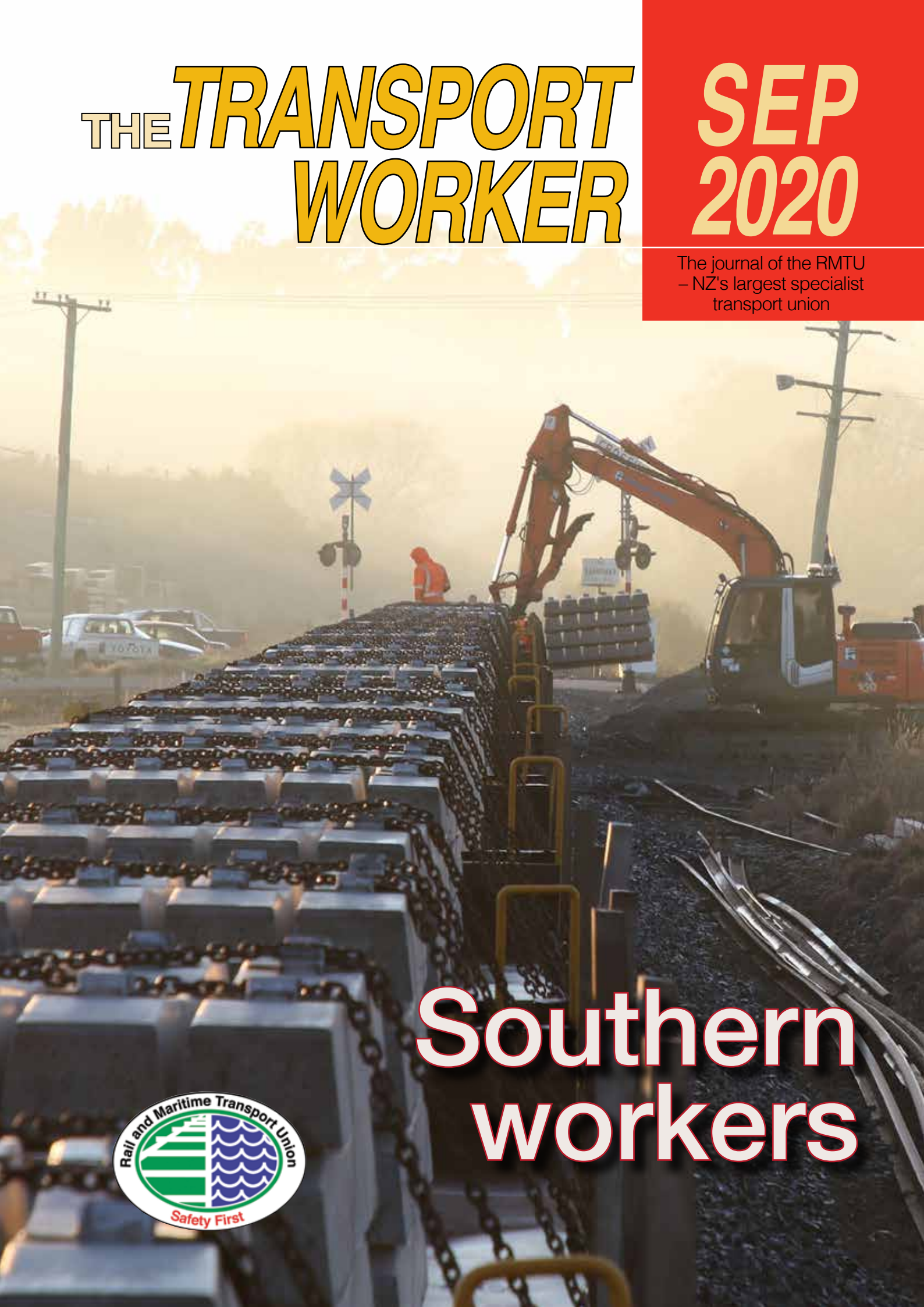


# THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

**SEP  
2020**

The journal of the RMTU  
– NZ's largest specialist  
transport union



# Southern workers



6 DUNEDIN RAIL

Dunedin Rail's six locos revealed for an impromptu display.

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Phil Twyford launches Rail Safety week.

13 PROFILE

Makere Pohe is the focus for this issue's woman member profile. Working at Westfield as a rail operator she is enjoying the challenges.

**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** A chilly morning near Balclutha is no deterrent to these hardy southern workers. Pages 14 to 15.

**The Transport Worker is published by the Rail and Maritime Transport Union, P O Box 1103, Wellington, Aotearoa–New Zealand.**

**Design and production by Mike Regan.**

**Printed by Pivotal+Thames Publications Ltd, P O Box 11–025, Wellington.**

**WWW.RMTUNION.ORG.NZ**

**ISBN 1173–6488**



**Wayne Butson**  
**General**  
**secretary**  
**RMTU**

## Reflections on covid & elections

**C** OVID-19 has sent Auckland back into level 3 and the rest of New Zealand into level 2 and reminded us that this virus is a clear and present danger to our team of five million. This latest level of alerts has finally seen the vulnerability of our waterfront borders now exposed to scrutiny to ensure they are making our country even safer. While we have closed our airports to all but essential flights our ports remained open to free trade and Union members and their families and communities to risk!

The RMTU strongly supported the testing of all port workers and users. This was essential if we are to keep on top of Covid and to not become overrun like our comrades in Victoria.

I watched a recent TV1 Sunday programme with a heavy heart when cameras were permitted for the first time into the Royal Melbourne Hospital and into the Covid-19 Red Zone wards. This disease is real and I find all this 'Plandemic' conspiracy bullshit so disappointing.

Tim Berners-Lee, as the inventor of the internet, must be so disappointed at how 'his' internet is being used and manipulated to spread this fake news shite. I dislike the creators of the stuff but the worst of it is the individuals who share and forward it to others.

Covid is also affecting our democracy.

The election has now been moved another month to 17 October 2020. This is the Saturday following our Biennial Conference and will make the availability of our Labour politicians to speak to us harder than it should be as they would much prefer to be on the hustings.

Normally our September issue of the magazine in election year would have major contributions from politicians outlining why we should be voting for them. I have decided you are all astute enough to know who to vote for because over the last three years you have seen the substantial funding which has gone into our transport infrastructure and especially rail.

Our rail infrastructure needs the funding – and more – if we are to ensure that rail provides a transport backbone to our nation. Any vote AWAY from the left is a



vote for less funding. I know you will cast your vote wisely!

The RMTU Biennial Conference in October will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the formation of our Union. We will be holding a celebration dinner as part of the Conference programme and have asked all our life members to attend. Sadly a number have declined due to health concerns but a solid turnout is still expected to attend.

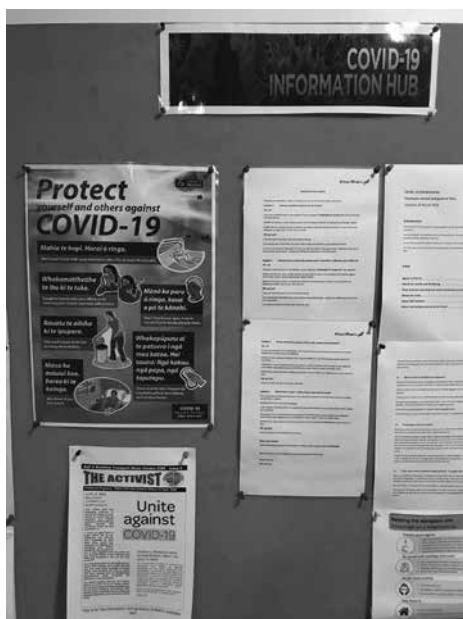
The success of our Union is a reflection of the wisdom and foresight of those who led the amalgamation discussion and process. To lock in our success for future generations of transport workers we must continue to grow. I am a firm believer that there should be one Union on the waterfront in New Zealand because a competitive multi-union environment only works for the boss – it's certainly not in the interest of organised labour.

As I write this my mind is dwelling on the KiwiRail bargaining which is about to commence with face-to-face talks. The scenario for bargaining is likely to be challenging and we may need to be innovative in what we do. It may be a time to talk conditions, rather than money.

Please ensure you are enrolled to vote and that you cast your ballot on 17 October because we need it to keep us moving! 🇳🇿

## Noticeboards of note

Part of the stand-out Covid-19 sanitisation station at Dunedin Rail.



## Retirements

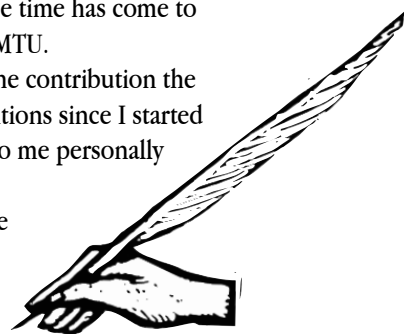
Dear Editor,

Having recently retired after 49 years combined service between KiwiRail and Transdev the time has come to tender my resignation from the RMTU.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution the RMTU has made to working conditions since I started work and also the support given to me personally when needed.

Wishing you all the best for the future.

Stuart Lawson.  
Otaki.



Dear Editor,

It is with regret that I wish to tender my resignation from the RMTU.

I started work with rail as a passenger operator and after four years became a train manager based in Wellington and on secondment to the Paekakariki depot.

I managed to make it past the '5 minute noodle' stage – just. I would like to thank all my colleagues for the good times, the life lessons and the support we all shared through the not so good times.

In particular, I would like to thank Harvey Patterson and Gary Innes for their vast institutional knowledge of the work place and the rules that applied to its functioning and the help that they gave unconditionally.

I would also like to say that Wayne Butson has impressed me over the years with his incredible communication and leadership skills.

There are challenging times ahead and I would like to wish all Union members and work colleagues a safe and secure future.

Barbara Allen

Dear Editor,

As you are aware I have ceased my employment with the Interislander effective 25 April 2020.

I wish to formally tender my resignation from the RMTU after almost 20 years of membership.

I wish to thank all those involved for supporting me and my colleagues over the years.

Your work is very much appreciated.

Carol Hildyard  
Blenheim.

Dear Editor,

It is with great regret that I tender my resignation from the RMTU.

I have been an active member since 2014 and was site delegate at Toll Auckland for a large part of my time with TOLL.

I have worked with some awesome people during this time; members, RMTU officials, both locally also

# The second wave

Comparing KiwiRail's kindness to Transdev intransigence

**A**FTER 102 days of returning to normality the middle of August has seen the return of community transmission of COVID-19. There was always an expectation that we would see a second wave and so it has been proven.

We have seen the government act decisively and move to Level 3 in Auckland and Level 2 throughout the rest of the country until re-evaluation on 26 August. There may be a re-evaluation before then if numbers stabilise or go down.

Just a reminder here that under level 2 you need to keep your distance from other people in public, wash your hands, sneeze and cough into your elbow, keep a track of where you've been and who you've seen, and wear a face covering if you can.

While under level 3, all the above precautions are in place but people are to work from home unless they are essential workers, and stay in their bubbles.

Currently, Aucklanders are not allowed to travel out of the Auckland region, although there will be the odd exceptions.

So where does this leave our members?

As many of our members are essential workers they are required to work and have

been at the riskier end of the spectrum with regard to viral transmission. Some companies have been very good at implementing restrictions, providing PPE and discretionary payments for those who are over 70, or immunocompromised (or have a family member who is immunocompromised) and have maintained regular communication with their employees. Take a bow KiwiRail. Others have not been so good, to varying degrees.

Take Transdev Auckland for example.

After earning praise from the Union because it essentially put in place the KiwiRail precautions and payments, it has reverted to type and will now make immunocompromised employees who decide to stay safe in their bubble and not go to work, use their sick leave in the first instance and then annual leave. After that they will need to take leave without pay.

This is shameful and hardly in the spirit of the team of five million.

Our members are at the sharp end of the COVID stick. Without them the country grinds to a halt. To force them to use sick leave and annual leave is morally reprehensible when they are protecting themselves

and their families – and the wider community including pressure on health providers. To provide them with no discretionary leave after their entitlements have been used up compounds the disgraceful behaviour.

Transdev are not alone.

CAF for example went this way during the first lockdown. What this shows is that private companies are far less likely to be concerned about the welfare of their employees.

The compulsion to return a profit to shareholders and owners, above the health of workers, displays a profit before people mentality.

It is the RMTU's position that all workers in essential employment should be guaranteed quality PPE equipment and, if immunocompromised (or who have a family member who is immunocompromised) or over the age of 70, must be paid to take discretionary leave until the whole country has returned to Level One. To not do this will lead to these workers taking risks and compromising their health and the wellbeing of others through having to make the choice between paying the rent or groceries, or staying safe and healthy. 🇳🇿

## ◀ LETTERS [CONT]

nationwide and some Toll management.

This resignation is in conjunction with my departure from employment at Toll NZ, which was my decision.

The decision to resign from Toll NZ was due to the toxic nature of the developing systems in this company and my own desire to enjoy my retirement.

I have enjoyed my time with the RMTU and have established some great friends. I wish you all a great future in these trying times.

Brian Walters

Dear Editor,

Having decided to retire on 26 June please accept my resignation from the RMTU from that date. I would like to thank officials and other members of the RMTU, past and present, who have helped me over the years.

A A Duff

Wellington.

## Wallet card returns

**B**ACK by popular demand, the RMTU has updated the WORK ACCIDENT/INCIDENT wallet cards for RMTU members on how to stay safe in the immediate aftermath of an incident – and ensure you preserve your rights in relation to being interviewed afterwards.

The prompt card reminds you of your legal right to not say anything that might incriminate you if interviewed by either the employer, Worksafe, NZTA or Maritime NZ and to make sure that, if questioned, you have the support of Union representation. 🇳🇿



# Too sick to leave

Petition to pressure MPs to allocate more sick leave

**A**S Parliament closed on this term of government Labour let loose a rumour that they'd make changes to the Holiday's Act if re-elected and change the regime around sick leave.

At the same time the NZCTU released polling figures showing that 68% of New Zealanders support increasing paid minimum sick leave.

These results were strong across income groups and political parties.

The Green Party had already committed to upping the legal minimum to 10 days a year.

With 68% support this is evidently a popular policy with working people, who understand sick leave is not just a work-rights issue, but also a public health policy that affects everyone. Furthermore poll figures show that 61% agree with letting people access their paid sick leave from the first day of work. At the moment there is a six month's stand down before it can be used.

More than half respondents (53%) believe the legal minimum should be increased to 10 days or more while 63% thought the Government's Covid-19 leave scheme should be expanded to cover people with symptoms waiting for test results so they can stay home on pay.

News media were abuzz on that last day of sitting to see if they could glean a little more about the issue but while many MPs spoken to were not quite as tightly lipped as Finance minister Grant Robinson, most harboured a knowing grin.

With the election campaign about to start we may well see it announced as a Labour party policy.

Currently mandatory sick leave is set at five days. CTU president Richard Wagstaff wants to see it increased.



"Too many people can't afford to be sick. That means they go to work when they are sick and risk spreading their viruses," he told Newshub.

Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said: "We don't want sick leave to be a barrier to people staying home from work if they are ill."

One of Labour's not-so-tight-lipped MPs Employment Minister Willie Jackson, said it was something "we are discussing at the moment" adding that an extra five days is the "view at the moment".

Labour MP Paul Eagle said he'd like to see it doubled adding that ten days would be great. "Let's hope that the next Govern-

ment does that."

Health Minister Chris Hipkins didn't add to the discussion telling a news conference that it wasn't "a matter for me and it's not a matter for today".

Green Party co-leader Marama Davidson told Newshub that as a parent it was very easy to use up your sick leave.

## Petition

Meanwhile the NZCTU is circulating a petition asking the next government to give working people the confidence to stay home straight away when they were unwell and not to be forced to visit GPs unnecessarily. Unwell workers and their families must be able to care for themselves.

They point to the extra provision of paid special leave for working people affected by COVID-19 and the huge difference it made.

Specifically the petition asks for:

- Extending the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme for the next year, make it easier to access, and cover anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, including those who are waiting to be referred to testing or getting results.
- 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.
- Make sick leave available if people need to care for their dependents like their children and their parents.
- Remove the 6-month stand down to access sick leave when you start a new job.
- Getting rid of the previous National Government's law change that can require a doctor's certificate after just one day of sick leave. 🇳🇿



# Acrimonious farewell to Dunedin Rail

Despite some sympathetic gestures and supportive citizens the enterprise is mothballed

**R**EADERS of the June edition of this magazine will be aware that the RMTU has been fighting hard to keep Dunedin Railways rolling – in fact this became the slogan of our campaign which generated a tremendous amount of public support.

As the June edition of the TTW went to press Dunedin Railways had been 'mothballed' and operations suspended. Members were at home and had been issued with redundancy notices that were due to come into effect on 30 June. The RMTU-backed campaign appeared to have secured the support of the local council for proposals to trial commuter passenger rail and to reconfigure the business to focus on the domestic tourist market in the wake on Covid-19.

Between now and then we have experienced a bizarre situation whereby the management of Dunedin Railways and

Dunedin City Holdings Ltd, the Council owned company that owns the railway, as well as the staff of Dunedin Council, appear to have stymied any attempt to keep the trains rolling.

Despite its support for commuter and tourist rail services in principle, when it came to backing it by meaningful action, Dunedin City Council failed to follow through. The proposal to run a commuter passenger trial was axed and no attempt was made to access government money, either through the Provincial Growth Fund, or support specifically focused on the domestic tourist industry. Dunedin Railways Ltd pressed ahead with its crackpot mothballing scheme and more than 50 workers lost their jobs at a time when the government was handing out over \$10m to a local bungy jumping outfit as part of the \$400m 'Tourism Sector Recovery Package'.

Under our neo-liberal local government

legislation, elected representatives cannot instruct the boards of council owned companies. This hands power to unelected bureaucrats who can fly in the face of public opinion with scant regard for the electoral consequences.

Of course the RMTU did not take this lying down and we have emphatically not given up the fight as this issue of the Transport Worker heads to the printers. Our indefatigable Otago rail branch rallied round our members and mounted fierce resistance.

RMTU national office had provided support for a social media campaign while



## PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

The plan has an external administrator and contributions are invested with four fund managers.



**Ports Retirement Plan**

Download a copy of the Product Disclosure Statement from our website:  
**[www.portsretirement.org.nz](http://www.portsretirement.org.nz)**

Issuer: Ports Retirement Trustee Limited



the country was in Covid level 4 lockdown and this swiftly bridged the virtual-to-real gap as the country shifted through the levels to level 1.

A poster campaign appeared on the streets of Dunedin which generated more public support and media coverage. This was backed up with targeted newspaper advertisements. Otago rail branch secretary and KiwiRail LE Dave Kearns honed the media skills he had acquired as an official of the former Hillside branch and fronted up to the radio, newspaper and TV journalists.

## Challenge

In potentially challenging circumstances due to Covid-19 a very successful protest was mounted at Dunedin City Council that achieved its goal of creating more positive publicity as RMTU members demonstrated they were both safety conscious and passionate about saving the railway.

As the deadline for redundancies ticked ever closer members took the message to the neighbourhood of board chair Kevin Winders, who is incidentally the CEO of Port Otago, and leafletted his suburb pointing out the travesty happening under his watch. This is a tactic the RMTU has employed in other disputes and it never fails to evoke cries of 'foul play' from the bosses. The fact is the so-called ruling elite spend a great deal of time and effort (and money) insulating itself from the unpleasantness caused by its actions: living, shopping and playing in exclusive

suburbs away from the economic and social impact of unemployment and in-work poverty. The leafletting tactic is a mild and peaceful way of reminding the ruling class they are socially accountable.

As this issue of the Transport Worker goes to press our members at Dunedin Railways, with the exception of a few left doing essential maintenance, have lost their jobs. They have stuck together and the RMTU has vowed the fight is not over. Encouragingly, there is a 'second wave' of public interest underway demonstrated by a stream of letters to the local paper and a series of opinion pieces by influential citizens.

Rumours abound about a potential buyer who is keen to take over the operation and purchase the rolling stock and there are calls for a fund raising campaign after the fashion of the original 'Save the Train Appeal' that led to the establishment of the Taieri Gorge Ltd railway in 1991. Time will tell if the RMTU's efforts have generated a snowball effect that will lead to the reestablishment of this iconic railway and jobs for the men and women who make it work.

In the words of the late Bob Crow, former general secretary of our comrade British union the RMT: 'If you fight you might not win, if you don't fight you will lose!'

The RMTU and former Dunedin Railways workers may not have won yet, but we're still fighting, and we might just win one day soon. 🚂

## The Last Day

LAST month Dunedin Railways ceased operating with some workshop staff retiring while most were made redundant. Ex workshop manager, Kerry Parry arranged an impromptu send off for everyone to celebrate the end of an era. He also invited several older past workshop employees to attend.

This was an informal gathering as the CEO had advised there was to be no formal send off or recognition for Dunedin Railways' staff.

"This was pretty poor considering some members of staff had given around 20 years of service," said Kerry. "Unfortunately, during this whole sad affair the CEO of Dunedin Railways has treated all staff with complete disrespect and indifference and has never once formally fronted to the people being made redundant."

The informal farewell went ahead and Kerry reported they had a great afternoon celebrating the achievements of key staff along with quite a few photos to record the event. The event concluded at the Kensington pub to round the final day out.

Meanwhile Kerry lined up all six locomotives from the fleet outside the workshop, and then had a number of staff group photos in front of the line-up.

"The six locos thing in itself is significant," he said. "It has never occurred before and will probably never happen again!" 🚂

## Obituary

Ian Smith

9/4/1919 - 16/8/2020

**J**UST to advise, Ian Smith, a former NZR engine driver who served in the wartime railway group which saw service in North Africa during the Second World War, has died aged 101 years.

Ian was a member of the 16th Railway Operating Company. I would also go so far as to say Ian was probably the last remaining former wartime railwayman who served in this company.



Ian was a fireman in Taihape when war broke out and he volunteered to serve in the specially formed group of railway employees who embarked for England in 1940.

Initially the group formed to assist British railwaymen who envisaged operating trains in Europe (France and the Low Countries presumably) against Nazi Germany. They eventually went to Egypt to take over railway duties from their neutral Egyptian counterparts.

On returning to New Zealand in 1943, Ian returned to the footplate of NZR locomotives.

He enjoyed a long life after his retirement but like many former servicemen, did not like to discuss his activities during those war years.

I ask you all to join me in taking a moment to remember these selfless men. They gave up a reserved occupation to go to war, and their efforts greatly contributed to the success of the Allies in North Africa.

RIP Ian. 🌐

**- Brendon Judd.**

# Pragmatic protest opposes immoral phosphate trade

New Zealand defies world opinion by allowing blood phosphate to enter the country

**O**NCE again the RMTU has taken the lead in protesting against the importation of 'blood phosphate' from the Western Sahara by New Zealand agri-chemical companies Ravensdown and Ballance Agri-Nutrients.

Readers will remember (The Transport Worker June 2020) our members delivered letters of protest to the captain of a ship carrying the phosphate back in March. The exercise was repeated in June at Lyttleton when a bulk carrier, the Trans Spring – which was delivering an estimated 30,000 tonnes of phosphate rock sourced from the occupied Western Saharan region, called into Lyttleton.

It is important the RMTU continues to register a protest against the importing of this cargo for three reasons.

1 - The Council of Trades Unions (CTU) passed a resolution at its biennial conference last year condemning the trade and calling on the New Zealand government to stop it. As an affiliate to the CTU and a waterfront union we have a duty to take action in support of this resolution. Former CTU secretary Sam Huggard has praised the RMTU saying: "Resolutions that just sit in a conference are meaningless without being organised around, so I am stoked the RMTU has picked this up."

2 - It's simply the right thing to do. Morocco has been illegally occupying Western Sahara and plundering its natural resources since 1975. Over 100,000 Moroccan soldiers remain in Western Sahara stationed behind a sand berm with over 5 million landmines, barbed wire, trenches, radar, rocks and dogs. Today, no other country or international organisation in the world recognises Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. It remains a non-self-governing territory entitled to a process of decolonisation under UN resolutions and the Saharawi people have an inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

3 - Protesting in this peaceful and low key way highlights the fact that New Zealand's anti-strike laws are among the most restrictive in the developed world. Under international law RMTU members could refuse to work ships carrying blood phosphate as they carry an illegal cargo. The employers would probably try and argue this was illegal under New Zealand law as workers can only withdraw their labour on health and safety grounds and if they are striking in pursuit of claims while in collective bargaining.

The right to strike on political grounds, a fundamental democratic and human right,



*RMTU members stand in peaceful vigil*





*A lone protester at ship side.*

does not exist in New Zealand law.

This must change, and registering our protest against this trade is one way of keeping that issue alive.

So however you look at it, we have a responsibility to ourselves as union members, as affiliates of the CTU, and to the people of Western Sahara to continue to protest.

Ravensdown and Ballance Agri-Nutrients don't like the negative publicity this action causes and have tried to justify the importation of blood phosphate on a number of grounds.

They argue there is no alternative to this source of phosphate and processing it in

New Zealand protects jobs. They have even waved the shroud of COVID19, saying 'the country's focus is on the plight of so many working people right here in New Zealand'. They say they should be congratulated, not castigated.

This is a gross misrepresentation of the situation.

It appears these companies have no Plan B in the event of halting or disrupting this trade – in itself is

a serious management failure.

Ravensdown and Ballance Agri-Nutrients have simply ignored demands that alternatives to importing from Western Sahara be considered.

Given that all other Western companies have stopped importing from Western Sahara and that there are legal and reputational risks to New Zealand in allowing it to continue, the management of these companies have failed in their duty towards their shareholders by not taking serious steps to find alternatives to Western Sahara phosphates.

The facts are, the companies could find other sources of phosphates or invest in equipment which would broaden supply options for the superphosphate manufacturing operation.

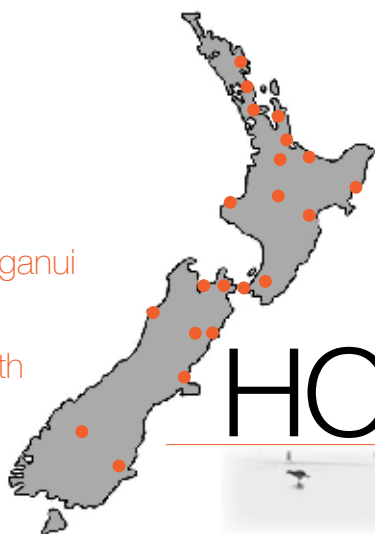
Companies in other countries, notably Australia, made it a priority in recent years to invest in upgrading their factory facilities with the view to being able to process rock sourced from other parts of the world and discontinued imports from Western Sahara.

It appears management failures to invest is once again putting New Zealand jobs and production at risk – not a relatively mild and pragmatic protest by Union members against an immoral and illegal trade. 🇵🇸



*The ship's captain receives the protest letter.*

Auckland  
Christchurch  
Dunedin  
Gisborne  
Greytown  
Hanmer  
Kaikoura  
Mount Maunganui  
Napier  
Nelson  
New Plymouth  
Ohope  
Orewa  
Paihia  
Picton  
Queenstown  
Rotorua  
Taupo  
Wellington  
Westport  
Whitianga



# HOLIDAYS



All current RMTU members are eligible to join after paying a Welfare Trust membership fee. Contact us to find out how.

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Your Welfare Trust has a fantastic range of reasonably-priced holiday homes throughout New Zealand exclusively for members. Take a look at our locations.



## Tranz Alpine

**G**RINS all around on the recently re-established Tranz Alpine trains.

Reports on future sales is positive despite a raging pandemic keeping overseas tourists at bay.

*The Tranz Alpine crew enjoying a coffee break at Arthur's Pass.*



## New meeting protocols

**T**HE Ports Retirement Plan adapting to the Covid world by meeting via Zoom. Pictured is a screen shot of the our investment advisors briefing Trustees on their performance during the last quarter.

## \$1,500 AD&D

All members of RMTU are now covered by a \$1,500 Accidental Death & Dismemberment Benefit, including \$500 spouse coverage and a further \$500 coverage on dependent children. This is an automatic membership benefit of belonging to the RMTU.

Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year. Please reply on line at [ailnz.co.nz/request](http://ailnz.co.nz/request) to have an AIL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain the additional insurance coverage available. This is very important to you and your family.

Please note: To qualify for the \$10,000 of additional ADB coverage, an AIL representative must visit you, obtain an enrollment form and collect premium for the first year. You may renew annually thereafter for \$5.



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A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A+ (Superior) for overall Financial Strength (as of 6/15).



# Cross with care

KiwiRail's campaign to protect drivers from near misses

**A**s well as the obvious risks for the public, near misses take a massive toll on operational staff. During Rail Safety Week (10-16 August) KiwiRail was out in force promoting safe behaviours around the rail corridor.

When launching Rail Safety Week at Wellington Railway Station KiwiRail CEO Greg Miller said while people might walk or drive away after a near miss, these split-second decisions can cause long-term effects for everyone.

"People are risking their lives and just one second of inattention at a railway crossing can create a circle of trauma rippling outwards – impacting friends and families, our drivers and the community."

He said a freight train weighing 1,000 tonnes across 30 wagons can take a kilometre to stop once the brakes have been applied. While commuter trains are lighter they still require a considerable distance to halt.

Thankfully, there has been a drop in recorded near misses on last year, but that

is no reason to relax.

KiwiRail staff visited schools and platforms all over New Zealand encouraging people to cross with care.



*Nicole Rosie, chief executive, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.*

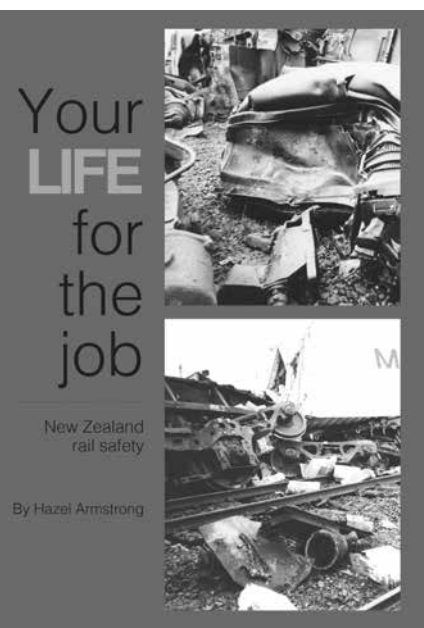
Meanwhile, TrackSAFE NZ Foundation's manager Megan Drayton said: "In the last 12 months KiwiRail recorded more than 300 near misses across the rail network. Of these, 191 near misses occurred at public level crossings and the majority of those crossings had flashing lights and bells or barrier arms."

This year's campaign uses real stories from KiwiRail LEs who describe their near miss experiences in graphic detail. 🌐

[nearmisses.co.nz](http://nearmisses.co.nz)



*KiwiRail's Wednesday Waiata group sing during the launch of Safety Week. The Wellington station foyer's acoustics added greater emphasis to the singing.*



## Critical reading

**A** second edition of your life for the job, written by New Zealand's foremost legal expert on workplace health and safety, Hazel Armstrong is about to be published.

In it Hazel concludes that the appalling rate of death and injury on New Zealand's railways in the 1990s is 'the story of de-regulation and privatisation'.

It reveals secret deals, drastic cost-cutting and reduced spending on health and safety leading to an appalling toll of death and injury. The RMTU's successful call for an inquiry saw immediate improvements and continuing vigilance sets new and higher standards.

This new edition contains two extra chapters and ten more pages to bring it right up to date.

The book will be launched at the RMTU's Biennial Conference in October.

To pre-order your copy contact the RMTU office. 🌐





*Train controllers, the traction control team and support/155 team at a meeting held on July 1.*

# A train control win

Decision making as it should be

**F**OR many years the issue of moving or having another train control centre in a location other than Wellington has been raised, attempted and failed.

This issue came up again last year with KiwiRail managers committing to forming a working group with the delegates.

Just prior to June 2 a consultation document was sent through to RMTU national office and then to the delegates on the recruitment strategy for the Auckland integrated management centre (IRMC).

This came as a shock to the delegates who were expecting a more engaged process that a simple consultation document and time frames.

TC delegates met with their RMTU organiser to map out a plan.

The first steps were to review the proposal, map out next steps and arrange a members' meeting for controllers, the traction control team, the support/155 team and finally request an extension to the consultation period until after feedback was received from these meetings.

A review of the proposal found many issues:

- Lack of input in the proposal and plenty of background noise about what was going to happen in the TC corridors but

this noise was not in the proposal.

- The recruitment and retention numbers did not stack up, members were clearly concerned about their job security.
- No information regarding any proposed facilities and locations for the IRMC in Auckland, including any temporary facilities.
- Plenty of talk about moving Wellington train control but no detail.
- While the proposal talked about clear benefits for the IRMC in Auckland, there were clearly large costs involved and the members did not understand the benefits.
- Pay progression issues in Wellington and any proposed Auckland teams.

In addition to the proposal, there were other issues at the national train control centre including proposed shift time changes, hard to get leave, lack of multi-desk training, late notice shift changes and casuals being used ahead of permanent 155 members.

The member meetings finally went ahead on July 1 which were well attended by NTC members.

The broad themes above were put to the meeting and more detail added which formed the feedback to go to KiwiRail

management and included two resolutions passed unanimously:

1. That under the current proposal current TCs are not willing to train TCs for the Auckland train control centre.
2. That we empower the TC/A box reps to inform management there is no agreement to change shift start times.

These members also wanted to improve communications so a survey was sent out and a closed facebook page set up.

After receiving the feedback, the shift start time change was dropped and it was agreed that a joint RMTU/KR HPHE work-group would be formed

This work group – NTC – Resilience and Growth met in person July 24 and on-line due to Covid-19 restrictions on August 13. An issue statement has been crafted and objectives set.

This is a good organising example, where members were united against a significant issue and the initial proposal. They voiced their concerns and were heard which resulted in a HPHE project.

Through the HPHE process, they will continue to be heard and be part of the decision making outcomes.

Well done to these members prepared to make a stand. 

# RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men

## Makere Pohe

Northland rail branch secretary

**How long have you been a member of the RMTU?**

I have been a member of the RMTU coming up to three years. I first started working for KiwiRail at Westfield (Auckland) and now I am a rail operator in the Whangarei terminal. I have recently taken up the role of Northland branch secretary with the RMTU.

**What does your current job involve?**

To me working in rail you can easily see if health and safety wasn't a top priority because things can quickly go terribly wrong. Every day we are out there working with heavy and dangerous machinery and you have to be alert and aware of your's and others' surroundings all the time. No two days are the same so we can't become complacent.

**What do you think about working in a male dominated industry?**

Personally I think it is important to always have in mind that you and your colleagues deserve to go home to their family and loved ones at the end of your shift. Having this at the forefront of your mind will help to ensure health and safety is a priority.

**What would you say to a bunch of women school leavers about working in an industry that's male dominated?**

Being the only female in a male dominated workplace and industry has had its ups and downs – just as in any workplace. But when you have a good team around you it makes it easier. I enjoy this type of work and it doesn't matter if you are female or male anyone can do this type of job. This industry can take you to many different roles if you're are willing to learn and give it



a go. It's pretty exciting where this industry could lead you to. It's up to you how you apply yourself. 🇳🇿

## Youth rep report

**A**S the RMTU's youth rep, I attended CTU's StandUp committee meeting on 10 July. StandUp promotes issues and activities that are particularly relevant to young working people.

The big focus this year is education and community building using a digital platform. We understand how hard it is to keep young members and activists engaged throughout the year, so creating somewhere that can be accessed 24/7 felt like the best move forward.

A decision was made to postpone the StandUp conference to Feb/March 2021 and make a webinar accessible this year, where there will be a focus on CV writing, wellbeing, interview skills and what a union is and how it can make change.

It has been very exciting to be a part of this movement and help it grow. 🇳🇿

If you're under 35 in our Union and wish to know more, follow our page [www.facebook.com/nzstandup](https://www.facebook.com/nzstandup) or email me on [campbell\\_leggett@hotmail.co.nz](mailto:campbell_leggett@hotmail.co.nz)

**- Campbell Leggett**



(l to r) Northland rail branch chair Albie Barr, minister Shane Jones, Northland rail branch secretary Makere Pohe and deputy prime minister Winston Peters during a visit to the Whangarei site.



# Balclutha's ballast boyz



**F**OR three weeks last month Dunedin crews were based in Balclutha running out ballast to help fill the heat restrictions spots. This should mean there will be a lot less of the 40 kph running during the hot summer days to come.

It was all going well until during the first week the generator, which operates the plough van, failed. But with some clever thinking from the field service unit, this was fixed for the second and third week.

It was also a good opportunity to put out some more concrete sleepers for future work in the Balclutha/Clinton area.

As can be seen from the photos some of the early starts were cold as winter tried to let us know it's still here.

Great work by the Balclutha track gang. 🌐











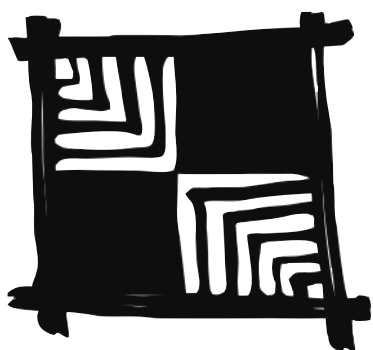
Christchurch CTU organising foundations (l to r) Will Stringer, Jim Meyer (tutor), Boaz Lovelock and Rebecca Hauck plus Annette Telfer (not pictured).



Receiving loyalty certificates at the Otago AGM are (l) Robertus Trompetter and Jim McKelvie



Otago Port executive (l to r) Renay Hope, Ruth Blakeley, Merv Read, Jane Shearer, Dave McDougal, Alan Richardson and Matt Dougherty.



## Unions have a long tradition of international solidarity.

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# UnionAID

## Better Work, Better World



*Dunedin Railways RMTU members plan the next move.*



*RMTU members at Hillside working with the architect consultant retained to develop the new site plan.*

## AROUND THE BRANCHES

### AUCKLAND RAIL

#### Praise for Transdev Auckland turns sour second time around

**I**T was always thought there would be a second wave of COVID-19 and now it has returned, with Auckland at its centre. During the last lockdown period a number of companies acted in a socially and morally responsible way. In Auckland this included KiwiRail and Transdev Auckland. People who were immune compromised, or who had family that were immune compromised, and those over 70, were sent home and paid discretionary leave. While KiwiRail have continued doing this under the new outbreak, Transdev have reverted to type.

Transdev sent a memo to its employees stating, anyone immune compromised or over 70 could stay at home during the current Level 3 lockdown but they will have to use sick leave and/or annual leave. After that is gone there will be no discretionary leave thus reverting to leave without pay. Given this current situation could well go to Level 4 and could last for some time this is unsatisfactory and unfair. However, at the time of writing it is lawful.

During the last lockdown the RMTU praised Transdev Auckland for acting in a socially and morally responsible way by paying the discretionary leave.

They have chosen not to do that this time and it is here they are answering to the owners. This is because looking after its employees, the people who make the

trains run and create the Company's profits, becomes secondary to making sure the owners get their pay out.

It's a disgrace and we will be arguing and campaigning for them to do the right thing.

The Auckland AGM has been postponed for the time being. Large group meetings cannot be held under the lockdown measures and we are complying with the rules around COVID-19. We will look to reschedule this later in the year when restrictions are removed.

Bargaining at Toll has been slow going. After an initial offer of a 0% pay increase and the loss of penal rates, the Company revised its offer to 1% and the loss of penal payments on Saturdays and Sundays.

The Company argues this is necessary as its customers are asking for more flexibility. This is short-hand for meaning there will be a lot more weekend work and, while they want workers to do those hours, they are unwilling to pay for it. This is a slap in the face for our members who worked through the last lockdown to make sure goods continued to be available for our supermarkets. The members have told us in no uncertain terms that the penal rates are not up for grabs.


We were due to return to the bargaining table in early August but the Company post-

poned this and we rescheduled for August 21. Unfortunately, the latest outbreak of COVID has meant this has also been postponed. We are planning to meet via Zoom as soon as possible to establish exactly where both parties are at and we may even get a chance to discuss our claims.

On the sad news side of things, we say farewell to Brian Walters who performed the delegate role with great distinction and has now gone into a well deserved retirement. Pepe Angua has taken on the role and has really stepped up to the plate and is doing some sterling work in difficult circumstances.

At KiwiRail there has been a restructuring of the roster for servicing which appears to be on hold for the time being. There is also an HPHE project on optimisation at Westfield – ostensibly about trains running to time, but also about cutting waste in the terminal.

This has hit some issues over consultation with the members and a concomitant scepticism from those affected. It's also time to welcome the new delegate in mechanical, Nandor Manz, who has taken to the role with great gusto, filling the very big shoes of the recently retired John Evans.

Needless to say there is a lot of interest from the KR members about the upcoming negotiations. 



## NAPIER PORT

### Sparing concern for incarcerated foreign seafarers

I guess the word for most of us over the last six months was – and is – Covid, and the impact it has had on port and rail workers being deemed essential. There were some very interesting testimonies in the last edition of the *Transport Worker* which provided insight to the lives of members in both our essential industries.

In moving through this global minefield of a highly infectious contagion, we must maintain our vigilance, particularly in the ports where some of our members come into contact with foreign vessels first hand.

Pilots and mooring crews are on the front line 24/7 in dealing with ship crews. One has to consider the implications at the time of vessel exchange, the serious nature of maintaining strict protocols around PPE


gear to prevent, what potentially, could cause a community outbreak and the complete shutdown of a port.

However, it would be prudent to mention that through this pandemic there are many international seafarers who have been unable to get home leave and have been on the same vessel as a consequence of Covid 19 for what we understand has been in excess of 12 months. They too are not allowed shore leave while in dock.

The implication of this imposed ship isolation on their families, their health, well-being and sanity must be testing to say the least. After all, some of these crews are not well paid and at times endure the toughest of environments. Let's spare a thought for foreign seafarers and the families they are

unable to see. They are all casualties, may be not directly by the toxicity of C19 but through the struggle they face on a daily basis, in a life of confinement, being home-sick and the inability to be with loved ones.

Napier Port volumes and shipping is now seasonally past its peak period in terms of container volumes. Logs however seem to be pumping. We continue to operate on what we consider to be a shoe string in terms of labour. There are shortages of staff in reefer care operations, heavy plant operators, general cargo. This was the first season of the new Thames St 2 operation, the second off-port container site.

For members who are elected to attend the national conference in October, look forward to seeing you there! 

## NAPIER RAIL

### Ten new members welcomed to the work force

KIA ORA brothers and sisters. Well is the year going by or what?

Local branch AGMs should be in progress throughout NZ but because of latest Covid-19 outbreak this has caused some disruptions and some postponements. The Napier branch would like to welcome Roland Brandsma joining us from the signals team and also Jason Finch from

the freight team as a rail operator.


Freight safety and productivity is up on last year for this month. Well done Napier freight branch.

Hawke's Bay also welcomes the intake of 10 new members which are assisting with drainage and culverts. Thanks to the future for your Government funded project.

Our old depot at Pandora has been

leased to ISO Company associated with Port of Napier. They are currently storing large windmills for south of Napier. It is positive to see that the land is being utilised.

On a closing note it will be interesting to see how our collective agreement and our MECA is at some stage boxed off.

Until next time – safety first and stay safe. 

## PALMERSTON NORTH RAIL

### Once again rosters lose sight of the real world

THERE have been many moons and many more rosters passed since the Palmerston North branch last checked in for duty. As usual the weather in the Mighty Manawatu has been glorious and as I type this, that run is about to end.

Luckily the Covid shut down was reasonably kind to us and we are almost back to normal – almost! I guess the most prominent issues for us has been the overtime ban for both the yard and loco, more so the yard and it's ironic that KiwiRail which was forcing us to take leave, now refuses

to give that leave if it is to be covered with overtime. However, it continues to cover sick leave with double ups and extra shifts when they want. How long will this carry on? Who knows!

And as usual our rosters for the LEs are the menacing beasts they have always been, with the company putting out roster after roster giving no real thought to work/life balance nor placement of shifts to really reduce fatigue. With a roster that is around 50% A shifts you'd think they would make it a top priority to have a happy work force.

Instead, it seems they just feed the train plan into their software and post what it spits out, as long as it meets the train plan, FAID (pointless at the moment) and the 76 hour minimum.

The company are also ignoring the roster process when it comes to level A, B, or C changes and our roster reps have no real chance to produce a viable roster. I think we've had possibly 6-8 roster changes in four months. This also causes disharmony and infighting in the ranks. Hopefully we might get some relief in the development

of a Christchurch-type roster proposal by our reps soon. We will see I guess.

With the pending wage round coming up and the company already offering nothing, one wonders if we really are appreciated for our efforts during the Covid crisis.

I think not especially when I have heard of other companies thanking their employees for their efforts by either giving them bonuses or shouting lunch. We got nothing! But at least they finally paid the

holiday pay out! Yippee!

Staff wise we have a few new trainees coming into the yard and yard guys transferring to loco, also congrats to our newly signed off LEs – we need them. I have heard the track gangs have recently been bolstered by 90 new staff members, so a big welcome to them.

Saturday August 8 we celebrated the retirement of three of our finest LEs and also an ex LE - John Rumble, John Trewavas,

Gordon Winchcombe and Alan Adams. We are losing a lot of knowledge in one hit and they will be hard to replace. Please join me in wishing them well in their retirement, it has been a pleasure to work with you all! Take care and enjoy your sleep ins gentlemen.

Be safe out there everyone and keep fighting the good fight! 🇳🇿



## HUTT WORKSHOPS

### Projects aplenty at busy workshops

**W**E missed the cut-off date for June so here's a double helping, noting that some topics have been taken over by subsequent events!

We start these notes within the restrictions of the life-changing event known as Covid-19. For many in our organisation, that meant little change. We worked throughout the (initial) lockdown period doing our bit to support the maintenance of the railway activity albeit in a reduced capacity. Thanks must go to our EGM Adam Williams who, I assume along with his fellow senior managers, kept the staff informed of plans and developing situations via video-conferencing (V/C). This was informative, timely and appreciated by the rank-and-file staff. These town hall style meetings continue, and go some way to maintaining effective communication 'from-the-top'.

The enforced take-up of technology will likely be one of those life changing events as it has proven that with the right investment and tooling, the much-promised benefits can be realised across the whole

organisational platform. V/C, whilst not a new concept, wasn't as extensive as we'd all expected, however, administrators and managers now working from home have forced a rethink of how we can run our business in the virtual world. There have been claims it makes those individuals more productive and that is believable when you consider how often you can be interrupted in an office environment!

By the time you read these notes I hope that the company's recent efforts (that is the Annual Leave and Employer Wage Subsidy) in full consultation with the RMTU, has proven its worth and steered us clear of any further and significant sacrificial action. Additional to this, the initial meetings for the MECA re-negotiation had been planned to occur a couple of weeks after the close-off for these notes so we expect a joint announcement should have been made by now updating the membership on progress.

In addressing the initial recovery from the Covid-19 emergency, we had a staged return of teams previously working on

various (Capex) projects. This was carried out in the knowledge and belief we could assure ourselves we could work safely and effectively in close quarters depending upon the Covid-19-level restrictions. Whilst the likelihood of infection may be low, we have to take prudent steps to ensure we don't suffer from any extraneous events/interactions that lead to staff, and the business, being compromised. Not an easy task. However, the company has stopped just short of saying it would die in a ditch defending and carrying out its most important core value of care and protect! In early August we saw the Ministry of Health indicate that we have to remain prepared to address possible outbreaks of 'community transmission' should our border protection process fail given we've had a few people breach the perimeters and go walk-about. This of course became evident on August 11 with subsequent changes to the MIQ process.

Earlier this year the Windows 10 rollout was getting underway however (unsubstan-

## RAIL - TAKING STRESS OFF NORTHLAND ROADS

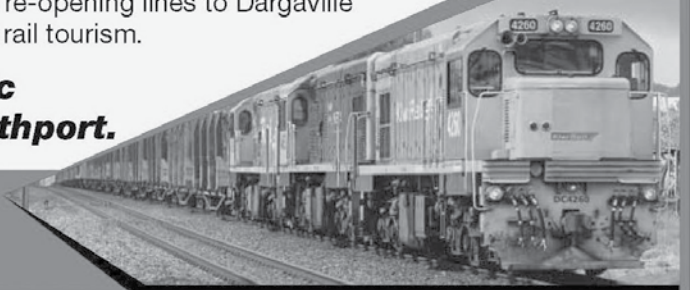
It's time to reconnect Northland's extensive railway network enabling industry to use the safest way to move freight and increase high value rail tourism.

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tiated) rumour has it that the project ran out of resource(s) and came to a halt. This made video-conferencing a bit of a challenge with people crowded around computers/tablets with scant regard to physical distancing within the confines of some offices to get management updates.

Just some weeks ago the Win 10 rollout recommenced. However, it would appear the team which did all the hard work earlier got pushed elsewhere and another turned up to do the work.

Coupled to this is the smattering of Win 7 devices to be mopped up. From a user's point of view, this was not a smooth rollout and will not deliver on the promise within the expected timeframes.

Another project approaching a significant milestone is the first tranche of four H2A carriages (aka Te Huia). A formal blessing was scheduled for August 13.

A further project that may get going this (calendar) year is the EF (aka Class 30) repair and refurbishment project. Those with long memories will recall a similar programme some years ago which was halted after only a few locomotives got a 'lick and a promise'. We hope to resurrect a more tightly controlled and fully-funded project with two dedicated teams working on two locomotives at any one time. We have taken the knowledge (and lessons) of the past and have folded this into our planning and engineering processes to give credence to a successful refurbishment of these mighty locomotives.

The aforementioned projects take up the last few square metres of space across



*Refurbished loco in sparkling condition.*

our Plant 1 and 2 buildings. Plant 2 is currently undergoing a structural upgrade (to ~67% NBS?) prior to the new (mechanical) inventory facility being installed in part of it – this will make our passenger and inventory teams very 'cosy'. I hope there's a party with lots of cake as Plant 2 has been bit of a controversial football since we embarked upon HPHE in 2015! A lot of effort has been expended in defending this operationally-valuable building against a tide of prejudice and politics.

The mechanical inventory team have recently taken delivery of new electric fork trucks to replace the diesels. That has not been without incident as a couple have failed (for different reasons) and their fit-for-purpose status has been questioned (based on their deadly silence, very rapid acceleration, no indicators and poor warning lights). Our local HSAT team is across this so we hope that the questions are addressed and the risk assessments reviewed before we suffer a 'people vs. plant incident'. New technology always brings its own range of problems so we'll have to calmly work through this (noting that the displaced diesels have been kept under cover just in case!).

A recent initiative to test our emergency preparedness took a somewhat cynical turn in July when trial fire evacuations were held on a section-by-section basis under

the watchful eye of a consultant (eye-roll backwards).

Depending upon your take on things it was either a fiasco or a learning opportunity – at the 'debriefs' at the assembly points there were robust discussions with the consultant who felt that we should have done things her way, when the staff did their bit and carried out their duties as per our current local, documented, published, notified and drilled instructions our way. Needless to say, it was uncovered that there was a disconnect between the company documentation and (alleged) codes of practice (no surprises there). To be fair, the company has made cuts over the years that puts all this stuff into the nice-to-do category but it never sees the light of day on a proactive basis. We still remain reactive which puts us a long way out from the company's stated desire of being NZ's leading H&S organisation.

Another test of our business continuity was a double whammy of an IT&T outage coupled with a mains-power failure on August 5. The resulting peace and quiet was quite helpful in getting on with other aspects of work which had battery powered tools available or simply taking the opportunity to carry out some much needed housekeeping. There was however a quick round up of 'gas appliances' to boil water for the smoko breaks!



*Loco aloft!*

◀ Election 2020 draws near and it's shaping up to be another close-call. Don't be fooled by the BS promises you get from the polities this year. Only be swayed by supported reasoning and a dose of logic; if you're still unsure look at it this way: Given the worldwide Covid-19 situation (take a look at [worldometers.info/coronavirus/](http://worldometers.info/coronavirus/) – read the stats and think), it is important to not change the jockey half way through the race so everybody better get out of bed on the Saturday morning and cast their votes! Also drawing near is the new wheel-

shop operation. Apparently the preferred bidder (not known) has submitted a price that appreciably exceeds our budget so the EGM has to approach the Board to beg/plead/request a financial top-up to allow the project to proceed (oh so bloody close now!).

Our AGM was scheduled for August 14 however Covid-19 restrictions put the mockers on that.

There has been much discussion around reorganising the site and bringing a lot more stability to the 20+ workgroups

(teams) we have. This will necessitate some more controlled growth in numbers as we bring our plans to fruition. We continue to drive progress against a backdrop of the SQDCP mantra (safety, quality, delivery, cost and people) and a desire to standardise our visual management controls, coupled with the much vaunted HPHE 2.0. This should see us take a great(er) leap forward across most of our operations over the coming months.

Until next time, take care and be damn safe out there! 🇳🇿



## WELLINGTON RAIL

### The most expensive siding in the world: Waingawa?

**G**REETINGS everyone from the warm Wellington depot. I am sure by now you would have received your Holidays Act back pay, a good time to get it amongst all the Covid uncertainty. Make good use of it. Treat yourself and your close family members but remember this was gained from all the years of toil and often night shifts away from home. As Jacinda says, be kind.

The Wellington depot is having a very large recondition, it really needed it since it was only meant to be a temporary building in the 1970s as the previous one burnt down with dubious stories of how. I won't elaborate.

Our new loco trainees are doing really well and itching to get out there. Congrats to Nigel who is the first to be ticked off, with

Nick and Howard next, followed by Jason.

Also congrats to Freddie who has also been certified as TX and all those other TXs who have graduated to the shunt. Well done. Allan Duff also retired during Covid. He realised how much better he felt away from the shifts so decided to make it permanent. Happy retirement Allan, hope we can go for a ride soon.

Big milestones at work too. Opera Piper and Phil Olsen 40 years, Brian Sefesi 20 years [still a boy] and Adam 5 years. Hope all that is correct.

Lots of big project work is happening in Wellington like double tracking from Trentham to Upper Hutt and plenty of maintenance work on the track. We sure do need it. There are around 20 speed restrictions to Masterton and about 10 from Wellington

to Palmerston North.

The most expensive siding in the world will be up and running in September at Waingawa. We will be again loading logs. I have to say that Masterton as a log hub works wonderfully.

As usual rosters are a hot topic. We need more trunk work to Palmerston North and I am sure we can get a deal with our Palmerston North brothers on a set of couplings which give us a more sociable roster and more time with those who matter

With all the cost cutting we have lost the Sky TV but I am pleased we will all chip in to get it up and running in our friendly lodge where the shunters and drivers have plenty of banter whilst often watching the cooking show or Ellen.

Remember to vote. Till next time. 🇳🇿

## WELLINGTON PORT

### Amazing news: workers' expect pay cuts while bosses get a raise

**C**HANGE is a boss's constant and Covid-19 is being used as part of that process. Like many other companies the port company has used the short term financial losses from Covid-19 to get into its workforce and cut yet again. This is on top of the inability of the company to repair all of the damage caused by the earthquake. Remember that?

The branch says farewell and thank you for your support to Lindsay May from R&D, Rajeshri Magan, administrator/receptionist and Victoria Hodson, cruise manager.

Another target area has been a 30% reduction of the engineering workforce. This number includes 37 year server Roger O'Neill who finished up mid-August. Roger started as a fitter in the boiler shop and has been part of the workforce prepared to debate the many changes – both mad and less so – put up by a long line of managers who should 'know better'.

The company has proposed reductions in the guaranteed hours of most cargo handlers. Although there has been discussions no agreement has been reached. We will

however lose salaried foreman Paul Pilgrim who has accepted voluntary redundancy after 34 years. The branch wants the company to recover work previously allocated to contractors but the company wants the easy route – cut staff hour guarantees. Amazing that it's the workers who are expected to take a cut rather than the bosses. Not much changes!

Log volumes have increased and the access to the log handling area remains intact. Electric hauled 'bomb' carts will be used to shift boxes to help overcome con-



◀ tainer loading interruptions resulting from the earthquake damage. However plans are afoot to extend the main container wharf while the future of the southern container wharf is still under consideration. Centre

Port House is to be pulled down so there is a new home for the cargo section and IT.

Some cargo handlers are doing their NZQA national certificate training and others are engaged in train the trainer/assessor

programmes to improve skill levels.

All these issues have increased tensions and the current contract expires 10 October. Watch this space! 🌐

## CANTERBURY RAIL

### Good ideas around to encourage government

**W**E'VE had a busy time of it in Canterbury Rail since we emerged (for now...) from the COVID19 lockdown. To start with the good news the Tranz Alpine returned to service for the school holidays and was booked out with locals taking advantage of the special prices KiwiRail charged. Our members were delighted to be back doing what they do best and post school holidays the service has been running four days per week and is still booked out weeks ahead. We're looking forward to both the Coastal Pacific and the Tranz Alpine returning to a full timetable in the spring – and the Overlander up north

as well. As this is being written we are also hearing of a potential upper South Island passenger rail tour option involving the Midland Line, Main South Line and Buller Gorge. With ideas like these on the table hopefully we'll have a government with vision post-election that further commits to long distance passenger rail.

Speaking of government vision, it's been good to see positive coverage of the rebuild of the maintenance facilities at Waltham. This was hailed as part of a \$39 million dollar boost for rail infrastructure in Christchurch – the most significant investment for decades. Members have

been keeping a close eye on this project as it develops – it's important we get it right first time as we'll most likely be living with this facility for many years to come. After years of underfunding we sincerely hope the election will return a government that sustains the investment in rail.

On a less positive note our dealings with Toll have not been very pleasant of late. Relations with local management are good, but it puts everyone under strain when the company tables proposals in collective bargaining that are frankly insulting to workers who have kept the supply chain operating through the biggest public health crisis in ▶

## Sickness, accident and death



### The New Zealand Locomotive Engineers' Sickness, Accident and Death Benefit Fund

In the last 10 years 230 locomotive engineers had to retire due to medical reasons. They received a total payout of \$4,737,097 from the above Fund. LEs who didn't belong to the Fund and who were forced to retire did not receive anything.

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**Attention LEs  
Join this Fund now for  
your own peace of mind**

100 years. A proposed below inflation wage offer with abolition of penal rates is misguided at best and inflammatory at worst. No one is under any illusions that Toll wasn't in difficulties even before COVID19 – we had a round of redundancies as we moved to level 2 that, whilst they did not affect the South Island too badly, were evidence the business is not in great shape. That said, it's our impression that there is some poor decision making going on at the top of the organisation.

KiwiRail operations has had an eventful few months. Sadly, we lost a very loyal and active member in Lindsay Gough to cancer. Lindsay was a very staunch and larger than life figure both in rail and in the Lyttelton community where he lived and was president of one of the local clubs. He was very well read and held informed opinions on a wide range of global issues that he shared in a forthright but engaging manner. A valued comrade and one we will all miss.

Secondly, there was an issue between the company and one of our health and safety representatives that was resolved in mediation, but not before it generated

a fair amount of angst, not just in our branch. More promising, there have been joint efforts by KiwiRail management and the RMTU to reset the Middleton HSAT, supported by our very capable national H&S organiser Karen Fletcher. We have some very promising young representatives on that team and together with a new local manager we are hopeful of good results.

Network services also has a new manager in the South Island, fresh from Downers. We welcomed him to a meeting with our branch secretary and South Island organiser to stress the importance of the collective agreement provisions around contracting out.

This remains as sensitive a topic, as ever, and KiwiRail's de facto recruitment freeze has led local managers to the invidious position of lacking people in already poorly staffed gangs to do some urgent and important work. The logical step in such circumstances is to contract out, a move that rightly enrages members. The branch had some success when we expressed the depth of this feeling and 14 outstanding vacancies received approval to be filled

within 24 hours of our complaint.

Sometimes we have to look past the symptoms and go to the cause. A child could see that simultaneously trying to reduce annual leave balances, cut overtime and freeze recruitment is going to negatively affect our ability to do the job we're all here for. Why people being paid \$750,000 don't get that is mystifying.

Two of our locally based delegates, Annette Telfer from Scenic Journeys and Will Stringer from RSAS, attended the CTU's three day Organising Foundations course at the end of July.

The course is aimed at people taking up full time union work and the RMTU has always put our most promising and committed elected officials through it. The feedback from the tutor was very positive and we look forward to Annette and Will applying the lessons learned by building our organisation in the branch.

Finally, Mark Harris, one of our TX maintenance members, has ended his career in rail. We wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement. Until next time, stay healthy and safe everyone.



## LYTTELTON PORT

### Bullying and harrassment being tackled seriously

**W**E'VE had a changing of the guard here at Lyttelton Port as our former branch secretary Brian Gilkison left in May. Heiner Benecke put his hand up once again and was elected unopposed. Given he was in the role before Brian, Heiner brings a wealth of experience to the job. Congratulations Heiner.

There has been quite a bit of media coverage around allegations of bullying and harassment at LPC. As this is written there are currently three different investigations underway:

- one into historical allegations concerning City Depot,
- another into a specific work area on the waterfront in Lyttelton, and
- a third so-called overarching review of the 'culture' at LPC.

Time will tell what these reviews will reveal, if anything. One thing the branch is clear about, is that RMTU members, especially in the container terminal, were subject, in our view, to a campaign of per-

secution and intimidation by management during 2017-18. Such that, by the end of 2018, nearly one in three RMTU cargo handlers had, or were, being investigated and two had been dismissed. A third dismissal followed shortly thereafter. We will be informing the independent investigator of this and will await her report with interest.

By the time you read this our main waterfront collective agreement will most likely have expired. The fatigue management working group which LPC committed to as part of the terms of settlement of our last negotiations has only just restarted after a two and a half year hiatus. We've had only two meetings so far and progress is slow, but it is at least a start.

Bargaining was initiated for the waterfront agreement in July and the remit process is underway. Pre-talks are taking place around the bargaining process arrangement. We're hopeful the new management team will embrace a less positional approach to bargaining than has been the

case in recent years. If we are to meaningfully engage in a high performance high engagement project, the relationship with management does need to improve and bargaining is an opportunity to do that.

Our branch AGM is looming fast. Returning officer Brant Yaxley reports many nominations have been received for delegate roles. Given we have put more active members through training per capita than any branch in the country this is encouraging. Our AGM is scheduled just a month out from the election and we have invited Port Hills Labour Party candidate Tracey McLellan to address members. For many years our branch has enjoyed a good relationship with outgoing Port Hills MP Ruth Dyson and we hope to continue this relationship with Tracey, when she becomes the next MP for the constituency. As an official working for the nurses' union Tracey is the logical choice for port workers who live in the Port Hills Electorate and we're sure our members will vote accordingly.



◀ The effects of Covid-19 continue to impact us despite New Zealand being the envy of the world in our handling of the crisis. On 27 July the Ministry of Health sent a directive to all NZ Ports about the new requirements being put in place to actively look for Covid-19 infection in people who work at our borders. This includes voluntary asymptomatic testing for all people who, in carrying out their tasks, come into contact with international ships' crew. For us this primarily means cargo handlers who regularly board vessels in the course of their work. This testing will be undertaken at Lyttelton by the LPC occupational health nurse under the supervision of the CDHB and MoH every Tuesday and every 2nd Thursday. Everyone who has any contact with international crews and wants to be tested is encouraged to do so. As a consequence of the directive, there has also been a heightened and much more visible presence of customs officers at the port. They are responsible for the monitoring of international vessels' compliance with the rules around crew coming ashore. These measures are likely to be in place for some

time.

Our new CEO has been implementing a number of changes at LPC with a management restructure and many administrative staff having to either reapply for their jobs or their roles being changed. It has been very disruptive but has not affected any workers covered by collective employment agreements. Some office workers have even been heard to say they might have been better off if they had been in a union. In Harbour Board days most administrative staff were union members, but post so-called ports reform these roles were de-unionised. Now they are all on individual employment agreements and have little protection from wholesale changes like this.

One consequence of these changes is that middle management all seem to be trying to outdo each other in their attempts to implement changes of their own and we have been dealing with numerous change proposal consultations.

Your branch secretary has been at pains to point out to managers that simply writing a proposal and sending it to him for his feedback does not constitute genuine con-

sultation. The affected workers in the work area where change is being proposed must be given the opportunity to not only have their say, but to have constructive input into the outcome. To this end, a number of meetings have been taking place with worker representatives and thank you to those of you who have participated in this process. It is encouraging to see that current management is far more amenable to this style of consultation than what we have experienced in the recent past.

On a less pleasant note we had a former member, who left us during the last major industrial dispute, reapply for membership recently. This has caused much debate and the branch executive has made the decision not to accept the person in question back into our Union. To leave the Union in the midst of an active dispute was a very serious offence in the eyes of many of our members and the offender must bear the consequences.

Until next time, stay healthy and safe, and here's to a second term for a Labour led government. 🇳🇿

## WEST COAST RAIL

### Enjoying renaissance of Tranz Alpine

**H**ERE on the West Coast we are celebrating the return of the Tranz Alpine and lamenting the fact that our brothers and sisters at Dunedin Railways were the victims of poor management that has seen their operation mothballed. Meanwhile KiwiRail's premier scenic passenger service is enjoying a renaissance. The Tranz Alpine returned for the school holidays and was repeatedly booked out, even when additional carriages were put on. At the time of writing it is now operating four days per week, soon to move to a full timetable – COVID 19 permitting. And that's not all – there are moves afoot to run passenger charters in the upper South Island. If we can sort out the safety issues there may be an opportunity to run passenger trains in the Buller Gorge.

On another positive note, and thanks to some very determined advocacy by RMTU National Office in conjunction with this branch and the Canterbury rail branch, KiwiRail authorised recruitment to fill 14

unfilled vacancies in network services in the Upper South Island. Several of these are over our side of the hill and staffing up to establishment in this manner will enable us to get on with work in-house, which is exactly as it should be.

Another win has been the recognition that additional work done by gangers, who have far more safety related paperwork to complete than was previously the case, should be compensated. The largely successful initiative to introduce digital technology into the administrative procedures done by the gangs has meant our members are more highly skilled and has boosted productivity. It is only right that this is recognised and rewarded.

Up in the Buller branch, our redoubtable branch secretary has been co-opted by the RMTU and KiwiRail to participate in the rules review that Zero Harm has initiated. Anyone who knows Kevin knows he has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the rules and an incisive analytical mind. He will make

an invaluable contribution to the exercise.

Over in operations there is a fair bit of discontent being expressed with rosters, particularly the starts in the wee small hours. These shifts knock our members for six and we need to keep a close eye on them. Fatigue is a contributory factor in many incidents yet with smart rostering the risk can be minimised, not to mention the benefits gained in a better family life and work-life balance.

Our plans to have a permanent memorial to provide a focus on Workers' Memorial Day were turned upside down by COVID 19 this year. We have not been idle however and have secured a beautiful piece of pounamu from the local iwi to be the centrepiece of our memorial for next year. A very worthy project and one which our branch is proud to be involved in.

Finally, and on a very sombre note, we all read the very moving accounts of the sentencing hearing flowing on from KiwiRail's guilty plea after NZTA prosecuted

◀ the company around the incident in which one of our long serving members lost his lower leg. The company has done the right thing by maintaining our members

employment and did the right thing with its early guilty plea. The victim impact report demonstrates the terrible human cost of such incidents. This is why we must all look

after one another and never drop our guard on the safety front.

On that note, stay healthy, be ready for contact tracing, and stay safe. 🌐

## TIMARU RAIL

### Keeping up with constant change

**A** mercifully quiet spell in mid-South Canterbury at present. At the time of writing it's so far so good on the COVID 19 front, but all our members are still aware of their responsibilities, especially in light of comments from our director general of Health that it's a case of not 'if' but 'when' we have community transmission.

On more perennial matters continuing shunt loco problems are a pain and we have to wait for mechanical guys to come down from Christchurch to effect repairs, which costs everyone time and has an impact on productivity. The sooner we get new rolling stock the better.

Readers may remember the hailstorm

last year that damaged many vehicles in Timaru – one of our utes has finally been taken away for repairs. Both our utes are probably due for replacement given their high mileage.

There are constant changes to operating procedures to reflect the need to keep everyone safe. For example, we now have lights fitted to our EU ride-on wagons for shunting down to port and we no longer use our quad bikes for piloting shunts there because of lack of clearances.

KiwiRail have been in talks with Timaru District Council about permanent closure of the Queen St crossing and the Timaru HSAT team has been pushing for a 100 metre extension to our southern shunt leg to serve

our CT site for two years. After some delay talks are progressing nicely and our track staff have sets all ready to go.

Talk in the terminal around pay is relatively muted. Doubtless by the time you read this there will have been some developments. In contrast the election is not far away and there is plenty of talk about that – we certainly want a rail and worker friendly government returned.

Our branch supports our Dunedin Rail members – we simply cannot believe the debacle which has unfolded there especially given the success that is the Tranz Alpine that we have all witnessed.

Until next time, keep washing your hands and stay safe! 🌐

## TIMARU PORT

### Fraught times considering Collective during Covid-19

**O**UR branch has been busy since the last issue. Both the Quality Marshalling and Prime Port Timaru collective agreements have expired and the branch has been busy negotiating for their renewal with the assistance of the South Island organiser.

The common theme in both negotiations has been uncertainty. Some of us are of the view that it is statistically likely there will be another outbreak of community transmission of COVID 19 in the next few months together with all the social and economic disruption that will entail. It is difficult to predict the volume of cargo that will move through our ports, both in light of this and the residual and continuing impact of the lockdown in the autumn and the pandemic that appears to show no signs of abating overseas.

In these circumstances both the employers we are dealing with have expressed a preference for short terms to renewed collective agreements, something we as a

union are not averse to.

At the time of writing we have received offers from both employers that, whilst they are far from ideal, do deliver pay adjustments that will most likely keep us just ahead of inflation providing that continues to fall over the next 12 months, which is the term of both proposed agreements.

There are some positive non-monetary aspects to both offers:

Prime Port wants to engage co-operatively in an end to end review of its operations with us and the Merchant Services Guild and the preliminary signs are that this may generate more guaranteed hours of work;

Quality Marshalling has agreed to a joint union-management roster committee that will seek to implement best practice, including two consecutive days off per fortnight.

Members are ambivalent about both these offers but have instructed our negotiators to settle.

The difficulty is reconciling the positive

rhetoric about being essential workers with relatively parsimonious wage deals. Members quite rightly ask the question why they should have to argue for cost of living wage increases when they are 'essential'.

On the other hand, COVID 19 has demonstrated the madness of running vital national infrastructure like ports on a purely commercial basis and, subject to the election result, we are mindful that this fact may have dawned on the politicians and a long overdue industry-wide shake up may be in the offing.

In such circumstances it may be in our interests to wait and see what the next year brings. If there is no signs of improvement it may be time for a more militant approach.

A big thank you to all our elected officials and delegates who do such good work on behalf of members. We sometimes forget to acknowledge just how hard this can be but the fact remains that they are appreciated. 🌐



## PORT CHALMERS

### The season to seek downsizing - NOT!

**G**REETINGS from an unusually warm Dunedin. As I write this we await yet more announcements about the second wave of Covid.

This is really starting to take an emotional toll on quite a few around me.

Even though in the port industry we are lucky to carry on like normal, a number of people are feeling anxious and uncertain what the next few weeks will bring. Look out for your mates and don't be afraid to ask how they are doing. We need to look after each other.

As we enter in to our slow season, we hear the yearly cry we have too many staff and we see numerous restructure documents appear. It's almost like the authors have nothing better to do and feel the need to fix things that are not broken! It's very

taxing when your employer has no respect or regard to the real facts of what happens in your day to day job.

Ourselves and MUNZ are pumped and unified to work through all this. Our problem is that we have an employer which wants all their own way. Eventually we will get there. I hear we are not the only port like this, so let's keep in touch with each other.

Our branch was gutted to hear that shift manager Merv Scoles was leaving POL after 30 plus years with the port.

Our honest held belief is that this was a result of a Clayton's restructure to capture a scalp that "they" had been after for a while. Merv was an all-round great guy, knew the business inside out, had good strong union principles and genuinely was invested in


the success of the Port. We will miss him and his sense of humour. As they say don't look back, all the best for new adventures.

Jacinda and her team are doing a fabulous job. Start the conversations with people about getting enrolled and most importantly making sure you vote.

I look forward to a Labour led government being returned for another term.

Any good union person would not even contemplate having Judith Collins in charge. For those who like a good political laugh, go checkout Gerrard Otto on Facebook – brilliant!

His comments are gold.

Well that's about all from us, until next time. Stay Covid safe and fingers crossed see you all at conference. 

## OTAGO RAIL

### Rumours rife re buyout of Dunedin Rail

**O**UR branch has been in the thick of it since the last issue. A big thank you to all active members who have supported our officials and delegates.

First, spare a thought for our networks services and LE members who were involved in a head-on between the former's hi-rail vehicle and the latter's locomotive during the lockdown. From the RMTU's perspective, the underlying systemic cause is the track warrant system. It would appear KiwiRail also shares this perspective given they have called in international expertise to review the system. NZTA however, have moved to prosecute both KiwiRail and our member. This is where a little known but vital part of our collective agreement becomes very important. Clause 32.1 of our agreement with KiwiRail provides for members to be indemnified against legal costs associated with defending any criminal or legal proceedings and representation associated with investigations by prosecuting agencies such as the police or NZTA.

Our member has been able to access the services of a Queen's Counsel at no cost to himself, something of a Godsend in


the circumstances. Very occasionally we get the odd member who expresses the belief they would be fine without union support. Regardless of all the other benefits in our terms and conditions of employment we enjoy because we've stuck together, we know that this particular clause is there because our Union and its members fought for it. If you think you're better off on your own you are deluded.

The campaign to Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling, and to save the jobs, rolling stock and the track, received a blow when Dunedin Railways Ltd (DRL) confirmed its crackpot so-called 'mothballing' scheme at the end of June and over 50 jobs were axed. We still have three members employed by DRL so our collective agreement lives on and we haven't given up the fight by any means. The branch leafletted the neighbourhood of the chair of the company, Kevin Winders, who is also the CEO of Port Otago, to enforce some social accountability. The management and board of DRL, and of Dunedin City Holdings Ltd, the company that oversees council owned assets is guilty of needlessly depriving working families

of jobs and putting an iconic tourist attraction at risk. The Mayor and the council are equally at fault, if not more so, in that whilst they paid lip service to the value of the DRL to the community they failed to demonstrate the leadership and vision to keep the trains rolling.

There was no shortage of options, including but not limited to a commuter passenger rail trial. KiwiRail demonstrated there is enormous local support for the type of service DRL can provide by restarting the Tranz Alpine when we moved to level 1.

As we write this there are positive rumours of a potential buyer who is committed to restarting the service and extending it to include South Island wide train excursions. Our branch continues to lobby and advocate – the fight is by no means over.

Over at Hillside the removal of asbestos entailed some disruption, with members being shifted to Cumberland Street while this was undertaken. The irony is that the future of the Cumberland Street site is probably very limited as the revitalisation of Hillside unfolds. Our members and management appear to be working well 

with one another and the consultants and architects on the latter project. There will be always be points of tension in a project as complex as this, and it is hard for people who have spent their working lives in rail under successive governments and employers who have failed to properly fund it to readjust to what seems to be a more positive future. That said, there does appear to be a willingness to listen and to work hard at getting it right – even if we sometimes argue about what 'right' actually is.

On a more positive note we had two

very active members of our branch, RMTU national women's representative Rebecca Hauck and KiwiRail networks industrial council member Boaz Lovelock, attend the three day CTU Organising Foundations course in Christchurch in July. Both say they enjoyed the course and learned plenty, and the reports we've had from their tutor have been equally positive. This is a course aimed at people taking up full time union work and it's testimony to the RMTU's commitment towards, and faith in, our elected cadre.

At the time of writing the KiwiRail MECA talks have yet to get underway. Our branch is hopeful that, unlike Toll, KiwiRail will recognise that essential workers who maintained the supply chain through the biggest public health crisis for a century deserve to have the purchasing power of their wages maintained. Toll have certainly done a good job of alienating their workforce and our members in Dunedin with a below inflation wage offer and an attack on penal rates. Don't even think of trying something like that Mr Miller. 🌐



## SOUTHLAND RAIL

### Time to be imaginative

**T**O say we're doing it tough down here would be an understatement. The economic impact of COVID 19 is being felt as it is everywhere in the country, although at the time of writing there is still zero community transmission and Victoria has just gone into its second full lockdown. Our particular economic blow was the announcement in mid-July by Rio Tinto that the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter is to close with the direct loss of 1000 jobs and a further 1600 in related services. While it was widely known the smelter's future was up in the air the blow almost came out of the blue via a mass text message sent to staff to tell them their jobs would no longer exist in 14 months.

It's at times like this when we need to be imaginative and realise that the policy settings of the past 30 years are no longer appropriate, if they ever were, for a remote, small developed country in the 21st century. A truly visionary government would look at the opportunity the surplus power and pool of skilled labour presents in our region and intervene swiftly and decisively. High speed double track passenger rail from Bluff to Kaitia anyone?

Despite being in the low season at a time of low global business confidence occasioned by the impact of COVID19 we have still seen plenty of tonnage on our trains railed in and out for our many various dedicated customers. Building railways stimulates economic growth and with modern technology it can be the right kind of growth creating low carbon, well paid work.

Note to the next Labour led Government?

On the subject of passenger trains there is some talk of a buyer being interested in Dunedin Railways and that the party in question has a vision of South Island wide rail excursions aimed at the Kiwi market. What a wonderful idea. Here in Southland we look forward to welcoming passenger trains back and fully back the campaign to Keep Dunedin Rail Rolling that the RMTU Otago rail branch has spearheaded.

Back to basics, the fuel bay in the freight yard in Invercargill has had a bit of an upgrade with the tracks receiving some tender loving care from our networks members. The spill tray has been refurbished, and the locomotives are now level when being re-fuelled, a full tank is now a full tank. Like we said pretty basic, but vital nonetheless.

The network members have been doing plenty of good work on our end of the Main South Line. Level crossing bridges have been attended to and some replaced, and there has been a big effort to de-stress the track in various locations. What is also great news, and a great display of team work, is faults that are being 155ed by operational staff have been attended to as well.

By time this edition has gone to press, Southland's first female trainee locomotive engineer (soon to become our first qualified female LE) will have started on the job training. The rest of our members on the LE roster are looking forward to the successful completion of this training, and Rae we will be all backing you, and are here to help you as a valued work colleague.

July also saw a sudden announcement of impending closure of the Ohai branch line. It was great to see RMTU national office fire a broadside at both KiwiRail management and the Minister of Transport and there was a subsequent comment in the media suggesting closure may not occur. As we write a review is underway and we understand there are positive developments. We hope KiwiRail management will talk to frontline staff as this unfolds. We could, and should, have been engaged earlier. This route has had a fair amount of investment over the last decade and is in much better condition than our CEO gives it credit for. We understand his focus is on Northland for political reasons but that is no excuse for this sort of oversight. In the last 12 months continuing bridge works, tidying up the rail corridor, sleeper replacements, and tree removal have all contributed to this line being in good shape. Once again, the fallacy of applying short term commercial thinking when looking at vital national infrastructure is thrown into sharp relief.

By the time you read this we will have had our branch AGM, scheduled for September 6. We are in good shape as a branch with some younger active members taking an interest and we look forward to bringing fresh ideas into how we organise. We have also watched the demise of yet another local National MP. Our region is notoriously conservative but perhaps it's time to change tack?

Until next time, stay safe and healthy.





# AROUND THE BRANCHES



*Marlborough Flyer in pre-covid times (l to r) John Trewavas, Phillip Wagener, Alastair McIver and Danny Greene*



*Scenic call centre with RMTU members taking a well earned break from the avalanche of booking calls with the restart of the Tranz Alpine train.*



*Enjoying break are (l to r) Bert Te Raki, Willie Iafeta, Brian (Stacky) Stack and Dodie Joseph.*



*Oamaru track gang caught working in their new digs.*



*Retiring Palmy loco engineers (l to r) Gordon Winchcombe, John Trewavas, Alan Adams and John Rumble.*