

THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

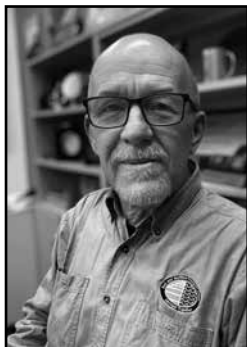
SEP 2022

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



UNION - POWER!



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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Northland branch show their enthusiasm for the RMTU at this year's AGM.

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**Wayne Butson,
General secretary
RMTU**

The last column is the most difficult

I am astonished as to how hard this contribution to *The Transport Worker* has been to write. It is to be my last and signifies the end of my 32 years working full time for the RMTU and its predecessors.

My connection to the Union and the New Zealand rail industry began on 20 September 1974 when I joined the loco division of New Zealand Railways in Invercargill and was signed up to the Enginedrivers, Firemen and Cleaners Association (EFCA) at the same time.

In 1990 I was granted a 12 month leave of absence from rail and became an industrial officer for the Combined Union of Railway Employees on the day of its formation and dismissed from TranzRail in 1991.

In 1995 the RMTU was formed and I become one of its organisers. Then in 1999 I became general secretary – my position until I depart on September 15, 2022.

A total of 48 years in rail which, I add, is not in anyway notable given the length of service of some members within the Union.

My mind is full of things I can say, can't say and, probably, shouldn't say, so I have resolved to dwell on what I want to say.

First my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the legion of rank and file delegates and branch officers who have carried out their roles voluntarily to the best of their abilities over the years.

Yes, the general secretary and the organisers have a valuable role but it's rank and file delegates and officers who deal with the vast majority of the tasks members expect the Union to do in return for their fees – and all whilst having a full time job of their own and a family/work life balance to maintain.

The RMTU and its members are truly blessed to have such a strong, focussed talented pool of people at their disposal.

I also acknowledge the strong and undying support I have received from the rank and file elected national officers for the Union over the years. It is truly astounding and a tribute to the calibre of the job holders that the RMTU has only had three national presidents during its history– one of them holding the position for slightly less than 12 months. The late Jim Kelly and our current president Aubrey Wilkinson have been rock solid in their leadership of our Union.

Peter Clemens, Ian Wilkie and Howard Phillips have all been standout national vice presidents.

I could go on and on. If I haven't named you please don't feel slighted as there

are just too many to name in this short contribution to the mag. Many members, delegates and officers have become friends of longstanding and I hope to maintain these relationships long into my retirement.

The stand out achievements of the RMTU, which I will take a small piece of participation responsibility and pride for, include the passionate advocacy and removal of the negative effects of the Employment Contracts Act and the tiered-based employment structure and disparate terms and conditions universal entitlements in the collective agreements. This work will not be truly finished until pay scale 1 (the range of rates scale) is abolished in all the rail collectives.

My first day in the GS role was the day of the Waipahi head on collision resulting in the death of Graeme White. His death was quickly followed by four more in a short space of time. These deaths are directly attributable, in my opinion, to the fact that in the lead up to the sale of rail, the rail workers were removed from the nation's H&S legislation and placed in the law applying to rail under the Transport Services Licensing Amendment Act with a test of "safety at reasonable cost".

I remember at the time my sound bite for media was "how do you measure reasonable cost? Is it in dollars or the bodies of rail workers and the misery of their families?".

The Ministerial Inquiry followed – a sad, moving and powerful time of healing for the families as finally we heard their voice.

The outcome was the repeal of section 6h and the return to coverage of rail workers under the national H&S law.

The contribution of Hazel Armstrong, Susan Robson and the late Jim Kitson to this cathartic and life changing experience can never be gauged properly.

I must also acknowledge the solid support and assistance of Ross Wilson the then CTU president and the Hon Margaret Wilson the Minister of Labour during this time.

Then we had the heady and enlivening times of the "Take Back The Track" campaign which saw the re-nationalisation of the track and infrastructure under Ontrack closely followed by the debacle of the 'Blue Book' with William Peet's attacks on our members and the Union's resitance ably led by our organiser responsible for the track area, the incomparable and late Scott Wilson.

Then onto the campaign for the re-nationalisation of the national rail operator and the formation of KiwiRail in 2008.

The focussed reduction of casualisation at ports, like Nelson and Napier, through strategic collective bargaining has been pleasing together with the expansion of the Living Wage across the Union's employers.

I will miss the people. An old port worker of towering intellect once told me "that all bosses are bastards". I have learnt he was right but there are good bastards as well as bad bastards. I have always admired those bosses who are able to deliver whatever they need to but at the same time look after their workers because they care. I have dealt with a small number of the latter but sadly a much larger number of the former.

Finally I wish to thank and acknowledge my wife and family. I have always strived to provide a good work/life balance but there were times when duty and the job did interfere or come before family events or arrangements.

I wish you all and the RMTU well into the future and look forward to you continuing to project a real workers' voice with power and influence into the workplace.

Union – Power! 🇳🇿



Life member Edgar Sparks recently celebrated his 80th birthday in Paekakariki. We took this opportunity to photograph four recent (including one acting) general secretaries of the RMTU: (l to r) Edgar Sparks, Wayne Butson, Todd Valster and Ross Wilson.

Napier Port board's gift to Wayne Butson on his retirement.

Lyttelton branch chair Andy Kelly (l) and branch secretary Heiner Benecke (r) with Lyttelton Port's new CEO Kirsty Gardiner. We wish Kirsty congratulations on her appointment and look forward to working with her on HPHE at the Port.



The case for regional

There is solid support for inter-regional rail within the RMTU with two members keen to get the various options and their thinking discussed. These long-time passenger passionate RMTU members, **Michael Nicholson** from Kapiti and **Isaac Broome** from Pukekohe, have thought long and hard about the issue and both have offered papers covering the discussion for publication. Both are agreed rail transport is a very energy efficient form of transport with excellent green credentials and that international studies show modern passenger rail is by far the least polluting form of surface transport.

Both writers bemoan our narrower "cape-gauge" railway which puts some limits on speed but point

The green credentials

STEEL wheels on steel rails provides very low friction travel and low rolling resistance. The result: a much reduced energy usage compared to air and road transport.

KiwiRail is said to cause 70% less emissions than road transport, even though most of their trains use diesel locomotives.

Rail transport becomes zero emissions when electrified and, through recent innovations, can recoup energy via regenerative braking technology which can then be used by other trains or fed back into the national power grid.

International studies show modern passenger rail is by far the least polluting



By **Michael Nicholson**

form of surface transport.

New Zealand's narrow gauge rail needn't be the inhibiting factor it is made out to be. While it is unlikely super-fast bullet trains seen will be seen, fast rail is achievable. Travel times are dictated more by the average speed than top speeds. A staged programme of curve easement, improved signalling, track maintained to higher standards, better designed trains to facilitate faster acceleration/deceleration and faster loading and detraining of passengers will decrease travel times overall. Tilt train technology, used on similar gauge rails as New Zealand, would allow current curves to be negotiated around 10% faster.

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rail expansion in NZ

out that average speeds can be improved. However, in order to develop and expand the national network there needs to be central Government policy, leadership and investment.

Both writers are keen advocates for expanding long distance passenger rail.

The Transport Worker has condensed both articles. Isaac argues a case before the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee Inquiry while Michael argues the case for low emission rail locally and nationally in New Zealand.



Paekakariki based Save Our Trains campaigners gather to support the expansion of long-distance passenger rail in New Zealand.

◀ Revival

Incremental investment and expansion could revive New Zealand's once extensive national network, reduce emissions pollution in the transport sector and better connect our cities, regions and communities.

Over recent years our national passenger rail network has withered drastically. Before 2001 passenger rail still had a comprehensive linked-up network joining most major cities and many smaller communities, including night trains between Auckland and Wellington. After 2001 there was a protracted and painful era of privatisation. Long-distance operations were sold or scrapped or moth-balled until in late 2008, the Labour/Alliance Government announced there would be a small fleet of long-distance passenger carriages built at Hillside Railway Workshops. Unfortunately, this development had been left way too late, the government changed and the order for the new carriages was unceremoniously halved.

For a number of years KiwiRail chased the easy tourism dollars while discouraging general travel.

Following the collapse of tourism post Covid, the Northern Explorer and Coastal Pacific ceased operating.

After a national public outcry a group of concerned citizens formed the Save Our Trains campaign since which it was announced these trains will resume in September this year. They will remain irregular,

The Enquiry

In early August Parliament's Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee (TISC) announced they are holding an inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand.

The aim of the inquiry is to find out what the future could hold for inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand.

Greg O'Connor, the chair of the committee, said: "We hope interested New Zealanders will take the time to have their say and help us better understand inter-regional passenger rail and its future in New Zealand."

The committee is looking forward to learning what the future of passenger rail could look like for New Zealand.

Terms of reference:

Investigating possibilities and viability of passenger rail in underserved communities, those with prior rail links that have been disestablished, and those currently advocating for improved rail links;

Gaining insights into viability of passenger rail sitting alongside KiwiRail's freight network;

Evaluating existing inter-regional passenger rail, such as the Capital Connection, and how these services work between local and regional councils and central government;

Gaining insights into the integration of regional rail into existing local public transport networks;

Investigating the climate and emissions reductions possibilities of passenger rail, and how this links to VKT (vehicle kilometres travelled) reduction targets in the Emissions Reduction Plan, and including electrification between regions; and

Investigating potential rail expansions and investments in specific areas, such as Tauranga and the Lower North Island.

The RMTU will certainly be making a submission to the Enquiry, said general secretary Wayne Butson.

"I would encourage members to do likewise or band together and make a group submission. This is our future here and we can make a serious contribution to its shape."

The closing date for submissions is Thursday, 06 October 2022. 🌐

expensive and even more unaffordable for Kiwi families, however, due to the campaign efforts at least there now remains a passenger rail option. It is hoped they can be developed over time to include daily operation, two classes and more stops, which would make them useful for general travel needs as well as for tourism.

Te Huia was initiated in 2021 between Hamilton and Auckland, unfortunate timing due to Covid lockdowns etc. Service improvements have been made early on, such as running off-peak trains and extending into central Auckland, stopping at Puhinui (a good transfer point to the airport) then onto the Strand (a bleak but central station close to the CBD).

Extend electrification

Meanwhile, Te Huia is becoming more established and passenger numbers are growing. There is need for a programme of continued improvements, including: extended electrification between Pukekohe to Hamilton (freight would also benefit); new electric or hybrid trains; faster operation (new third main will help); more regional station stops; addition of new central and east side Hamilton stations; access to Britomart (using new electric trains); and extended network to Cambridge, Tokoroa, Tauranga and Te Kuiti.

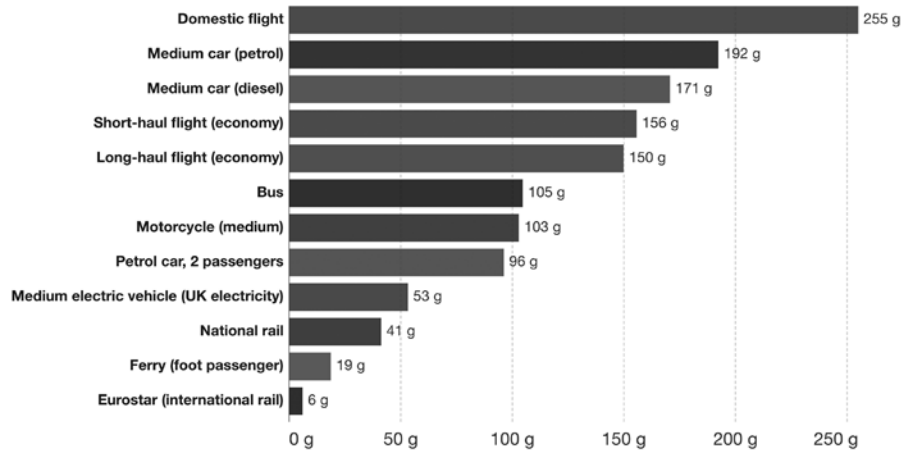
Services in the lower North Island have been improved in recent years through investment in new trains, more frequent operations and better reliability leading to high use of commuter trains.

There have long been proposals to extend regular services to the growing town of Otaki. Ideally, double tracking from Waikanae to Otaki would have taken place at the same time as building the expressway extension. Currently, proposals for extending electric commuter rail services have stalled.

Horizons and Greater Wellington Regional Council have developed a business case for modern and more regular – including weekends - Capital Connection services in a paper named the Lower North Island Rail Integrated Mobility (LNIRM). Trains would be powered by a very low emission hybrid electric system where batteries took over when the overhead power cables stopped. This proposal was supported by Manawatu and Whanganui's seven mayors,

Carbon footprint of travel per kilometre, 2018

The carbon footprint of travel is measured in grams of carbon dioxide equivalents per passenger kilometre. This includes carbon dioxide but also other greenhouse gasses and increased warming from aviation emissions at altitude.



Source: UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2019. CC BY Note: Data is based on official conversion factors used in UK reporting. These factors may vary slightly depending on the country, and assumed occupancy of public transport such as buses and trains.

as well as the eight mayors of the Wellington region. The proposal sought funding support through the 2022 budget but it was turned down – even though the business case has a very good cost benefit rating and many other tangible advantages, such as emissions reduction, reducing road traffic congestion and better connecting lower North Island communities.

The RMTU's Wellington Rail branch sent a letter to Government expressing deep disappointment that it was not funded, especially in the context of substantial Government support to assist private individuals in purchasing electric vehicles (EVs), the fact the LNIRM business case was so good and that new replacement trains and other improvements for Palmerston North and Masterton are urgently needed.

It can only be assumed this worthwhile passenger rail project will eventually be funded.

Not that long ago New Zealand had a comprehensive and joined-up national passenger rail network with good national coverage and well connected to other modes such as ferry services and feeder buses.

Room for bikes

This extended reach and usability and formed a total public transport option. Organised connecting passenger rail and feeder buses can work well to connect large and small communities.

Good examples can be found in New South Wales (TrainLink) and Victoria (VLine).

Bikes, scooters and trains go hand-in-hand to provide an excellent way of extending the reach of travel. Improvements are still needed, such as the ability for trains to carry more bikes and for bikes to be more available for casual hire. Due to their proximity to town centres, travellers such places as Palmerston North, Masterton, Frankton and Addington could benefit from better provision of bike and scooter facilities.

Night trains

Modern night trains are a realistic alternative to extremely polluting air travel over longer journeys.

Travelling between and to Wellington, Palmerston North, Hamilton and Auckland are identified as ideal distances.

Not so long-ago travellers had the choice of two quality night trains in each direction with sleeper compartments and good catering. One train also had cheaper seats for budget travellers. Services were later reduced with seats only and a limited catering service. Although not as attractive it still provided a handy and well used service. Again, lack of investment/political forced closure in 2004 – the carriages were then over 75 years old and deemed unfit for continued operation!

Modern night trains would be an ideal solution and three accommodation options could capture passenger needs and traveller expectations:

- Sleeper compartments – private hotel room style, very comfortable, most expensive.

A practical and viable plan



IN this excerpt from Isaac Broome's (pictured above) submission to the Transport and Infrastructure Select Committee Inquiry into the Future of Inter-regional Passenger Rail in New Zealand he focusses on his ten point plan which he claims will provide New Zealanders with the useful and practical rail service they can use.

Rail is a well-established means of inter-city travel in most countries if the right type

of train and service is provided. It is also one of the safest and most environmentally friendly modes of transport.

There is considerable potential for rail passenger services in New Zealand which currently lacks a nationwide rail passenger service network due, largely, to a lack of commitment in investment and improvements since the 1970s.

We once boasted having some of the best passenger trains in the world. These days only the Tranz Alpine, the Capital Connection, the Wairarapa Connection and the Te Huia train services are still running frequently enough to be considered public transport services.

The main inhibiting factors are the slow speed of the network due to its narrow gauge and lack of maintenance.

Also, while roads are progressively upgraded and improved, the rail network still largely follows its original alignment, and often on the same infrastructure as when they were built.

A number of lines, which would have been well-used passenger routes, were never completed due to a lack of financial support by successive Governments.

What needs to be done

In order for new rail passenger services to be realistically achieved and be viable, there needs to be a major restructure of rail in New Zealand, with more direct overseeing and leadership from the Government who will provide a large proportion of the funding. The present flawed system has KiwiRail as a commercial State-owned enterprise responsible for both the rail network and being an operator, effectively having a monopoly on rail in New Zealand. Under the present system, decision making by KiwiRail with regards to rail investment tends to be only from a purely commercial point of view and not a holistic view which takes into account public good and other key policies and objectives of the Government.

There needs to be a change to the structure and responsibility for rail in New Zealand, which needs to be implemented in conjunction with the proposed new funding systems for rail, to provide a fair and open access network for all rail operators, and to ensure greater transparency of the true costs associated with rail, and that

■ Lay flat seats – dorm style at night with lay flat beds, not so expensive.

■ Sit up seating – for those on a budget or who are not travelling longer distances, cheapest budget option.

Ideally, there would be plenty of space to carry bikes.

Greater Wellington Regional Council has recently endorsed the Wellington Strategic Rail Plan – a 30-year plan to improve regional rail infrastructure. It will allow for improved passenger rail capacity and for growth in rail freight operations.

Peak time frequency will improve to:

■ Four trains on all lines by 2025, train every 15 minutes.

■ Longer distance train frequency will improve to Palmerston North and Masterton by 2028.

■ Six trains on all lines by 2032, train every 10 minutes.

■ Inter-peak services will increase to four services per hour, train every 15 minutes.

■ Ten trains per hour (every 6 minutes) on the Kapiti line mid 2030s, Hutt line early 2040s.

Network reliability and robustness will improve, and capacity will progressively increase as infrastructure is upgraded.

Some key infrastructure developments this investment will include sections of double and new tracking, improved layouts, some sections with a third line and signalling and station upgrades. :

Studies commissioned by Government around options for extending railway electrification were recently made public including Waikanae to Palmerston North and into the existing electrified railway to Hamilton. Electrification would benefit both passenger and freight with a faster, more efficient and zero emissions operation over this route.

Government has initiated an enquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand (see side bar).

The current system does not work well.

For passenger rail to expand and improve there needs to be central Government leadership. It is unrealistic to expect regional authorities to develop new trains which cross multiple regional boundaries.

Central Government plans, develops and controls state highways which link cities and communities, long-distance rail is similar national issue – it needs a big picture perspective with centralised planning.

It may be appropriate to form some type of central government agency to develop, expand and operate passenger rail separately from KiwiRail, along the lines of Amtrak (USA), VIA Rail (Canada), PRASA (South Africa) and Great British Railways (UK).

Passenger rail is basic public infrastructure which should not be politicised. There needs to be acceptance of the greater good aspects which it brings. New Zealand can have it all – roads, air travel (when appropriate) and a well-functioning modern passenger rail. 🌐

all public funding invested in rail is utilised to the greatest benefit to taxpayers and end users of rail.

There also needs to be change to how rail passenger services are classed and operated, away from being fully commercial business operations, which with long distance inter-regional services have been primarily focussed on international tourists. Passenger services need to be re-focussed to be viewed and classed as essential services and a public good, which are accessible and affordable to all, providing a decent comfortable public transport service and an economic lifeline to small and regional towns.

Ten point plan

1. Recreate the office of Minister of Railways. The project and scale of the work needed to be done to the rail system in New Zealand both now and into the future justifies this together with the need for a Minister to lead and oversee rail.

2. Separate the rail infrastructure and rail passenger services from KiwiRail and regional councils, and vest these in the existing rail land holding SOE New Zealand Railways Corporation (NZRC), with a new nationwide city rail passenger service division.

The New Zealand Railways Corporation needs to become the Government entity responsible for:

- * Rail land.
- * Managing, maintaining and building the rail network.
- * The train control system.
- * Managing network access and rail user charges.
- * Setting national codes and standards for rolling stock, training and qualifications.
- * To become the rail regulator (transferred from NZTA).
- * Nationwide planning of rail and suburban and inter-regional passenger transport.
- * Ownership of passenger rolling stock and stations.

The NZRC should be funded in a similar manner to NZTA with rail user charges from



An ADL diesel unit bought from Perth. When first purchased critics said they wouldn't be enough to get Aucklanders out of their cars. Pre-Covid they passed 20 million passenger journeys!

rail operators (with the rail network opened up for any operator to use), together with funding from the Land Transport Fund and Crown grants for specific projects.

KiwiRail Holdings Ltd should remain as a commercial SOE rail operator, paying rail user charges for using the NZRC rail network.

All passenger train services need to accommodate bicycles. The Great Rides of New Zealand cycle trails should be linked to passenger train services where possible.

3. Immediate Government-funded purchase by NZRC of the ADL class diesel multiple unit trains (DMUs) in Auckland and all available former Auckland SA/SD commuter carriages.

Acquisition of this passenger rolling stock needs to occur as a matter of urgency to avoid their loss to overseas buyers and to facilitate new services.

Refurbished ADL trains (and SA/SD carriages) could be used to provide new commuter rail services in Hamilton, Tauranga or Christchurch or to start new commuter rail services in these cities as well as Dunedin, and between Henderson and Helensville.

4. Significantly upgrade the North Auckland line with an extension to Whangarei. With higher line speeds the line could have:

- * New heavy weight 50kg rail and concrete sleepers.
- * Realignment, including building a Mareretu deviation from Mareretu to Oakleigh via Waipu and Marsden Point, and building the Makarau bypass.
- * Curve and grade easing.
- * Increase the axle loading of the bridges on these lines to enable greater ton-

nage with heavier and more powerful trains to be hauled over them.

- * New crossing loops and high speed turnouts.
- * Double tracking between Swanson and Helensville.
- * Electrification between Swanson and Whangarei.
- * Installation of signalling between Waitakere and Whangarei.
- * Installation of a turntable at Helensville.
- * Build the Southdown-Avondale line.

The aim should be to get the line speed of the entire line up to at least 80km/hr, with 110km/hr where possible for passenger trains.

5. Commence a rolling electrification programme in conjunction with the refurbishment of the EF class electric locomotives, initially between Papakura and Pukekohe, then Pukekohe to Hamilton, Hamilton to Tauranga, Auckland to Helensville and Whangarei

Electrification is much-needed on the "Golden Triangle" rail route (Auckland-Hamilton-Tauranga), along with double tracking, and if the Ports of Auckland is relocated to NorthPort.

6. Significantly upgrade the main trunk lines to speed up travel and enable bigger, heavier trains.

This includes the need for:

- * Triple and quadruple tracking between Auckland and Pukekohe via Newmarket and Penrose.
- * Full double tracking between Pukekohe, Hamilton and the Kaimai tunnel in the Waikato.
- * Building a bypass route around the Whangamarino Swamp along the middle of the SH1 Waikato Expressway between Mercer and Rangiriri.
- * Full double tracking between Rangiora and Rolleston in Christchurch.
- * Curve and grade easing.
- * Installation of high speed points and crossovers.
- * Improved signalling (ETCS level 2 in Auckland suburban area.
- * Grade separation of level crossings.
- * Increase the axle loading of the bridges on these lines to enable greater tonnage



Graham Lyes, Tony Peebles, Sam Perera.



Aaron Walton, Mark Boyd, Tyrone Montgomery.



Sammie Stowers, Stu Marsh, Josh North-Johnson and Steve Dasler

Lyttelton line-up

Branch members 'caught' in a photo shoot at a recent Lyttelton Port event.

with heavier and more powerful trains to be hauled over them.

* Significantly improve the standard and maintenance level of the track.

7. Establish a new main trunk rail route between Whangarei and Wellington via Tauranga, Rotorua, Taupo and Napier.

This would establish a new main trunk route utilising existing upgraded lines and new lines to fill the few gaps and with extensions to Kaitaia and the Napier-Gisborne line to Te Karaka. This would link all the major population centres, ports and forestry areas in the North Island.

Developing this new trunk line would also be ideal for carrying more containerised freight on the Golden Triangle.

8. Reopen the Wairoa-Gisborne line and reinstate half of the former Moutohora branch to Te Karaka.

In the Gisborne region, the Napier-

Gisborne line needs to be fully reopened from Wairoa to Gisborne while half of the former Moutohora branch line needs to be relaid from Gisborne to Te Karaka where a new log loading site could be established.

9. Build new combined passenger stations for train services and coaches in all cities and towns with a rail line, to be owned by NZRC/Cityrail, as part of developing an integrated nationwide public transport service.

10. Auckland light rail – rethink needed in conjunction with new inter-regional rail passenger services.

Light rail in Auckland needs to be scaled back to a more basic and affordable project using conventional light rail, initially on two key arterial routes out of the CBD and into the central suburbs along:

* Queen Street/Great North Road/SH16 to Westgate.

* Customs Street/Symonds Street/ Dominion Road to Stoddard Road in Mount Roskill.

Implementing the above will provide New Zealand with a viable rail network with a realistic, sustainably funded structure on a fair level playing field with road, air and maritime transport.

It also actively supports this Government's policies and objectives, and provides New Zealanders with a useful practical rail service they can use. 🇳🇿

Make a submission to the Ministerial Inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand.

The closing date is

Thursday, 06 October 2022

Have your say.

Email the committee at:

ti@parliament.govt.nz

Up for the challenge

THERE will be no dramatic changes to the RMTU when the new (acting) general secretary, Todd Valster, takes over from Wayne Butson, he told *The Transport Worker*.

One of his key concerns is succession planning throughout the union and the need to encourage young members to step up to leadership and responsibility – for themselves and for future workers in rail and ports.

"Nevertheless, I think we are delivering results, though it takes time."

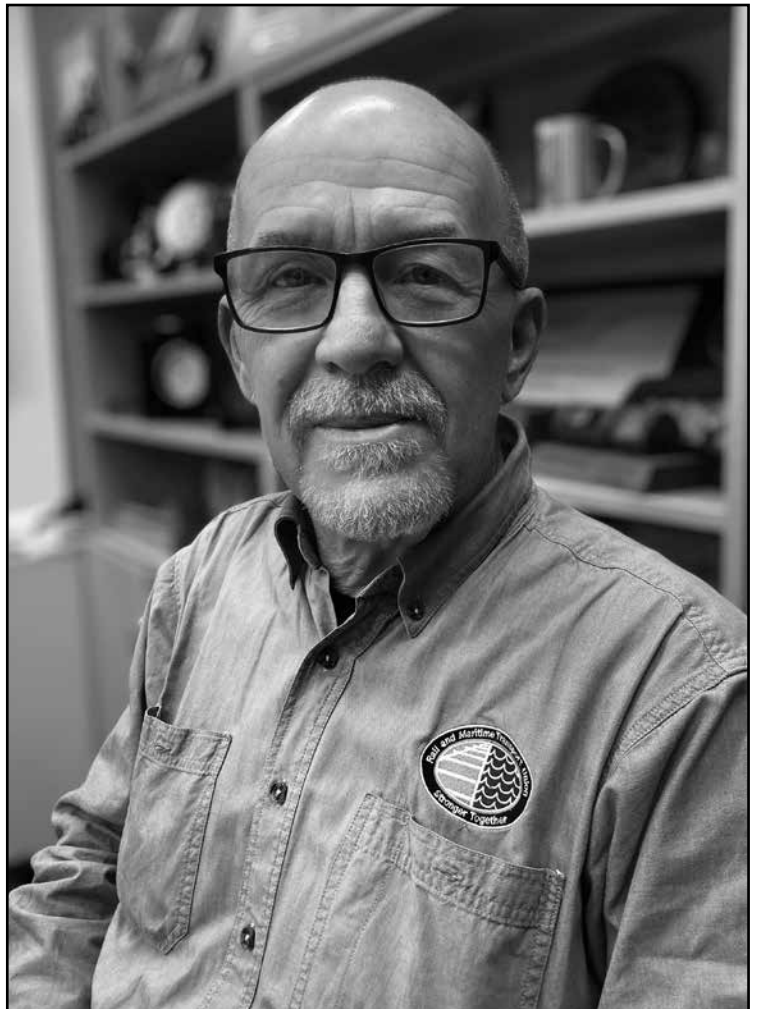
While Todd didn't start his working life as an active unionist it was kind of inevitable with a father already active and a locomotive engineer.

"I began life in Dunedin and lived there for 19 years," he said. "When I left school I went to work for the local hospital but after a while decided it wasn't for me."

So he followed his father into rail.

"He was an LE in Wellington and because they weren't employing trainee LEs in Dunedin I followed him there."

After nearly five years Todd qualified for his 1st grade



\$10,000 ADB

All members of the Rail and Maritime Transport Union 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 Rail and Maritime Transport Union. **Members also have the option to increase their coverage an additional \$10,000 which costs just \$2 for the first year.**

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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 for \$5. A.M. Best, one of the oldest and most respected insurance ratings companies, has rated American Income Life as A (Excellent) for overall Financial Strength (as of 7/20).



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◀ ticket quickly followed by an electric ticket.

"Driving the electric multiple units on a regular schedule suited me at that stage with a young family," he said, "but I preferred to drive freight whenever it became available."

He recalls being dragged to union meetings in those early days by his father where he felt he was treated like a child – discouraged from speaking or contributing by the "elder statesmen" including his father!

"Dad was definitely into justice and fairness. He came to New Zealand in the late 1950s from Holland where he'd experienced oppression in the Second World War," said Todd.

"He supported the union and its members but not so much the bosses. He was all for trying to make sure that deals were turned down and was always keen on trying to get more from them."

It wasn't until the rail strike of 1995 that Todd started showing a keen interest in union affairs.

"The strike shut down rail entirely for a day and I really enjoyed being on the picket line from five in the morning until five at night. From that day my interest in union work grew."

He recalls a time when one of the LE delegates - who in Todd's opinion had not performed well - was up for re-election. Todd stood against him, won and became one of the Wellington Rail branch LE delegates.

"I then worked my way towards becoming the branch secretary but had to mark time for a while as vice chairperson. Eventually I secured the branch secretary position."

As branch chair he was asked by the RMTU to participate in a few specific tasks including helping to organise the Wellington Rail branch.

"In 2002 I was offered the opportunity to become an organiser for the Union so I took a year's leave from Rail and attended a course – Organising Works through the CTU - which I passed. It was a pilot programme and I was joined by some good people including our current Minister of Transport Michael Woods."

A permanent position at the RMTU followed as a replacement for union stalwart Eddie Dickson who had landed a job in London with the ITF.

"I knew I wasn't going back to rail," said

Todd. "I believed in the work of the RMTU and saw this opportunity as bringing me closer to my philosophy of providing and fighting for fairness in the workplace and balancing the equation between employers and workers."

Another major driver behind the decision was working for safer workplaces.

He was a delegate for the Wellington branch during a pretty disastrous period in rail in New Zealand when a high number of workers were killed at work.

"Far too many," he said. "There was nothing worse for me than having to visit the dead workers' families and to try and improve their lot. Those are the hardest jobs I have ever done."

He later participated in the ministerial enquiry into rail safety and the subsequent reconciliation process.

"We can be incredibly proud of the work we've done but that drive for safety is as important now as it was then. I'm absolutely delighted that the RMTU has set a high standard by having its own dedicated health and safety organiser."

Todd is also a firm advocate of the value of joint employer/worker councils having been on both sides of them – as a workplace delegate and since joining national office, as an organiser.

"Industrial councils have made a significant difference to working conditions and have gone a long way to easing contract negotiations allowing problems to be solved in good time with the relationship with employers much improved."

While he counts the negotiated settlements and the underlying work of industrial councils among the Union's successes he also counts the harder fought battles such as the "stoush" with Centreport when the RMTU closed it down for two days.

"Work was being outsourced and they refused to allow workers to go along with the work which was common practice," he said. "In the end we won, a new CEO and HR team were appointed and we began consultative regular forums with management which continue to today. We built up trust and those forums have passed the test of time."

The bigger problem on the wharves is out of our control or influence he says, which is a lack of work with competition between port companies for freight.

"An issue that will need to be sorted out soon."

Other successful campaigns included 'Take back the track' after Rail was sold to a consortium including Faye/Richwhite and Canadian Rail - both of whom stripped the company of almost all its assets and then made a very healthy profit when they sold it a few years later.

"This was a hugely successful campaign. Now we have fully funded below rail and proper investment."

Saving Hillside Workshops in Dunedin was a further success and work has already started on a complete rebuild.

He's glowing with his admiration for Wayne Butson's leadership and the fine position he leaves the Union in.

"I believe he is largely responsible for the respect we have from employers and members and the growth in our membership which continues apace and is now over 5000 members."


He's particularly proud that the RMTU managed to get the phrase "same or more favourable" into the employment contracts making sure that if (or when) work is privatised terms and conditions remain stable.

"Unlike what happened to the poor bus drivers in Wellington and elsewhere," he said.

In the short term getting into bed with MUNZ is not a hot topic on his agenda. He says while one big union on the ports makes sense there are obstacles which will need to be overcome first.

"If we amalgamate it would still leave some unions out in the cold. At Centreport alone there are five unions – all for just 200 workers. In the final analysis it's a desirable outcome but not at all costs."

He plans his leadership to be inclusive and fair.

"I'd rather suggest than dictate and seek equal inputs. But I know the buck will stop with me. The upcoming national RMTU conference will be a benchmark. I'll be running things from the top table rather than my usual role of troubleshooting and keeping things moving smoothly. Without my replacement in place it could get a bit frantic. But I'm up for the challenge of union leadership as I firmly believe I have the skills and intelligence needed for the job and I most certainly have the passion to build union power and the RMTU." 

Fatal fatigue


KIWIRAIL health and safety reps learned how human error caused by fatigue contributed to catastrophic events such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill and Three Mile Island nuclear disaster.

The course, run by Worksafe is called Preventing & Managing Fatigue – Health & Safety Training.

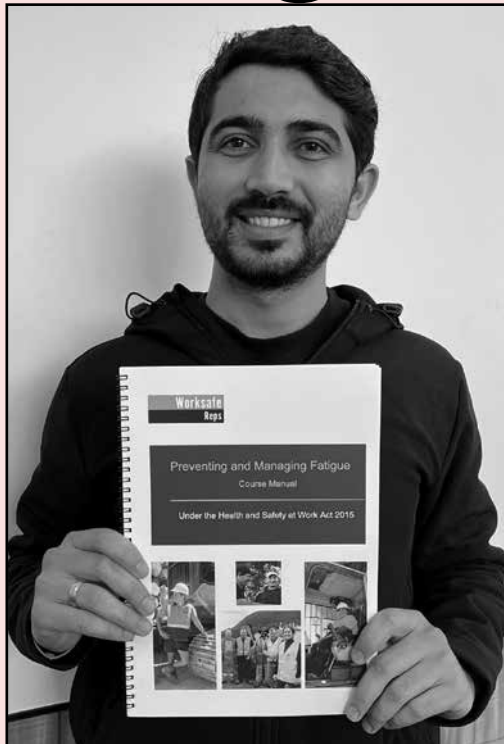
Using case studies reps learned how fatigue can impair a person in the same way as drugs and alcohol, affecting reaction times, decision making, the ability to assess risk and communication.

Sleep science and the principles of fatigue risk management were covered in the course including good rostering design and personal strategies for managing fatigue from shift-work.

The course also provides an understanding of the legislative duty to manage the hazard of fatigue, risk management and provides the tools and templates for introducing or improving a fatigue risk management system.

The course is recommended for health and safety reps and roster delegates.  For more information go to the Worksafe Repts website

<https://worksafereps.co.nz>



Arpit Panchal from KRG Hutt mechanical workshops at Worksafe Repts training.



who is holding this sign?

AFTER a long hiatus Just Fair Culture training has resumed to KiwiRail.

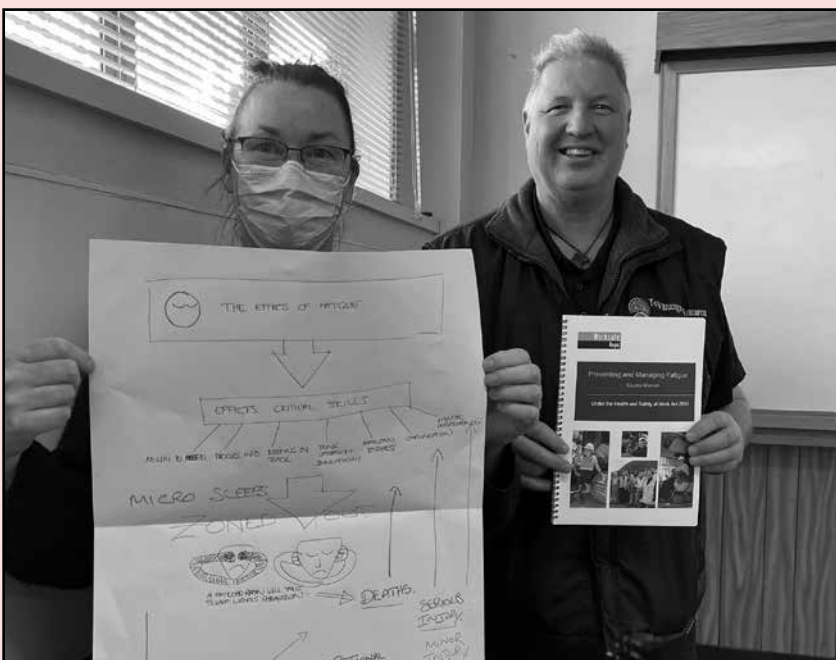
The Just Fair culture (JFC) programme was co-developed by KRG and RMTU delegates in 2014 with the aim of improving the safety culture at KiwiRail.

When an incident occurs, the JFC process requires the employer to ask 'what' caused the incident rather than 'who' caused it.

An investigation must not start with blame, which has been a typical knee-jerk reaction to incidents or near misses in the past.

The aim of JFC is to understand the gaps in the safety system (the holes in the Swiss cheese) and learn from mistakes so they don't happen again.

HSATs have an important role in reviewing the safety investigation report and following up on the corrective actions.



Amy Cronhelm and Sam Kabui with poster on the effects of fatigue at Worksafe Repts training.



Where it turns out a person's behaviour was a contributing factor questions are asked to find out why the person did what they did.

Unless the behaviour is deemed reckless, the focus is then on education, coaching and restoring the person back to the workplace.

A disciplinary procedure is, for most union members, a difficult and stressful event.

While JFC does not completely allay those fears, it can reduce them. If managers, HR staff and delegates are well trained in the Just and Fair Culture process, it can take the heat and stress out of most investigations.

Just Fair Culture resumed in Auckland in June and will deliver courses to delegates, HSAT reps and managers in August and September. 🌐

Hit and miss conditions on the waterfront

FOLLOWING the tragic workplace deaths at Ports of Auckland and Lyttelton in recent months the Government's review of health and safety in the ports continues.

The Minister of Transport and Workplace Relations and Safety Hon Michael Wood requested the regulators of Maritime NZ and WorksafeNZ work with industry, including unions, to identify the issues and improve safety.

This could include changes to safety regulations if required.

Maritime NZ has established the Ports Health and Safety Leadership Group on which the RMTU is represented by president Aubrey Wilkinson.

The Leadership Group will report to the Minister by October 2022.

At a workshop with Maritime NZ, port delegates and H&S reps identified the following issues;

- Lack of staff to carry out tasks safely (eg: staff who should be working in a gang of six had only four people to do the job);
- High staff turnover and a large casual workforce;
- Fall arrest systems such as inertia reels are old, poor quality and difficult to adjust;
- No joint plan with other port operators on how to rescue people in an emergency;
- Fatigue risk due to people working 72 hours per week;

- Lack of incentive to report near miss incidents because workers are stood down following an incident and not paid whilst the investigation occurs;

- Old and outdated plant. Some straddles have 45,000 hours life, but many are older and plant is often patched up to keep working;

- New staff or casuals are more likely to be given the 'crappy' straddles. Bad seats and brakes were also discussed and lack of suspension;

- Lack of standards regarding exclusion zones. One port has 12 metre exclusion zones whilst other ports have six metre exclusion zones;

- Non-standard PPE is being used within organisations and across sectors. Lack of women's PPE and for casuals who are required to pay for their own PPE (ie: rain coats);

- Yard conditions and injuries from hitting potholes and poor ergonomics of operating straddles;

- Poor conditions on board the ship (eg: rusted gangways, no lights, and poor ventilation); and

- Training and competency of workers is not standardised across ports with pressures to sign people on as competent.

The RMTU is pushing for national standards to regulate the industry including an approved code of practice for stevedoring. 🌐



**PORT
HEALTH & SAFETY
LEADERSHIP
GROUP**

Hola Españ~

When eight southern LEs travelled to Spain to ensure the new South Island locos meet NZ expectations

THE time had arrived to replace the South Island's ageing fleet of locomotives. With an average age of 47 years the current mix in use is on the cusp of decrepitude with associated frequent break downs and pose an undesirable and increasing hazard to locomotive engineers.

Through a process of elimination and a careful study of specifications the KiwiRail procurement team, which included RMTU LE KIC reps Jed O'Donoghue and Dave Kearns and mechanical council rep Luke James, they landed at the door of Swiss engineering company Stadler Rail – not the cheapest bid but, according to KIC central LE rep and union lead for the Spanish 'armada' reps, Howard Phillips "but because the Stadler bid was deemed the best overall of the 10 received from reputable international manufacturers".

Realistic mock-up

Among the conditions of the deal Stadler were to build a full size realistic mock up of the cab such that working conditions and cab layout could be fully and rigorously tested and explored prior to production. Originally, the mocked up cab was to be shipped to New Zealand for examination but shipping delays,

combined with worldwide travel disruptions due to Covid, saw the time line for this likely to be dragged out to a three to six month delay.

Instead it was decided to send a team of LE representatives to Valencia in Spain - the Stadler manufacturing plant which would be building the locomotives.

The RMTU, determined to get the cab conditions right, insisted a comprehensive group needed to be sent.

"Not just the two suggested by KiwiRail," said Phillips. "We wanted a fair representation of LE reps from across the South Island and suggested eight would be the minimum. After a little jockeying back and forth, KiwiRail agreed. And they were so pleased they did. They really got bang for their buck."

The team (plus three from KiwiRail management) comprised: Paul Foskett (Picton), Mike Morgan (Otira), Dodie Joseph



Bryan McKay climbing into the realistic mock up and



(Greymouth), Steve Stringer (Middleton), Grant Palmer (Timaru), Brian McKay (Dunedin) and George King (Invercargill). Together with the reps on the procurement team they mustered 237 years of loco service.

Most readers would gawp in envy at a company-funded trip to Spain but Phillips said this particular assignment was a gruelling experience – three days of intense factory inspections and discussions squeezed between two series of excruciatingly long, tedious and cramped economy class flights – around 30 hours travel

Cab details

The new cab layout is a 'desk-top' design – a significant departure from the AAR control stand configuration of the old South Island fleet. Once the LE is seated in the driving position, all the regularly used controls are within easy reach and do not require overreaching or twisting into awkward positions to operate.

The locos will be built to the latest European collision crash standards making the cab much safer for the LE than any others in the current

(l) Layout of the proposed new cab and (r) Dodie



Ma!



the LE team in front of the mock up with KiwiRail reps and Spanish staff

time to Spain and 40 for the return.

No time to recover

"There was no time to recover. Basically, we saw the inside of planes, a hotel room and a factory," said Phillips. "And all in an energy-sapping 40 degree heatwave. Which bit would you be envious of?"

Brian McKay endorsed that sentiment saying you had to be experience it to know how hard it was. It wasn't just "another junket on the KiwiRail dollar".

"Was it worth it? Yes!" he said adding they had helped create a cab "for our needs".

KiwiRail hadn't commissioned new locomotives since the DL order to CRRC Dalian some 13 years ago and the post production problems from that experience were hard learnt lessons. As far as possible, with this new and substantial order, they were determined to get it right from the beginning. Hence



Mike Morgan and George King working the controls.

fleet. One trade off for safety is that the side windows are smaller than have traditionally been used and some lateral sight-lines are reduced.

Unlike the mock up, the new cab will have air conditioning.

Now the cab layout has been approved and the design "frozen", we look forward to continuing engagement with LE, RSAS and terminal Union reps throughout the production process, prototype testing and introduction to revenue service.



Joseph and Mike Morgan trying to keep cool

Discussing the cab layout with Stadler and the combined team.



the large team.

In the final analysis, this order for 57 new locomotives at a total contract price of around NZ\$403 million is a substantial purchase and getting it right is crucial.

According to Phillips, while the Stadler's designers had been very good, the thorough inspections given them by the New Zealand LEs elicited praise from every quarter.

"They checked everything in the cab and some aspects beyond," he said. "Much to the admiration of the Stadler designers."

Toilet problem

Unfortunately, New Zealand's narrow gauge railway and physical conditions restricted the length and size of the final build and not everything desired could be accommodated. For instance, an onboard toilet had been considered but it would have been just too cramped and small to be widely useful.

"Instead," says Phillips, "toilet facilities are being installed or upgraded at numerous locations across the network."

"I had high expectations of Stadler after reading about the company and I was not disappointed," said Paul Foskett. "Multiple forms of crack testing and measurement checking with the latest equipment gave me the assurance they were at the top of their game. Also it was a real pleasure to work with the cab designers who worked very hard to accommodate our design changes. There were few very difficult modifications the RMTU team required within the very limited space."

"What an excellent facility, great hosts and a great team of designers," said Mike Morgan. "They were very open to change,



Mike Morgan tests the cab entrance wearing a tunnel mask.

which means the end product will be great."

He added that while a bigger cab would have been better they found ways to adapt and fit various items of gear.

"This was the biggest headache but it is all in there now and processes can be developed to ensure it isn't a hindrance in a depot where it isn't required."

The team spotted a bevy of cab improvements including new ways of stowing equipment which made the cabs appear less cramped "and surprised the Stadler designers with their ingenuity and smart thinking" he said.

At one point the entire team had to demonstrate they could escape through the emergency exit – via a front window, which was accomplished without fault despite the various body shapes on offer!

"Our team did an awesome job considering the gruelling travel we had to undertake in such a short time," said Dodie Joseph who added the team were out to make



Howard Phillips the national office rep who led the Union team.

◀ the cab "the most" user friendly and comfortable in the given space.

"The engineers showed true interest in what was important for us and all the small details that mattered. Nothing was a hassle."

Dodie added they worked well with the Stadler team for an overall win despite the intense heat and short time frame.

"It was a great experience and I look forward to seeing the prototype. Very exciting," she said.

"I enjoyed the company of all the people involved in this exercise," said Steve Stringer, "it really was a team effort. I'm confident it will pay dividends for years to come."

Two prototypes of the new DM loco will arrive in New Zealand mid 2024 for thorough testing before work on the remaining 55 locomotives begin.

And not before time, says Phillips.

"The old locos have outlived their design life by a couple of decades and are noisy, they vibrate excessively, are not well sealed, let in exhaust gasses and are not reliable. In the new cabs, LEs won't even need to wear ear muffs to exclude the noise — as the cab is fully insulated, sound proofed and sealed — and the seat will be an ergonomic sensation." 🌐

SOLIDARITY



(top) Wellington rail branch member Chris McGrigor supporting firefighters on strike late last month and in Dunedin more members show their support.



New face at HQ

NEXT time you call into, or phone, RMTU headquarters the first person you are likely to meet will be Alejandra (Pronounced: Alehandra) Garcia — the new National Office administrator and point-of-contact for almost all enquiries.

Alejandra has lived in New Zealand for five years after coming here from her native country, Mexico, to study and improve her English.

Then she met her partner and "I stayed!"

He is an IT guru from the UK but now a permanent resident in New Zealand.

Prior to coming to New Zealand Alejandra was as physiotherapist but desiring a change

of direction she picked up a job in health in Wellington, with a high level of IT expertise required. She loved the change and finds the work fronting the RMTU challenging and satisfying where she has ample opportunity to test her IT skills.

"I don't really like to always be in my comfort zone," she told *The Transport Worker*, adding that the front desk provides just about the right level of challenge she's comfortable with. She readily admits the variety of work is "crazy" but she is still learning the ropes.

In her spare time she paints and does a bit of swing and dancing.

We wish her well in her new post. 🌐



New SI organiser appointed

DAVE KEARNS, the newly-appointed RMTU South Island organiser, has no illusions of the size of the task ahead of him.

"It's a big gig but I'm really looking forward to it," he told *The Transport Worker*, acknowledging the size of the geographic area he needs to cover and the range of workplaces.

"Some of the key things I plan to get my head around are a clear timetable of all the different collective bargaining arrangements and implementing systematic and regular visits to each branch and workplace is part of my schedule."

By making regular workplace visits a critical part of his posting he plans to become well acquainted with the issues and trials of the membership.

"I need to explore and determine where I can be most effective and the only way to do that is to keep the lines of communication open. I think we are already a highly organised union and we need to keep that up to get the best outcomes possible. That will come from the members and branch delegates. I'm there to support them and help them maintain momentum and enthusiasm. If we're not doing that we are in danger of not empowering the membership."

He describes his motivation to become active in the Union back in the day was prompted by an incident at work.

"One of my colleagues was hauled before management, in my view, on an unjustified post-incident drug and alcohol test. I was incensed by the injustice and approached management to express my opinion and support for my mate. I was



unceremoniously told to 'Butt out'. Which I did, but then I went on to find out what I needed to do to 'butt in' effectively. That's when I was elected as a union delegate and have been fighting for members' rights ever since."

He was mentored in his union work by, among others, the late RMTU president and union stalwart Jim Kelly – a fellow worker at Hillside – and buoyed by an upbringing that focussed on fairness.

Dave will be Dunedin-based where he has been for most of his life. He has four children though only one is still dependant, and four mokopuna – mostly in the South Island.

He joined New Zealand Rail in February 1985 as an 18 year old apprentice pattern maker at the Hillside Workshops and, apart from a couple of periods overseas has been with Rail ever since – the last ten years as a locomotive engineer at first in Christchurch and back in Dunedin in 2014.

Like many folk in South Dunedin he sees the rebirth of Hillside as a "good news story worth celebrating".

"A lot of people in South Dunedin are very pleased to see its revival and supported our campaign to save it," he said. However, this does not mean it is out of danger. He

is now concerned for its physical future as authorities endeavour to stop the rising tides washing it – and half of South Dunedin – away.

"We need to be vigilant the right design decisions are made for future growth in rail, and protection provided against rising tides inundating the workshops along with a large part of South Dunedin. Even years ago, encroaching

water from king tides and groundwater could be seen in foundry pits at Hillside, a volatile mix."

He says plans are afoot to raise the footprint of the Workshops by about a metre which may stave off disaster for a short while but it's probably not a permanent solution.

Dave believes the climate crisis is a looming catastrophe which will test the wide ranging views of members.

"We need to have some grown up conversations about its implications and the changes coming our way. We need be ahead of – and part of – the decision making before those decisions are imposed on us," he said. "However, I'm confident the end result will see more investment in rail and shipping."

Meanwhile, on the political front he thinks that while the current Labour government have failed to implement bold policy to address inequality, among other things, rail has thrived relatively with substantial investment.

"The alternative prospect of a National-led government is infinitely worse and could undo all the gains of recent years. Without a doubt we must do all we can to keep Labour in power". 🇳🇿

JOIN THE CAMPAIGN TO KEEP DUNEDIN RAIL MOVING

The Dunedin City Council needs to use innovative thinking to keep Dunedin Railways rolling, including the iconic tourist attraction of the Taieri Gorge Railway. No to mothballing

Sign the petition at: facebook.com/dunedinrail

Book

Te ohaki tapu - The formal pact.

Described by author Maurice Ormsby as a specialised piece of work this book is an important contribution to Maori and Pakeha historical record – and to railway history.

The book describes the pact which let the main trunk railway through the King Country. The pact was made between 1882 and 1885 by five tribes of the Rohe Potae (King Country) led by Ngati Maniapoto, with the colonial government which needed land for the railway line, while the iwi sought access to the wider money economy, European agricultural technology and development finance.

Although the government did not honour the formal pact, Ngati Maniapoto did, even to the point of going to war on behalf of its erstwhile enemies. The agreement has yet to be tested in court.

The lengthy negotiations began in the late 1870s, and finally was finalised in 1885, under the Stout-Vogel government.

Controversies were settled by discussion until a consensus was reached.

In 1882 Rewi wrote to the then Minister of Native Affairs, John Bryce, asking him to hurry up with the formation of the line, and to complete it within five years, so he could ride it before he died.

Ngati Maniapoto and neighbouring iwi were eager to participate in the wider developing economy and saw the railway as beginning the process. The government and its public servants were insistent that at the ceremony the premier Robert Stout should turn the first sod on the south side of the Puniu river. Ngati Maniapoto disagreed, and the dispute lasted until the morning before the ceremony took place. In the end Stout deferred to the view of the iwi and senior rangitira, Wahanui Huatare, dug the sods and Stout wheeled them away in a ceremonial wheelbarrow. That barrow is now displayed in the Otorohanga museum. 🇳🇿

■ To order a copy (\$40) email your name and address to: info@steeleroberts.co.nz They will send you a copy and an invoice to allow online payment.



Mike Lynch's commemorative seat unveiled at Hindon by his workmates and family at Dunedin Railways on August 7. Mike passed away suddenly in January this year.

Leaking ceilings

INSIDE Trandev's amenities block in Wellington Railway Station after the big rains. The station has had a fortune spent on earthquake remediation but it appears the work didn't include making the building watertight.

Degraded ceiling tiles had been noted a couple of weeks earlier. Given the immediate and serious risk of further tiles falling and, potentially, on staff, H&S rep Mark Pickering, recommended all wet, damp or water stained ceiling tiles throughout the station staff amenities (including bathrooms) "be removed by 1200 hrs today (August 19) or those areas will be closed to staff use". 🇳🇿



50 years of rail service

THIS year train controller, Ray Luty, reached 50 years of working in rail. Covid delayed a celebration but we managed to get together in late May to celebrate. Family, friends and past and present colleagues came together at the Wellington Railway Station. There were many tales told about working with Ray. He was known as a stickler to the rules and feared by new LEs because of this hard approach. Well done Ray!

(l to r) Todd Valster presenting Ray with an RMTU Certificate of Appreciation.

In his last months as general secretary Wayne Butson attended a number of branch AGMs to deliver his final thoughts and to congratulate significant achievements among members.



Retirement celebrations for Geoff Van Zoomeran and Mike King - Hawke's Bay rail branch.



Dave Marden, Napier Port, presents Wayne Butson with a gift of thanks.



Congratulations to David Hughes. Napier Port branch member for 45 years.



Northland AGM & UNION POWER



Auckland AGM



Timaru Port branch AGM

Retirement congratulations at the AGM

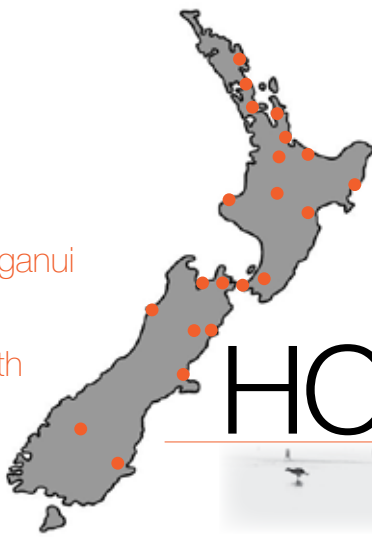


(l to r) Branch secretary Joe Gibson, Geoff Van Zoomeran, Mike King, RMTU general secretary Wayne Butson and branch chair Darryl Hoare.

Napier Rail branch AGM



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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NORTHLAND RAIL

Reopening work on Otiria line - mothballed in 2016

KIA ORA KOUTOU, it's time for another update from the not-so-winterless North. Some of you southern folk may not agree with that statement with your snow and all of that carry on, but when you need to wear two shirts to work it's a sure sign that the temperature gauge is dropping below 20 degrees.

Around the traps in the Greater Auckland area it's never really stopped. With the near completion of one project another project begins as we head north of Kauri in an attempt to re-open the line to Otiria which saw its last train in 2016 when the line was mothballed.

It's no easy task but our track and structures teams have proved they are more

than capable of getting the job done to the highest of standards. The formation is set to be dug out and re-ballasted as currently it consists mostly of scoria, which is great for drainage and landscaping but put a train over it and it soon turns to dust. Along with the formation, the rail and sleepers are being pulled out and replaced in sets/panels, as well as a few bridges needing major repairs which are well past their prime. Big thanks to our brothers and sisters in the operations department for working with us on the weekends with the rail and sleeper drops.

As always with projects comes the contractors. Some are well needed for tasks that fall outside our core scope of works,

such as hi-rail excavator operators and surveyors. Some not so much, especially when we have qualified in-house protectors and have already removed protectors provided by another rail contractor. More to come on that front.

On Friday August 12 we held our AGM which was attended by Wayne Butson who had the nerve to comment on how lovely our weather is in Northland on such a crisp morning with exactly one ray of sunshine poking through the cloud cover on a 18 degree morning.

We were lucky to have as guest speaker local Whangarei Labour MP Dr. Emily Henderson who spoke on Fair Pay Agreements. As a union I think we can all get behind the



Otiria upgrade.



WHERE ARE YOU?

When problems arise we may need to contact you in a hurry.

Please check we have your correct address and contact details.

<http://bit.ly/exmEyl>

or

04-499-2066

◀ betterment of workers in Aotearoa. Emily also reinforced Labour's support for rail and especially for the Marsden spur project which will be huge for the Whangarei economy. Ask any National MP their thoughts on rail and they'll tow the anti-rail party line.

It was great to have Wayne as a guest on his farewell tour and for him to give a state of the nation talk as well as answering and providing feedback to the members who had many a question. Wayne has put a lot of personal time and effort into this Union

as the general secretary and as a branch we took the opportunity to thank him for his many years of service. Thanks again Wayne and enjoy a well earned rest.

Be safe and look out for one another.



BAY OF PLENTY RAIL

New renovations to accommodate increasing staffing levels

KIA ORA from the sunny Bay of Plenty. Tauranga terminal has some very positive and exciting opportunities ahead. The number of staff who will be operating the yard is increasing from 10 to 15. This includes more roles for team leaders.

Due to the increase in numbers, renovation work is going to commence on an adjacent building to house the extra staff, locomotive engineers and their trainee engineers as well.

Additionally, the first female Tauranga rail operator has been employed along with a new manager in Adele Liliva. Congratu-

lations ladies and Tauranga and welcome to the family.


Mount Maunganui and Kawerau continue to welcome new members to the KiwiRail whanau too with an abundant number of new trainee rail operators and locomotive engineers. They are all doing a fantastic job and we are loving having them join the team.

With all the rain which has come this winter the Mount yard has struggled at times to stay open for operations. However, it continues to be a working project for the future. Mount Maunganui are looking forward to the additional and upgraded

lighting in their yard which is to come in the near future.

Finally, we would like to welcome back a couple of our fantastic KiwiRail colleagues who have joined our team again after a period away. We are loving having you back, don't leave us again.

Mount Maunganui and Tauranga have recently celebrated the graduation of three Toi Toi graduates. Well done to you all. What a fantastic journey you have been on. We wish you every success in the future.

The future depends on what you do today said Mahatma Gandhi. Until next time. Nga mihi me te aroha nui. 

NAPIER PORT

Another port company taking annual leave to cover Covid absences

KIA ORA KATOA NGA MEMA. Yet another complication due to Covid. Not sure how other port members or rail staff are faring once their sick leave allocations which has been used up to recover from Covid.

The Napier Port Company is now taking staff annual leave to cover any other illnesses not associated to Covid. A while back we had conversations with the Company over how members and other staff would be treated once sick leave was used up as it was perceptively clear, the stand down period, of what started out as 10 days for catching Covid and latterly dropped to seven days, was no doubt and going to have an impact on sick leave entitlements. Initial discussions by the branch and the company indicated there would be discretionary leave available in these circumstances. However, eight months on we are facing attacks on annual leave which were never part of the aforementioned talks.

Members have indicated they would

rather go without pay than have annual leave taken away. Family time and the ability to have decent holidays is more important to some of them.

There is one aspect to catching Covid which has not changed: if a person is or was 'A' symptomatic, whereby if one has the virus but has no affects, in this instance the discretionary leave applies because effectively the person is able to work but is forced to stay home. In essence, no deduction.

There are also those who have been able to work from home, because they can, but who have been paid when inflicted by Covid. Therein lies, in my view, a discrimination.

For the last two years plus, it has been the staff on the coal face who have had to come to work every day in the main through lock downs, staff shortages etc as essential workers. Right from the onset of Covid our members have kept ports and rail alive through difficult times, unable to

work from home. We are now in an environment whereby the company chooses not to support its staff financially when they are the very people who got them through the Covid crisis and are now being treated with indifference and bias.

In the scribe's view, a consequence of privatisation – profits before people.

Moving on!

On a lighter note, the new Six wharf is now in use. It was officially opened and blessed on Friday 22/7/22.

The new suction technology devices holding the side of the vessel to the wharf, (in part) replacing some mooring lines is now operational. The company is also investing in 'shore tensioning equipment' a technology to ultimately get away from shorelines. My understanding is this way of tying up and holding ships alongside is practiced in other NZ ports already. Interestingly, with the 'Moor Mater' suction devices being set on top of the wharf edge, it forces the cranes to sit a few extra feet

away from the wharf edge, impacting on the weight concerns when lifting containers from the far side of the ship.

No doubt the future will dictate bigger and heavier shore cranes or, with the wharf being built with the potential for gantry cranes in the future. The alternatives are

wide open.

In closing, on behalf of the Napier Port branch of the RMT Union, we wish Wayne Butson a fruitful, happy and successful retirement. No doubt fishing will play a larger role in daily activities.

Words simply do not capture the acco-

lades you deserve, as both a long serving member and the many many years of service to the Union movement as a whole – nationally and internationally.

A big thank you is just not big enough. I kotahitanga e hoa. 🌐



Napier's Six Wharf on the way to completion

HUTT WORKSHOPS

Filling vacancies proving to be difficult

ONCE again, we commence these notes with continuing good news on the upgrade front. Another wall of one of our plants has been seismically and cosmetically upgraded to present a more modern facility on the outside whilst internal upgrades continue as fast as they reasonably can despite Covid-induced delays.

It is great to see the much-promised capital is being continually spent to upgrade the facility and many things within it.

New tooling has been included as we can no longer simply 'make do' and yet be safe and efficient in our work. The latest plans just distributed include proposed upgrades to one of our largest amenity blocks over two levels which will cater for the guys and girls with a modern, bright and inviting environment in which to arrive

each day and clean-up in at the other end.

A lease has been signed to allow our inventory team to relocate some of their operations into the adjacent suburb of Seaview.

This will necessitate the splitting of functions across two sites as they migrate out of a substandard warehouse not fit for the safe storage of inventory stock and is a cold and uninviting work environment for the staff. Recent high winds had the roof sheeting wanting to depart the site and the glass-lined walls threatening to follow suit. This also has been a long time coming and we welcome that.

On the staffing front a group of team leader vacancies were advertised with only a couple being filled. The unsuccessful candidates were given development feedback to enhance their chances next time around.

We have several groups of staff on various training and development courses which is good to see as we need to get back to being a training ground within the industry – not an easy task when the employment landscape is suffering considerable upheaval. An international recruiting drive earlier this year has apparently yielded a good number of overseas candidates however, the woes within Immigration NZ's processes (just look at their landing page on the Web!) have slowed things down so they may well arrive in time for this year's annual Christmas closedown!

Asset management issues still plague us surrounding some rotables. With the increasing turnover of engineering staff the 'smooth running' of the function is compromised.

With so many steps involved trying to lo-

cate assets by serial number retrospectively, people are finding they are on a hiding to nothing. We've previously advocated using Amicus and SAP to track asset movements however this relies on the paperwork being

completed which an overloaded workforce simply cannot keep on top of. More on this later.

Our AGM may be impacted this year due to our large meeting room suffering a

safety issue which limits meeting numbers. We may have to engineer a work-around like in times past.

Until next time, take care and stay safe out there. 🌍

WELLINGTON RAIL

Matariki family celebrations spoiled by dodgy time-tabling

Matariki celebrations, fireworks and trains bombs

OVER 100,000 Wellingtonians turned out on a perfectly still clear night to see a firework spectacular on the waterfront.

This was a significant event marking the first indigenous public holiday to have been granted. It was a family affair with many choosing to use public transport.

Instead of being a show piece for rail, it was a nightmare for many, including our staff.

A convoluted arrangement saw Greater Wellington Regional Council and Transdev Wellington (TDW) sharing responsibility for planning and operating bus and rail services in the capital city. Increasingly, minor events such as blocked lines through to major stadium events regularly fall woefully short of customer demand. When these situations arise our front line staff are subjected to high levels of abuse from disgruntled punters.

Bus replacement due to line maintenance has been part of life pretty much forever. Instead of it being a common plan, each time something different is tried on the hardy punters who gamely try to stick with public transport and of course - our staff. The latest master plan was to suddenly

move the bus departure time forward, ignoring the published timetables and, of course, staff rosters. In one recent case staff were rostered to leave Wellington on a bus three minutes before they were timetabled to arrive. Get the drift of how international expertise leaves many of the locals a little underwhelmed.

Who can blame them?

People are urged to ditch their cars and use public transport only to be let down by an under performing system. TDW's main response has been to reduce security and in doing so expose staff to more risk. Hardly an enlightened approach - many of our members think!

Even by Wellington standards it has been a wet and windy winter. There have been many service disruptions due to slips, high seas, overhead faults, falling trees and all manner of obstacles to stall a rail system. An unusual event was a particularly hard frost affecting services on all three lines. As always, our KiwiRail colleagues and our operating staff rose to the occasion and did their best to keep things moving and look after the customers.

As well as weather events we have had Covid still affecting staff and their families. That combined with high levels of flu and colds and many run-down staff from working long hours to plug the gaps, have seen our rosters severely stretched over recent months. The marked difference in granting

special sick leave for Covid victims by KiwiRail is in stark contrast to Transdev. Many staff have to use annual leave to be able to pay their bills during times of sickness. Ongoing shortage of passenger operators in particular has had a major impact on crewing levels on services.

Talks to renew the expired MECA with TDW and mechanical partners Hyundai-Rotem have begun at the time of writing. With a whole new management line-up it is like entering uncharted waters - despite this being the start of the seventh year of the current operators of the Wellington rail system.

A promised review of the PTOM contracting system by the government seems to be missing in action. We hope it surfaces soon and will signal a more rational approach - an approach which is customer and staff focused rather than the current failed model which is completely profit driven, most of which benefits foreign shareholders from locally funded assets.

We have congratulated 40 year anniversaries for locomotive engineer Dennis Howe and train manager Mike Don. Also celebrating 20 years on the track are Mel Gordon and Tim Blyth.

At the time of writing, the Wellington Rail branch AGM is coming up on Wednesday August 24, this time without the constraints of Covid restrictions. We look forward to seeing you there! 🌍

NELSON PORT

Extreme weather causing havoc in the region

AS I write this Nelson is in a state of emergency as two days of heavy rain is threatening the city with flooding, 200 houses have been evacuated

and we still have about 18 hours to go. No matter if you believe in climate change or not unprecedented weather events are becoming normal and we are often working

in more extreme weather. At a time of this civil emergency when people are advised to stay home and avoid unnecessary travel our people are out working on the wharf. You

◀ must ask yourself is this right, is this safe? This branch will be back in negotiations before the end of the year and tough economic times start to bite for many. Inflation is running near 8% and is really starting to hurt for a lot of our people.

Labour shortages continue to make it difficult to man shifts and the loss of skilled workers from the industry is making an impact.

Great rifts have occurred over the last couple of years as we struggle with differing

ideologies and our lives have been under more pressure than ever. It is more important than ever that we show our solidarity and look out for our fellow members not just thinking of ourselves.

Shipping continues to be sporadic; we have just come off a 10-day stretch of no container ships at all and only a handful of log vessels.

This is a challenge to our members' incomes and mental health. Port Nelson is showing a downturn in business that will

hopefully recover in the next year.

We all need to look towards a time of economic recovery when ports will be extremely busy.

C3 continues to grow its membership in our branch and performs a significant contribution as their business in the port grows and their management continues to embrace a relationship with the RTBU.

It is likely to continue to be a rocky few months ahead but hope fully we can come through without too much damage. 🌐

WEST COAST RAIL

Coast affected by its fair share of weather-related events.

THE West Coast has again had its fair share of adverse weather events of late resulting in multiple line closures and service disruptions. Things came to a head when the TranzAlpine hit a large slip just past Stillwater. There were no injuries but it did close the line for a couple of days.

Our members have been working hard to reopen both the SNL and Midland and, as I write, the Buller Gorge is closed again.

The impact of such outages has been tough as we head into the peak season with more coal out of Mai Mai.

Westland Milk Products, starting end of August, followed by a return to daily TranzAlpine trains we can only hope for more settled weather.

One thing that did go well was the farewell of Gilbert Bryan after almost 50 years of driving. He has always been very quiet but judging by the turnout he was well respected and liked. Enjoy your retirement Gilbert. 🌐



Gilbert Bryan with his retirement gift.

CANTERBURY RAIL

Sick leave is not holiday leave - an issue brewing!

AT the time this goes to print we will have had our AGM and elected new and old delegates.

These positions are vital to the well oiled functioning of the RTBU.

There seems to be in Canterbury a change with management wanting to talk with our delegates about what is happening

in each area of KiwiRail.

This can be both good and bad but it keeps our delegates informed of what is happening with each area but also requires time and work of our delegates.

It will be good to see our new organiser around to give a helping hand to some of those more time consuming issues which

arise.

Lately in the Canterbury branch there have been a few issues with special sick leave.

If you read your MECA special sick leave can be granted by your manager for certain cases.

The ones in the past that were just given ▶

were for things like cancer or heart attacks where there is a long recovery time and it can take months not days before a member is fit for work.

But it's not always granted. One thing we can do as a branch is say we don't agree

and wish to initiate a contractual interpretation dispute.

This will bring it into focus if managers are not doing the right thing and trying to get members to use their accrued leave which could expend all a person's leave

for the next year.

Your holiday leave is just for that – holiday time off with family and friends, resting from work, not recovering from a serious illness. 🌐

OTAGO RAIL

Hillside in danger of not meeting expectations

THE Otago Rail branch of the mighty RMTU has been very active in the last few months. First with the Hillside refurbishment which seems to be lurching towards some sort of conclusion. From what seemed like a perfect chance to build a workshop and establishment all at KiwiRail could be proud of, we now seem to be moving towards a more slimmed down work area with, no doubt, a grand looking facade which can be touted to the politicians as a grand success.

If we miss the chance to do this refurbishment correctly then unfortunately our members – and future members – will have to pay the cost.

The project manager seems to have an agenda of finishing the rebuild to what he and outside contractors think will suit us. While input has been given and promises made as budget constraints bite, more and

more of our input is being disregarded in favour of cost cutting.

This was a good news story and hopefully there will be some sort of turnaround from KiwiRail to do it the justice it deserves.

Mid August saw a site visit by Stuart Nash, Minister for Economic and Regional Development. It was very interesting he quizzed KiwiRail on the decision to assemble imported parts into completed rail wagons at the new facility rather than full manufacture. Something the RMTU has been questioning all along.

A bright light on the horizon are our brothers and sisters at Dunedin Railways, formerly Taieri Gorge Railways, have had some sort of reprieve and with the re opening of the borders are beginning to ramp up again for the upcoming cruise ship tourist season.

It has been long argued this iconic her-

itage railway has a future in Dunedin and it shows it has resilience by surviving a few very lean years over the Covid shutdowns.

One thing we are at a loss to understand is why the owners of Dunedin Railways will not support them to run to at least Pukerangi in the Taieri Gorge, rather than terminate at Hindon. For the sake of one section, which is in good running condition – evidenced by the fact work trains and other services are currently using it – the passengers could experience the unique gorge itself.

The networks teams are slowly getting up to full strength and there is some major work being done on the network by all of the teams – bridge, track and signals - all of whom have put in some long hours during the winter months to complete these jobs and, dare I say, that also includes the local management team. Well done to all. 🌐

SOUTHLAND RAIL

AGM votes for more time to read bulletins before entering main line

GREETINGS from the sunny south. With the upcoming high season fast approaching, we are all gearing up for another busy year of carting the precious commodities that keep the economy moving.

Speaking of the economy, we hope all members are dealing with the costs of high inflation and interest rises as best they can. I'm sure this will be at the forefront of our MECA negotiations next year.

As a branch we held our AGM on August 14 with a good turnout from freight operations. Some good discussions were held with branch resolutions being passed by those in attendance, notably a request for mainline RCOs to be given allocated

time to read and prepare bulletins before heading out on to the main line. We know this is already applied to LEs, but would like to see it applied to all operators who travel on the main line. We will be forwarding this to our KIC representatives.

Some new faces have also put their hands up for delegate roles which is great to see.

Delegates are an essential piece of the puzzle when it comes to the strength of the branch and the RMTU in general, so we thank each and every one of you.

We welcome our new trainee ROs who have joined us recently – Anna Skerrett and Josh Carroll-McCleery. Both have come in with a great attitude and we look forward

to teaching them the ropes. We also warmly welcome the new South Island organiser, Dave Kearns. Dave has a wealth of knowledge of all things rail related and has a strong history of unionism and activism. We look forward to seeing him around the depots in future months.

Word has also come back from the LE contingents which took a trip to Spain to discuss the cab layout of the new South Island loco fleet.

By the sounds of it we are working with a far superior manufacturer compared to that of the DLs. Those involved now have a better understanding of our needs when it comes to the gear we use.

Stay safe out there 🌐

Remutaka Tunnel - mechanical ventilation on the cards

ONBOARD staff and passengers who catch the busy Wairarapa to Wellington train service are one step closer to breathing clean air when the train goes through the Remutaka Tunnel.

Harmful gases such as diesel particulate, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide accumulate in the tunnel following the early morning freight trains.

The tunnel relies on natural ventilation (wind) to clear the air. On calm days, the fumes don't shift easily and their build-up can be literally eye-watering for on-board staff.

Current efforts to minimise fumes include


having a 60-minute window between freight and passenger trains, improving door and window seals and fitting locos with emissions' reduction kits.

Whilst these have been partially effective, there are still a high number of fume events.

The last few months have been particularly bad compared to previous years. In June and July at least six onboard crew were sent to hospital or medical centres due to fume exposure whilst working onboard the passenger services.

Symptoms include stinging eyes, irritation to nostrils, mouth and throat. There is a general unease that repeated exposure (even at low levels) to the fumes could be detrimental to health with some staff reporting they are sensitised to even low levels which spark respiratory symptoms.

The Union welcomes the findings of a feasibility study on introducing mechanical ventilation into the tunnel to improve the air quality. The KiwiRail-commissioned report has come back in favour of installing the mechanical ventilation (bi-directional fans) inside the 8.7km tunnel environment and fixed gas monitors which will communicate gas readings to train control in real time to help manage the risk.

The report noted there is a large increase in passenger numbers predicted in the coming years with peak traffic likely to reach seven trains per day (each way) from the three per day currently. There is no doubt a ventilation system is vital. 



The top of the vertical vent above the tunnel. Note the dead growth around the tunnel vent.