon as works can resume," Phil Twyford said.

MANAGED DEPARTURE PLAN FOR STRANDED FOREIGN NATIONALS ENABLES SAFE, ORDERLY EXIT

The Government has announced a plan to enable the safe, orderly exit of tens of thousands of stranded foreign nationals from New Zealand during the current COVID-19 Alert Level 4 restrictions, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters has said.

"When we moved into lockdown a week ago, the Government rightly prioritised public health, and limited the movement of people so as to restrict the spread of COVID-19. But it is clear that many foreign nationals travelling here do not have the resources or capability to adequately self-isolate, and wish to return home," said Mr Peters.

"We have taken the time and care to develop a seriously detailed plan for the exit of foreign nationals, without endangering the lives of others," Mr Peters said.

Under the managed exit plan:

- Foreign nationals returning home will be considered to be engaging in "essential travel", and therefore able to travel domestically (whether by air or land) when they have a confirmed and scheduled international flight out of

New Zealand, subject to requirements which will be set out on www.covid19.govt.nz

- Foreign governments will be allowed to organise charter flights to repatriate their citizens, but only if they can satisfy New Zealand health requirements
- Commercial capacity between New Zealand and Europe will be increased, by New Zealand approving a second daily flight between Doha to Auckland by Qatar Airways

It is expected that the first foreign government-organised charter flight, operated by Air New Zealand, could leave New Zealand as early as Friday evening. Commercial options continue to be available to stranded foreign nationals.

Mr Peters said the public health and economic considerations of New Zealand and New Zealanders were paramount in the decision to facilitate the managed exit of stranded foreign nationals.

"We are conscious that returning foreign nationals to their home countries will reduce the potential pressure on health services in New Zealand, and reduce the risk of welfare issues developing for those people who are stranded and unable to afford to be here much longer."

Mr Peters emphasised that travel restrictions associated with Alert Level 4 would continue to apply for all foreign nationals, except for those travelling to leave the country.

"If you do not have a confirmed international ticket, then you must stay in self-isolation. Stay put and continue to follow Alert Level 4 guidelines and maintain your bubble.

"New Zealanders returning home from overseas will continue to be subject to strict screening and self-isolation requirements; and domestic travel by New Zealanders will continue to be reserved for essential workers only.

"Given that Air New Zealand intends to fly charter flights from New Zealand to Europe for European governments, we will explore the extent to which New Zealanders can

return in the planes on the way back," Mr Peters said

Foreign nationals seeking to leave New Zealand will not be allowed to leave self-isolation to travel if they are at risk of COVID-19. This includes anyone who:

- Has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Has symptoms consistent with COVID-19;
- Is waiting for COVID-19 results;
- Is a close contact of a suspected/probable/confirmed case of COVID-19; or

- Has travelled internationally in past 14 days.

"All passengers will also be required to complete any health requirements as necessary at their airport of departure," Mr Peters said.

Further details are available at www.covid19.govt.nz.

Foreign nationals should contact their Embassy or High Commission for further advice.

