

# THE ACTIVIST



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## LEVEL 1 - NEW ZEALAND IS CURRENTLY AT COVID ALERT LEVEL 1.

Life is pretty much back to normal.

### INVESTMENT IN RAIL

A reminder as to what Budget 2020 provided for rail, including:

- \$246 million to support investment in the track and supporting infrastructure.
- \$400 million to help replace the Interislander ferries and associated portside infrastructure.
- \$421 million for new wagons and locomotives.

Changes proposed through the Land Transport (Rail) Legislation Bill will also provide long-term certainty for rail by allowing network investment to be channelled through the National Land Transport Fund. Budget 2020 provides \$148 million to support the fund to make these investments once the Bill has been passed.

### PETER CONWAY MEMORIAL LECTURE GOES ZOOM

Join UnionAID on the 17th of June at 1900hrs to hear from Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC), for the 5th annual Peter Conway Memorial Lecture.

In her lecture 'From Crisis to Recovery and Resilience', Sharan Burrow will explore how

we respond to the social and economic crisis we face.

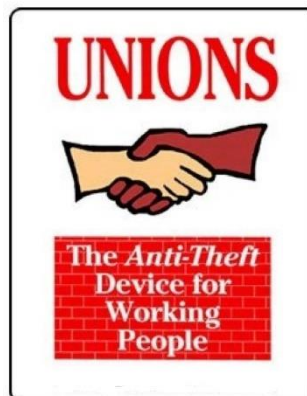
The lecture is open to all online at 1900hrs with Zoom. Register here: <https://unionaid.org.nz/peter-conway-memorial-lecture-2/>

### TOLL

Following Toll's callous restructuring of its workforce we move on to renegotiating the Collective Agreement. This will be a tough negotiation with Toll pleading poverty even more than usual. Your Union has already run some claims meetings around the country although the Auckland meetings will commence the week starting 15 June and we would like to start bargaining before the CA expires. We have requested specific bargaining dates from the Company and await an answer.

On a sad note, following the redundancies, we bid farewell to two of our active delegates, Pat Frelan in Hamilton and Leon Thompson in Nelson. Pat was a battler for our members both on the site and at the bargaining table. He was feisty and in difficult times could raise our spirits with his sense of humour. Leon was a stalwart in Nelson and there will be a big unfillable hole in that branch that will show how short sighted these lay-offs have been.

The RMTU wishes them both all the best, any employer would be lucky to have them and they are not lost to the union movement as I am sure both will carry on the fine work they have done for RMTU members.



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

## KIWRAIL TRAUMA SUPPORT-POLICY AGREED

Workers who've been involved in traumatic events such as level crossings incidents will soon receive better care and support under the newly developed "Potentially Traumatic Events Standard". The Standard was jointly developed by Union and KRG representatives who have in many cases shared their first-hand experience of being involved in traumatic incidents in the workplace. Workers who've been exposed to traumatic events will be supported with paid time off, greater support from EAP, and a work based 'buddy' system for ongoing care and support of people who may be experiencing mental distress.

## DELEGATE MERV READ RETIRES FROM PORT OTAGO

Merv has been a loyal and active member of the RMTU and its predecessor union since 1976 and has worked at Port Otago as an electrician for over 44 years. Last Friday he started a new chapter in his life and retired.

As well as representing his workmates in the plant maintenance workshop at Port Otago Merv was Vice-President of the Branch and played a big role in the work of the RMTU. He represented members at numerous RMTU National Conferences and Port Forums and was on the combined unions' bargaining team at Port Otago negotiating successive collective agreements with the employer.

Merv was always a calming and thoughtful influence in his dealings with fellow delegates, members and management. He brought a vast amount of experience to the table and had a great sense humour that

was a huge asset to whatever team he was part of.

Merv's wife Karen has spent decades living with his shift patterns and union work and will now have what we hope is a long and happy retirement with her husband.

From everyone at the Branch, and your fellow union members across the country Merv, well done and thank you. You will be missed but we know you won't be a stranger and we look forward to seeing you around town socially.

## KIWRAIL SHUNT LOCOS ASBESTOS ISSUE- MINIMAL PROGRESS

In 2018 Kiwirail found Chrysotile (white) asbestos inside the electrical cabinets (arc chutes) and engine compartments of the shunt locos DSG's and DSJ's. The Union is disappointed that after 2 years, the company's asbestos management plan remains in draft and only 2 arc chutes out of 480 (16 arc chutes per DSG) have been replaced with a proto type. This is despite assurances from KRG that they would replace all asbestos arc chutes by 1 June 2020.

## EXPERIENCING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

FinCap would like to extend an invitation to all unions, the free and confidential support we can offer to their members experiencing hardship. Initially, we triage referrals through our helpdesk called MoneyTalks: <https://www.moneytalks.co.nz/>

For more information on FinCap, including advocacy etc. please see our website: <https://www.fincap.org.nz/>

**82%\* Want to catch a TRAIN to the AIRPORT Who's blocking it?**

SUPPORT US FOR AN ACTUAL FAST AIRPORT TRAIN: [ptusers@outlook.com](mailto:ptusers@outlook.com)

SOURCE: \*NZ HERALD ONLINE POLL 13,300 VOTERS OCTOBER 2018 | 6% prefer light rail tram | 1% prefer a bus | 9% prefer drive and park



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10-JUN-20

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

If you have any questions, please email Merv (decades-long union member/supporter and union delegate at FinCap): [merv@fincap.org.nz](mailto:merv@fincap.org.nz)

## CTU LAUNCHES PETITION CALLING FOR SAFER SICK LEAVE IN LIGHT OF COVID-19

Everyone at work should be well. The experience of COVID-19 has taught us how important it is that people stay home when they are sick. It's best for them and it's best for everyone else in the workplace to stop bugs spreading.

"Currently the law provides for 5 days paid sick leave for a full time employee. The issues experienced as a direct result of the COVID-19 virus have shown that 5 paid days of sick leave is simply not enough. Today we are launching our petition for safer sick leave for working Kiwis," CTU President, Richard Wagstaff said.

"For most people that have used their sick leave entitlement the choice is to go to work sick or stay home and not be paid. Most people cannot afford to go without a day's pay. So many will be forced to go to work sick."

Tarsh Dixon is a community support worker and member of E tū who knows how important sick leave is. "As a sole parent, it is really important to have extra sick leave. If one of my children gets sick in the winter, they all get sick and I need to take time off to care for them. By the time I get sick, the sick leave has all run out for me. The nature of my work as a support worker is very physically and mentally demanding at times, and can cause fatigue and injury."

To create safer sick leave for all Kiwis we should:

1. Extend the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme for the next year, make it easy to access, and cover anyone with COVID-19 symptoms.

2. Gradually increase legal minimum paid sick leave from 5 to 10 days over the next year - with support from the government to help small businesses make the change.

3. Make sick leave available if people need to care for their dependents, like their children and their parents.

4. Remove the 6-month stand down to access sick leave when you start a new job.

5. Get rid of the National Party's law change that can require a doctor's certificate after just one day of sick leave.

"Let's use the experience of COVID-19 as an opportunity to make New Zealand a better, fairer place," Wagstaff said.

## RMTU FIGHTING HARD TO KEEP DUNEDIN RAIL ROLLING

The fight to save jobs, and save the track and rolling stock at Dunedin Railways continues apace. Dunedin Railways is owned by Dunedin City Council through its investment arm, Dunedin City Holdings Ltd. The iconic Taieri Gorge railway is part of the operation.

The COVID19 lockdown meant Dunedin Railways business was shut down in March and since then the RMTU has been fighting for its survival after management pressed the Council to 'mothball' the operation. In our view the so called 'mothballing' will mean the railway will swiftly deteriorate and reopening it will be a big challenge.

Readers of previous issues of The Activist will be aware our community based campaign to get Dunedin Railways to rescind the redundancy notices issued to 51 staff has gained massive public support. Our social media presence (see here <https://dunedinrail.co/>) has resulted in thousands of signatures on a petition and translated into backing from the wider community.

The campaign got off to a great start when RMTU Otago Rail Branch Secretary Dave Kearns fronted up to Dunedin City Council's Planning and Infrastructure Committee and



got them to back a feasibility study and trial of commuter passenger rail for the city. The Mayor backed our cause together with many Councillors and we were, and are, very grateful for their support.

Unfortunately, their vision was not matched by determined leadership and when bureaucrats and management said the commuter rail trial was impractical Councillors failed to press on. The trial was declared to be off, much to the chagrin of our members who knew that the difficulties involved were far from insurmountable.

The RMTU then organised a protest to deliver a letter of concern to the Mayor. This was superbly organised by the Otago Rail Branch and followed all the COVID19 level 2 protocols, including physical distancing and contact tracing requirements. This received very good publicity (<https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/railway-workers-protest-mothballing-taieri-gorge>) and demonstrated the workers' will to fight for their jobs and the railway.

The RMTU also backed an advertisement campaign in local newspapers and using posters around town. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. With time running out until the redundancy notices come into effect on 30 June the RMTU is lobbying politicians around the ownership of the track with a view to it being taken over by KiwiRail and Dunedin Railways paying a user fee for running trains on it just as it does on any other part of the mainline.

The struggle carries on and members are encouraged to directly contact key local political figures to emphasise why this iconic railway and the jobs that go with it should not be closed down. Their e-mail addresses are as follows:

[clare.curran@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:clare.curran@parliament.govt.nz);

[IngridLearyLabour@gmail.com](mailto:IngridLearyLabour@gmail.com);

[scott.willis@greens.org.nz](mailto:scott.willis@greens.org.nz)

[jakbrazil@me.com](mailto:jakbrazil@me.com);

[Mark.Patterson@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Mark.Patterson@parliament.govt.nz);

[Paul.gourlie@nzef.nz](mailto:Paul.gourlie@nzef.nz)

## RMTU EDUCATION ZOOMING AHEAD?

Like many organisations your Union has shifted much of its work to internet video linked platforms to enable us to meet during COVID19 lockdown restrictions. Our organisers have all completed a course on running education courses using the Zoom platform, a tool we have been using for regular internal meetings and with some employers.

The RMTU is now exploring the options Zoom provides for running short modularised courses for delegates, officials and active members. These will not replace our regular one day courses when we eventually move out of COVID19 meeting and travel restrictions but will complement what we do. One justifiable complaint is that delegate courses can be few and far between and freshly elected delegates often require training very soon after taking up the role, especially in the fields of disciplinary meetings, document interpretation and health and safety fundamentals.

We are in the process of writing up trial modules in all these areas and look forward to seeing if it's possible to provide members with high quality and meaningful training via Zoom. Watch this space.



## NZR STAFF WELFARE TRUST – MEDICAL BENEFIT CLAIMS DEADLINE

Benefit claims for the year 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 must be at the Trusts office by 5pm on 30th June. Claims received after this date will not be accepted. Please note that Trust is at the mercy of NZ Post, and there are delays at the moment, so don't leave submitting your receipts and claim document too late. The Trust address is PO Box 2409, Wellington.

## 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

## **NZR STAFF WELFARE TRUST ACCOMMODATION BALLOT - 2020/2021**

This year's ballot for the Group A closed Dec to Feb period will be drawn one month earlier than in previous years, i.e. applications will be due into the Trust office by 31st July. This is to allow those who are unsuccessful to still be able to make alternative plans.

There is now a limit of one week at any one location during the ballot, i.e. Saturday to Saturday, to give more members the opportunity of being successful. Please note that members are welcome to book a second week (if it is available) after the ballot has been drawn and the left-over vacancies are released for general booking on the website.

This year's payment due date will be 2 months in advance of the first date of the stay for all ballot bookings. The Trust

advises that refunds will only be given to those whose leave is not approved or to people whose circumstances change for medical reasons. All other ballot bookings will be non-refundable.

## **NORTHERN REGION**

### **ROSTER CHANGES AT WESTFIELD SERVICING**

Having made changes that have not been embraced by the membership in Westfield around changes to the Mechanical Team's roster, KiwiRail are now seeking to have a go at the Servicing Team. The Servicing Team have run 12 hour, 4 days' a week, rosters for years and the members, having organised their lives around these rosters, are in no mood to be moved from them.

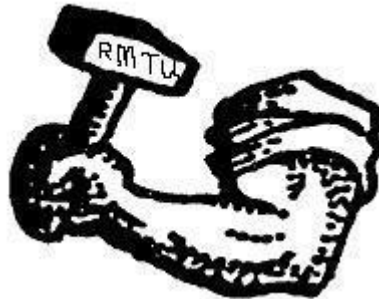
We have several members whose hours are enshrined in their letter of appointment and they cannot be moved from those hours unless they agree to it. The other members have been steadfast in maintaining the current roster and we will be meeting with the management this week to see their response to our feedback. We sincerely hope the Company have learned from the previous roster changes and see sense enough to abandon their current course of action. Watch this space.

## **NORTH TUGZ BARGAINING**

The move to Level One on the Covid-19 has meant that bargaining at North Tugz can be resumed. The RMTU has asked for, and are awaiting a response, regarding new bargaining dates from the North Tugz.

We met with the members this week to let them know we are ready and primed to return to the table and both our delegates, Chris Shaw and Nigel Yellowlees, have done some great prep for the upcoming round.

Although the Collective Agreement is due to expire in July, the government has extended the period for bargaining for CAs so the Collective is safe until at least September. The



Union believes the next round of bargaining will give the membership a clear steer on the bargaining process and we are hopeful that we can progress to a ratification soon.

## **BOP REGION**

**C3.** The C3 Collective Agreement has been signed by both parties and the timing of the back pay will be sorted out by Friday 19th.

**IXOM MORRINSVILLE.** The RMTU have initiated bargaining for the Ixom / RMTU Morrinsville Collective Agreement, and our claims are to be finalised.

## **CHAMPION FLOUR MILL.**

Unfortunately Champion have lost the Goodman Fielder contract and we are currently working thru a restructuring which may involve redundancies. We have also initiated bargaining for the Champion/RMTU Collective Agreement.

## **PORT OF NAPIER CRANE**

**DRIVERS.** The RMTU has initiated bargaining for the Port of Napier Crane Drivers Collective Agreement and we are currently finalising the RMTU claims.

## **CENTRAL REGION**

### **CENTREPORT DOWNSIZING PROPOSALS**

The Wellington Port – Centreport are proposing significant cuts to the workforce covered by the three unions (Etu, MUNZ and RMTU) Collective Agreement. CentrePort are saying a forecasted significant drop off in trade in the Port overall are the reasons for their proposal. The proposed cuts include a 20% drop in guaranteed hours for cargo workers but the lowered guarantee is not for all of the cargo workers so the cut may affect around half of the cargo workers which relates to a 40% cut in guaranteed hours for them. Other cargo sections headcount is also being cut by around 20%. For the workshop the CPL proposal is to disestablish 30% of the workshop roles.

A well-attended meeting of the combined unions members at CPL was held this week.

Members are surprised and angry with the proposal, they question the CPL forecasting. Most of the downturns in trade are in areas that they are not involved in at CPL, like logs and cruise ships. Members are asking for more information about the forecasting. There is no appetite for cuts to their conditions.

## **SOUTHERN REGION**

### **BARGAINING AT PORT OF TIMARU**

The RMTU has initiated bargaining with both Prime Port Timaru and Quality Marshalling Timaru for renewal of the collective agreements we have with both employers.

COVID19 protocols have meant some slight delay but the relaxation of the limit on the number of people who could meet to up to 100 just before Queen's Birthday Weekend did allow us to hold membership meetings to discuss priorities for bargaining last week.

Our very active Timaru Port Branch organised back to back meetings and some very good discussion ensued. It is clear that COVID19 and its subsequent economic fallout has focused many peoples' minds. The uncertainty of what lies ahead is apparent to all, and every day we read of both job losses and the Labour led coalition's strategies to mitigate the economic and social impact of what is happening. That said, it is also clear that many workers who were, and are, deemed 'essential' are justified in believing they deserve recognition for keeping our economy and society functioning through the lockdown. Transport workers, including port workers, maintained the supply chains that ensured society was able to be sustained and have played a key role in New Zealand being one of the world's best performing nations in the fight against COVID19.

We are looking to organise dates for discussion with both employers in order to progress bargaining. The employers are operating in a very different environment to that which was forecast at the start of the year, as our members, so talks are bound to be interesting.



## HILLSIDE REVITALISATION PROGRESSING

This multi-million dollar project is ticking along. As can be expected with something so complex it's not without its challenges. One of these is the fact we have a large number of different groups – 'stakeholders' to use the management jargon – who all have overlapping and in some cases differing interests.

KiwiRail RSAs, Network Services and Property Services all have their own priorities from a management perspective. Our members in these parts of the business share some of these interests but also have their own priorities as front-line workers. And we have to try and come up with a plan and implement it together. One member described it as a Rubik Cube puzzle.

We have had preliminary discussions between the RMTU representatives and management and the project consultants on the design for the revitalised site. The next phase is to move into detailed discussions with the different business units and membership groups about what facilities they require and desire (not always the same thing...).

We have very capable representatives in our Dunedin membership and no-one is losing sight of the fact that only a few years ago we were fighting a desperate rearguard action to keep Hillside open. Whatever the frustrations and challenges of this project, fundamentally it's a good thing.

## PORT OTAGO MANAGEMENT GETS IT WRONG

In common with many managerial regimes the one at Port Otago is very assiduous in publishing a regular propaganda sheet

aimed at staff. This one – titled – 'The Bridge' is more regular than most and drops into members' inboxes every Friday.

The RMTU is in a multi-union collective agreement at Port Otago with our comrades in MUNZ and so you can imagine the surprise with which members of both unions read of 'confirmation' by management of a '12 month across the board pay freeze' for all staff as part of the response to the downturn occasioned by COVID19.



Of course, any such pay freeze would breach the collective agreement which has a scheduled 3% pay rise due at the end of July. For a pay freeze to happen the collective agreement would have to be varied with the consent of union members. No such consent had been obtained. In fact both the RMTU Branch and the MUNZ Local had wisely rejected management's call for a freeze as the information presented in support of such a drastic step was flimsy at best.

Both unions wrote to management pointing out the error and

requesting the pay freeze statement be withdrawn. A thunderous silence followed until the following issue of 'The Bridge' pointed out 'for clarification' that the pay freeze only applied to managers and the board.

Two points arise from this. In your union's experience managers receive more respect from workers if they own up to a mistake and admit they got it wrong. To err is human, and there is no doubt that COVID19 has meant many of us are working under enormous pressure, managers included. Secondly, if Port Otago is in such dire financial straits that it is considering drastic options like pay freezes then talking with front line workers in an open and transparent manner, sharing all the relevant information and not just cherry

picking what suits to fix a pre-conceived solution, is surely the best way forward?

## LYTTELTON PORT MANAGEMENT INITIATES TALKS WITH RMTU

The new management team at LPC have scheduled talks with the RMTU on fatigue, a much delayed project that the previous CEO left sitting on his desk for over 18 months, to commence on 30th June.

There is no doubt this will be a very hard nut to crack given that any substantial progress in the Container Terminal will involve varying not just our collective agreement but also that of MUNZ. Add to the fact that the collective agreements incentivise arguably unsafe practices and the issue of how we shift to safer rostering without disadvantaging people becomes all the more challenging. Branch officials will approach this with open minds however, as we have an obligation to work through this issue. The RMTU applauds the fact the new management team have chosen to raise this before collective bargaining later this year. This one step is a significant departure from past practice.

Another departure is the request to discuss a possible High Performance Engagement (HPE) initiative at LPC. The RMTU has enjoyed varying degrees of success with HPE with other employers, most notably KiwiRail. Where LPC is more complicated is the industrial history is one of successive disputes and there is overlapping union coverage and separate collective agreements. The Branch Executive has opted to discuss a bi-lateral HPE initiative i.e. between the RMTU and LPC and excluding other parties at this stage. At the time of writing, initial talks have been scheduled and we look forward to reporting progress.

## ACC GRANTS AND LEVIES

The ACC has been running a grants and levies scheme for injury prevention initiatives. Roll bars for quad bikes and such like have been recipients to date. In the latest round of grants issued by ACC is this great initiative to address a high risk area;

AW Trinder Ltd - This project aims to make the forestry transport sector a safer and more accessible workplace by automating high risk and challenging log truck load securing procedures. Specifically, it will produce an automated throwing, tensioning, retrieval and stowage system for load binding tie-down chains on hauling trucks.

Risks of injury from chain throwing and tensioning primarily strain or sprain of the shoulder joint and "struck by" bruises and lacerations. The proposed new Load Securing System will isolate the driver from the potentially injury causing log binding operations and remove the physical strength element of the tasks.



## KR CRN SPAD MEETING

KiwiRail Critical Risk Network (CRN) on Signals Passed at Danger (SPAD's) met this week for the first time this year. Like many meetings now this meeting was done online. Reducing SPAD's

has been a project for many years but in more recent times the focus on this workgroup has dropped off.

The CRN SPAD group includes the Auckland and Wellington Transdev's, Train Control, Networks, Zero Harm, Signals and members of KIC. Even though this meeting had been planned for months, many of the RMTU team could not join the meeting due to leave or coming off night shifts.

The meeting started with reviewing a risk assessment but the headings were too broad and more detailed risks under the headings needed to be added. Another agenda item was Interceptor, this project has been going



for a few years but seems to have lagged with KiwiRail still keen to introduce without any cab alerts which is unsatisfactory. Stabilised approach markers have been agreed to a long time ago but again this project has not been completed. Data on SPAD's this financial year was presented for all business groups and the Transdev's. The SPAD to date are near triple the target set to achieve in this financial year which is of course a concern, in particular Networks SPAD's. KiwiRail will arrange a subgroup to work on the risk assessment headings and provide full information on the Interceptor project to date and provide time lines.



## KR SHOULD TAKE BACK TAIERI LINE

The union representing rail workers says KiwiRail should revoke the lease for the Taieri Gorge rail line from Dunedin Rail Limited (DRL).

Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) General Secretary Wayne Butson says the mothballing of the line by DRL despite strong opposition from the Otago public was a threat to its future viability.

Mr Butson says the line is an important limb of the national rail network.

"We are concerned the bad decisions by the DRL Board and CEO are placing this line in jeopardy."

He says the RMTU has no confidence the mothballing plan proposed by DRL was going to keep track or rolling stock in working order, because the plan did not have any detail.

He said the Board and senior management of DRL had actively worked against preserving this asset and should be replaced.

"It is staggering to see that despite the support for some form of Dunedin Rail operations by the Dunedin City Council, local MPs and candidates, and the general public, that a handful of individuals through negligence or arrogance or ignorance have been able to effectively ignore the clearly signalled wishes of their owners."

The RTMU was calling on Transport Minister Phil Twyford and Associate Transport Minister to intervene.

"Minister Jones should pay particular attention to this issue with his Infrastructure and Regional Development portfolios."

Mr Butson says as a State Owned Enterprise, the shareholding ministers of KiwiRail are the Minister of Finance Grant Robertson and Minister of State Owned Enterprises Winston Peters.

He says the Taieri Gorge rail line is too important to be let down through mismanagement at the local level and was part of national infrastructure.

Mr Butson says the Keep Rail Rolling campaign led by rail workers who were union members locally had presented a strong case and had gained the support of the DCC for the campaign, which had been described by Council officials as 'convincing.'

**BE SAFE, BE  
HEALTHY, BE KIND  
AND ABOVE ALL  
ELSE .....  
BE RMTU!**