

THE **TRANSPORT WORKER**

SEP 2023

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

The
best of
both
worlds!



9 ACC RECOGNITION



Aaron Gledhill's shift work induced-sleeping disorder has finally been recognised by ACC.

15 UNION STALWART



After giving more than 60 years of his life to Rail – and the RMTU – Keith Turuwhenua has retired.

24 ANNIVERSARY



Some of KiwiRail staff dressed for the occasion to celebrate 100 years of the Otira Tunnel.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: For as long as Hana Martin can remember she has been in love with anything and everything to do with the sea. Working the wharves and the pilot boat she is definitely in her happy place. See profile page ??

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Todd Valster
General secretary
RMTU

Vote!

THE elections are looming, dark clouds are rolling over and the political rhetoric is becoming more strident – and less believable. Our significant political parties – by which I mean those already represented in Parliament – are all, as expected, trying to upstage each other while aiming their versions of the truth at voters.

Under such circumstances it is almost impossible for me to write this editorial without the election playing a major part.

My opinions, as you are aware, side with Labour. How could they not? They have revitalised our particular transport interests and without doubt they have focussed their programme on helping the disadvantaged while endeavouring to level a very very uneven playing field. Never mind that the wealthy have become – well, wealthier.

On this track I have recently come across a powerful new report authored by the NZCTU, First Union and ActionStation called *Profit-led inflation in Aotearoa*. It shows clearly that corporate profit (AKA greed) is the main driver of inflation in Aotearoa, responsible for around 55% in 2021-22 despite many among right wing parties who lay the blame for that at the feet of the current Government while braying the only solution is a step to the right. Don't be fooled.

The right's mantra of high wages and incompetent management is manipulative and untrue.

The report casts light on three key inflationary sectors in the economy and gauges their influence on those crippling inflation rises: food, housing and banking; and transport. The report concludes that from mid 2021 to the end of 2022 – when inflation was surging – rising profits contributed more than half of domestic inflationary pressure while wages were responsible for less than a third.

Absorb that for a minute – *more than half!*

Over 50 percent of the rising costs of daily living is being poured back into the pockets of those dear friends of right wing parties – and pouring significant portions of those windfalls into those very parties' coffers. Why not? They can afford it. And the prospects are more more more!

And as long as they can shift the blame to the left the better they all like it!

Transport is the same. Mainfreight for example, earned about \$200 million per year in net profit before tax in 2019 and 2020 but saw profits more than double in the year 2022 to \$489 million and soar again in 2023 to \$587 million. Today (as I write) I hear about the enormous profits being wrung from householders by electricity companies.

Make no mistake: It is profits fuelling inflation not rising wages!

By focussing on minimal wage rises, business decision makers are able to cover their own gross profits through a shield of misinformation and myth.

Download a copy of the report from our website (rmtunion.org.nz) under the heading **HOT TOPICS** on the left of the opening page.

The upshot of that rave is simple: Make sure you – and your whanau – cast your votes. Apathy favours the right!

Voting day is October 14 but postal ballots will be sent out earlier and voting may begin on October 2. If you will be overseas at the time you can still vote. Download your election papers from:

www.vote.nz

The download link will be available from September 27.

SOME local and internal issues also occupy our minds.

■ There have been two changes to the NMC; Ratahi Ellis has replaced Dave Marden as the North Island Ports NMC rep and Sam Kahui is standing in for Ray Brown as the Te Kupenga Mahi rep.

■ Most of the positions on the KiwiRail industrial councils have been filled. Several positions have not been filled so we have recalled nominations for those vacancies. The recall notice is under the 'Hot Topics' tab on the RMTU website.

■ Women's Committee – when the KR Industrial Council reps are finalised we will call for nominations for the RMTU Women's Committee

■ As previously stated, KiwiRail bargaining was delayed by agreement with full backdating on the new rates. The signed MECA terms of settlement has been sent to KR delegates and the report back meetings will take place in the week commencing September 11. Ratification ballots will be prepared in early September, possibly about the same time as this magazine is published.

■ At our last delegates conference it was resolved to investigate electric voting. We have located a provider of such services we think is worth following up. You can see details at <https://choicevoting.co.uk>

■ And, finally, if the mis-and-dis information, or downright fibs coming your way, not just over the next few weeks, concerns you, you are not alone. The NZCTU is ahead of the game bringing you a training course – **Countering False Information**. This two-hour free course is being run in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland with more to follow after the election!

Meanwhile, please, please get out and vote on October 14 (or before) and encourage your whanua to do the same.

Stay strong and safe! 🌐

Appreciation

Dear Editor,

Last week I attended the Napier Port branch AGM (as a guest) and during Todd's address Karen Fletcher's name came up and I realised I've been meaning to email her.

I want to thank her so much for her hard work and expertise in the health, safety and wellbeing space, including fatigue research. The knowledge she imparted on others is absolutely invaluable, and has a wider impact than solely RMTU members.

Despite being outside of RMTU coverage, in my current and previous roles since my departure from the port, I've been able to help and advise other workers (albeit on the sly at times), and encourage business leaders to review the demands they place on their workers.

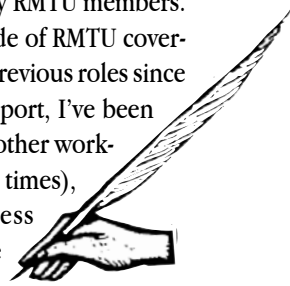
In some instances it has been a case of creating awareness and in others it has been more tangible including upgrades to PPE provisioning and factoring in break times to meet workload demands, reducing excessive hours and worker stress.

Never underestimate what you do and the flow-on effects it has in the wider community.

Thanks again.

Best regards,

Roz Muir



Showing off the ropes

Newly-employed South Island organiser Andy Woolhouse is shown around by veteran old hand Rebecca Hauck in Otago at the Hillside Workshops.



Sobering message for H&S delegates from KiwiRail CEO

KiwiRail's CEO, Peter Reidy, provided a sobering and serious opening message about the company for health and safety forum delegates at their annual gathering citing a poor safety culture and blaming it on a business which had become too used to having so many injuries – and people coming to accept it as normal.

Reidy was guest speaker to the meeting in May of 120 HSAT (health and safety action team) leaders and delegates, sponsor managers and zero harm staff from KiwiRail who met for the two day conference jointly run by KRG (KiwiRail Group), RMTU and HSAT in Wellington.

KRG senior manager Paul Ashton echoed Peter's message by telling forum members that 6% of the KiwiRail workforce were injured in the previous 12 months to April – or one in 17 people. On average,

he said, a worker is injured every 36 hours at KiwiRail – a number based on the total recordable injuries which includes lost time injuries (time off work) and injuries requiring medical treatment. Unfortunately, since the forum, injury numbers have increased to one every 30 hours at KiwiRail.

The greatest category of actual injury is from manual handling.

Reidy described a safety culture transformation programme currently being rolled out across KiwiRail with the support of the RMTU industrial councils. The programme aims to improve management leadership skills and accountability, manage critical risks better and improve worker's confidence to refuse unsafe work (red card).

Phil Parkes, CEO of Worksafe, followed with a thought-provoking address challenging forum members to think about health and safety differently. He likened health and

safety to a Bandaid – good for healing a cut but useless at addressing its cause.

He urged KiwiRail to think about the way work is done. His message was simple: "If we manage work well, we get good outcomes (including fewer injuries). Conversely when work is managed poorly we have negative outcomes. It sounds simple but it's not."

He challenged the group to have health and safety conversations without using the words HEALTH and SAFETY. In his opinion people are put off by the association with compliance. He suggested conversations should be focussed on what is needed for work to go well including what conditions are needed for work to be successful. For example, the number of staff needed, how the work could be planned, then asking what a bad day looks like.

He said in New Zealand we tend to treat



workers as a problem rather than the solution. If workers are seen as the problem the company treats them as a liability and tries to manage people like they're the problem.

Parkes rightly says frontline people should be treated like the assets they are. If

workers feel safe and empowered to speak up, they'll also find a better way of doing the work. Worker engagement through HSATs, industrial councils and other union/company forums are vital structures for workers to participate within and it is how

work is managed.

He was scathing about management safety walks. He likened them to the boss coming in to talk about safety. What worker would admit they don't follow the safety procedures because the proce-

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dures don't work?

He posed the question: How do you create an environment where workers are willing to put their hand up to say the procedures are not being followed?

In every investigation and prosecution, he said, there are always two versions of events: There is work which is imagined and work actually done when no one is watching.

How do you know where you stand? How do you close the gap on work which is done and work which is imagined?

What can we do to bring the procedure to real life, and what can we do to encourage workers to do the job differently?

The RMTU speaker reenforced the right to use the RMTU red card, which was designed specifically to stop unsafe work if workers believe there is an imminent and

immediate risk of harm.

In cases where the red card is used, managers and the Union need to be notified ASAP. The union will back your decision.

"The RMTU has worked hard to mitigate work place dangers and these messages reiterate we must not be complacent but must continue to be vigilant and call out unsafe practices," said H&S organiser Karen Fletcher. 🌐

CEO Peter Reidy's vision for a safer KiwiRail workforce

OUR purpose is to build stronger connections for a better Aotearoa. We will do this by demonstrating to New Zealanders and our people that they can always trust us to ensure everyone at work in KiwiRail and Great Journeys of New Zealand will safely come home every day, free from injury.

I am very concerned about our current approach to health and safety. We are injuring far too many people . . we are hurting a person every 30 hours and that is not okay. We will never earn anyone's trust if we continue to harm people and operate our business to the point of failure.

If we truly care for our people and New Zealand, we will visibly deliver a promise to care and protect through following health and safety leadership principles:

- A belief that all injuries and occupational illnesses are preventable

- Line owners lead safety

- Employee involvement is essential

- Working safely will be a condition of employment.

We will do this through building visible felt-leadership behaviours and a culture of discipline across our business – Good Safety is Good Business. We are not going to try and deliver on our Care and Protect promise – we are absolutely determined to deliver it.

I can't do this without you - I need our leaders and our people to rely on each other and unite to care and protect our people.



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.**

To have an ALL representative deliver your certificate of coverage and explain additional insurance coverage available:

Reply online: ailnz.co.nz/request

Reply by email: **Email your name, address and contact number to pr@ailnz.co.nz**

Please note: To qualify for the \$10,000 of additional ADB coverage, an ALL 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).



iPhone users – open the camera and point it at the code. Android users please download QR & Barcode Scanner from the Play Store



Good things take time – like Auckland's 42% clause

It all started August 2018 when a claim was put forward for a weekend allowance for locomotive engineers in Auckland, due to the ongoing increasing amount of weekend work.

During the course of the bargaining we got another big win – standby reduced from 12 hours to eight hours for LEs. So the weekend allowance was taken out of the claim for that bargaining.

In 2021 bargaining for the claim was tabled again. At that time we were moving from Transdev to Auckland One Rail (AOR) who took over in January 2021. During the bargaining sessions it became obvious that AOR had no appetite for the claim so a counter offer was made that LEs would only be rostered to work for 42% of the weekends – Saturday and Sunday. On the respective depot master rosters, any weekend work over that would be by agreement and attract a rate of 150% as an allowance. As part of this, when on a relief link, which

The claim for LEs to receive compensation for an ever-increasing amount of weekend work has taken over five years to get resolved.

is shown as Monday to Friday but normally contains weekend work, the weekend content would also be by agreement and paid at 150%. This meant getting effectively a penal rate back for LEs, who are normally paid an aggregate rate.

Needless to say this was ratified to come into effect the next roster change after ratification. At a meeting soon thereafter the company started to realise the implications of what was agreed on and we could not get agreement on the interpretation of the clause. One of the sticking points was the company's view that the weekend percentage was calculated on individual days. Our view was a weekend was two days, Saturday and Sunday.

After many meetings, the end was

still not in sight, so the decision was made to take this to mediation. There were many more delays in getting agreed dates for mediation before finally getting the company in the room.

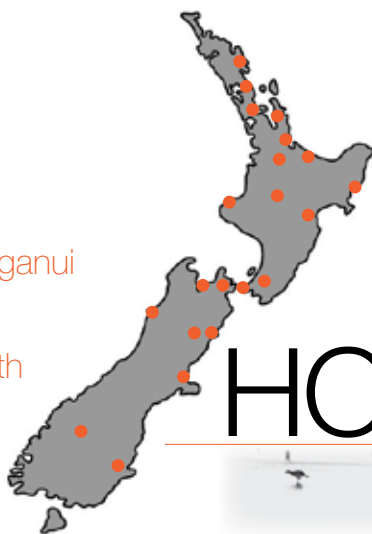
Three mediation sessions later we could still not reach an agreement so our lawyer filed to take this before the Employment Authority for a ruling.

Five days before we were due before the Authority the company contacted the RMTU with an offer which was, effectively, what we had been arguing with them over for the previous 14 months.

The claim for LEs to receive compensation for an ever-increasing amount of weekend work has taken over five years to get resolved. Members felt strongly about this issue and the strong support of other members empowered the bargaining team, the branch executive and national head office to take this challenge and win it. 🌐

By Mike McLaughlan (LE AOR)

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



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Picton's temporary ferry terminal takes shape

THE Interislander ferries have officially moved from the old terminal in Picton allowing for deconstruction to start. The temporary terminal will be home for shore based Interislander staff for the next few years as the old terminal is replaced with a new facilities to cater for the new Interislander ferries due in 2016.

Built in 1962 the old terminal was starting to look a little tired and in its current empty state looks even more tired. According to Engineering NZ the old terminal handled 750,000 passengers and 3 million tonnes of freight annually and was, in its day, quite a feat of engineering.

The same challenges will be faced in the 21st century as in 1962 - keeping the ferry terminal operating whilst constructing new wharves and buildings.

The challenges facing staff are to fit everything into a much smaller operational space but maintain the same level of service to passengers.

The new temporary structure seems like a Tardus – looking much bigger on the inside than the outside.

However, at peak season it is projected to accommodate up to 900 passengers at any one time – a challenging prospect in this much smaller space.

Initially passengers will need to be bused onto ferries until such time as reliable and safe walkways can be built to allow foot passage onto the vessels. Part of the baggage carousels have been reused at the temporary terminal but for the most part it is a new facility.

The challenge for iRex now is to build the new terminals before the ships arrive. This will include remodelling of the rail freight yards in both Picton and Wellington as the new ferries will also be rail ferries. It will be a terrible shame if the rail infrastructure is not ready to go when the new ferries arrive.

With massive funding from government the iRex project is now the biggest infrastructure project in the country.

The goal is to fill in the biggest pot hole in State Highway 1 and create a modern ferry service linking New Zealand's two biggest islands. 🌐



Shift work based sleep disorder now covered by ACC

IN the early 2020s former KiwiRail loco engineer Aaron Gledhill was diagnosed with a sleep disorder caused by shift work. In 2021 he began to suffer severe fatigue symptoms from the cumulative effects of sleep debt – not getting adequate sleep. He was eventually diagnosed with a circadian rhythm sleep disorder caused by shift work.



The shift work sleep disorder affected his sleep regulation which prevented him from being able to obtain good quality and adequate amounts of sleep and left him feeling extremely fatigued during the day. The disorder affected his ability to function well, his reaction time, concentration and memory and overall, his health was negatively affected.

Prior to working as an LE doing shift work he had no sleep problems.

Because the condition is a work-related gradual process injury it is covered by ACC.

However, initially KiwiRail's injury management provider, Work Aon, declined the claim. With the advocacy of the RMTU lawyers, the decision was overturned and Aaron now has ACC cover.

Aaron has expressed his heartfelt thanks to the Union's lawyers for their excellent representation and help through a very difficult process. He also credits the support of his partner who helped and encouraged him to get the diagnosis and medical treatment.

Aaron says the treatment is ongoing and includes a combination of medication and a strict sleep hygiene regime of consistent sleep and wake times.

He has now started a new job after deciding to medically retire from KiwiRail. The new job has regular hours which

doesn't require any shift work and he's slowly regaining his health – but it's a long process.

After he left KiwiRail Work Aon wrongly cut his ACC entitlement and with the support of the Union it has been reinstated with a top up amount to meet his pre injury earnings.

RMTU health and safety organiser Karen Fletcher says: "It's important injured workers get advice from the Union so they're aware of their ACC rights.

"KiwiRail is an accredited employer which means they receive a large reduction in their ACC levy payment in exchange for paying workers their ACC entitlements and for arranging treatment.

"They have to provide what the ACC legislation entitles workers to – not less. KiwiRail contracts Work Aon to carry out that service for them."

What is shift work related sleep disorder?

A shift work sleep disorder – such as a circadian rhythm disorder – can affect melatonin production (sleep promoting hormone) which prevents a person from getting enough sleep.

Symptoms can include insomnia but getting very little sleep despite being very tired can result in extreme fatigue.

Irregular and continuous shifts with differing start and finish times and insufficient rest between shifts to facilitate recovery are contributing factors to a circadian rhythm sleep disorder.

Shift work related sleep disorders can be covered by ACC under a gradual process injury or illness.

They can take a long time to recover from.

Formal diagnosis of a circadian rhythm disorder

involves specific criteria including:

- Chronic or recurring sleep disturbances due to alterations of the persons internal circadian rhythm or misalignments between their circadian rhythm and their desired or required work or social schedule.
- Insomnia symptoms and/or excessive daytime sleepiness.
- Clinically significant distress or impairments to the individual's mental, physical, social, occupational, or educational performance that can be attributed to their sleep disturbances.

Sleep apnoea

Another common sleep disorder (though not shift work related) is obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA).

Typical symptoms include snoring, not feeling refreshed on waking, day-time sleepiness, altered mood, and morning headaches. In New Zealand, OSA is estimated to affect at least 4% of men and at least 2% of women.

See your GP or rail medical officer for advice. 🌐

This article is a follow up to an article published in an earlier edition of *The Transport Worker*

Fire in our belly!

CTU Women's conference 2023

KIA ORA whanau! The NZCTU Women's Conference (July 7 & 8, 2023) was a jam packed, two days of empowering guest speakers, networking and lots of waiata to warm the soul.

The room was so filled with tautoko and aroha it was hard to say goodbye to the sisters we had just met for the first time and those we reconnected with.

With over 120 working women attending the conference and 16 different unions there was a lot to talk about and discuss.

The 10 guest speakers included:

- Tory Whanau, first wahine Maori mayor elected in Wellington. Some of her key messages of being mayor without any council experience were, "don't listen to the haters, listen to your gut" and "surround yourself with positive and genuine people". And a bit of self love and 'mum's boil up' always did the trick.
- Hon Julie Anne Genter, Green Party MP, spoke passionately about political issues and the need to live in harmony with nature and people. To battle climate change she said we need cooperation like never before, and the union movement is so important in this space – we are walking, noise making billboards for these issues. She also spoke about how important rest is, especially with the severe staff shortages happening right now all around the world. "Rest is a radical action you can take to look after yourself and your whanau," she said – so simple, yet so true.
- Saunoamaali'i Dr Karanaina Sumeo, Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner, said she has a fire in her belly for all the homelessness and hungry children in the South Pacific and countering the amount of racial and sexual harassment going on. Pay gaps facing women, Maori, Pacific and ethnic communities are indicators of workplace inequities, she said. "Pay gaps result from bias and discrimination, over representation in low-paid and under-valued occupations



Some of the delegates at the NZCTU Women's Conference

and under-representation among leadership," she told us. The statistics she quoted were very confronting.

- Melissa Ansell-Bridges, NZCTU secretary, spoke of parental leave policies, women in the world of work, getting rid of violence and harassment in workplaces and revisiting, reviewing and revitalising the working woman's charters. And supporting issues at work which are important to us. Whatever line of work women are in, she told us "we (NZCTU) are there to support and lift each other up".
- Three ex workers from the Calendar Girls Club of Wellington also joined us. Their group was formed early this year when 19 strippers were fired from a Wellington club after coming together to negotiate for fairer contracts. Five months later, now called Fired up Stilettos, they are pushing for legislative change to protect independent contractors in the adult entertainment industry as well as reaching out to strippers across the country working in exploitative conditions. They certainly have some 'fire in their bellies', protesting outside the club they were fired from and on Parliament grounds. A member's bill will be presented to Par-

liament for better working conditions. Good luck sisters!

- Hon. Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education, Child Poverty Reduction and Women, spoke about how poverty is still an ongoing issue in Aotearoa.
- Zoe Port of the Tertiary Education Union spoke of empowering the next generation and engaging young people in the union movement. "We need our young people to be involved more now, more than ever before in the union movement, or unions will die out," she said adding that "35 year olds and younger make up only 13% of unions and yet there are more women than men. Young people need to be exposed to what unionism is. We need to share the history of the stories and get a 'fire in their bellies' to continue the union movement and protect the rights of the working people. Sending your younger union brothers and sisters to conferences, meetings and forums is key to gaining knowledge, strength, and connecting with the union movement not only in Aotearoa but around the world. We as women in our unions need to keep the union movement going." Strong unions need women! 🌐

Fabulous women, great to connect

RMTU Women's forum 2023

TWENTY-FIVE RMTU women's reps from ports and rail were joined by delegates from the ASU (Amalgamated Stevedored Union) and Maritime Union (MUNZ) sisters to discuss common issues and provide support for new people to become more active in unions.

The forum was organised by the RMTU women's committee, and chaired by National Management Committee Women's rep Rebecca Hauck.

Speakers included RMTU organiser Dasha Van Silfhout who ran an interactive session on the role of the RMTU delegate and RMTU health and safety organiser Karen Fletcher who led a discussion about a women's health policy.

KiwiRail's human relations lead, Michelle McFadyen, spoke about KiwiRail's strategy to encourage more women into KiwiRail. Currently between 10-12% of KiwiRail staff in operational areas are women. They hope to grow the proportion to 25% of the workforce in the next 5-10 years.

Labour MP Helen White spoke about the unfairness of restraint of trade clauses, particularly on young fast food workers. Helen encouraged the RMTU to support her private member's bill to change the employment law so lower income workers are no longer subjected to restraint of trade clauses in their individual employment agreements.

Helen said that it's typically younger people who are negatively affected by the restraint of trade clauses which prevent them from working somewhere else and losing out on better employment conditions. She made the point that workers are



expected to be highly flexible with their hours of work and other conditions but don't receive flexibility when they want to go and work for a competitor.

Lastly, congratulations to Gemma Thomas who was successfully elected to the position of RMTU women's rep for the Council of Trade Unions. Gemma works as a security officer for Port of Tauranga.

Congratulations also to Makarita Hill who was successfully elected to the RMTU International Transport Federation (ITF) as a women's rep. Makarita is a train manager for Auckland One Rail.

Comments from the day included;

"Fabulous women, great to connect"

"Fun"

"Great and informative"

"Empowering"

"And great to see so many newbies!" 🇳🇿

Some of the first-time attendees at the Conference, (below) Rebecca Hauck and Todd Valster.



The new Waltham mechanical hu

When the mechanical consultative council (MCC) met at the end of May in Christchurch they were given a tour of the new mechanical hub being built at Waltham. With completion scheduled for the end of 2023, the new building was a hive of activity.

The hub will bring together KiwiRail staff from existing sites in Addington, Middleton and Waltham into a single, modern facility. The old workshop is being converted to storage while the new facility is 9,200 square metres and will house 25 maintenance berths, an underfloor wheel lathe and other specialist rail maintenance equipment such as a wheel set drop table and locomotive axle weighing systems.

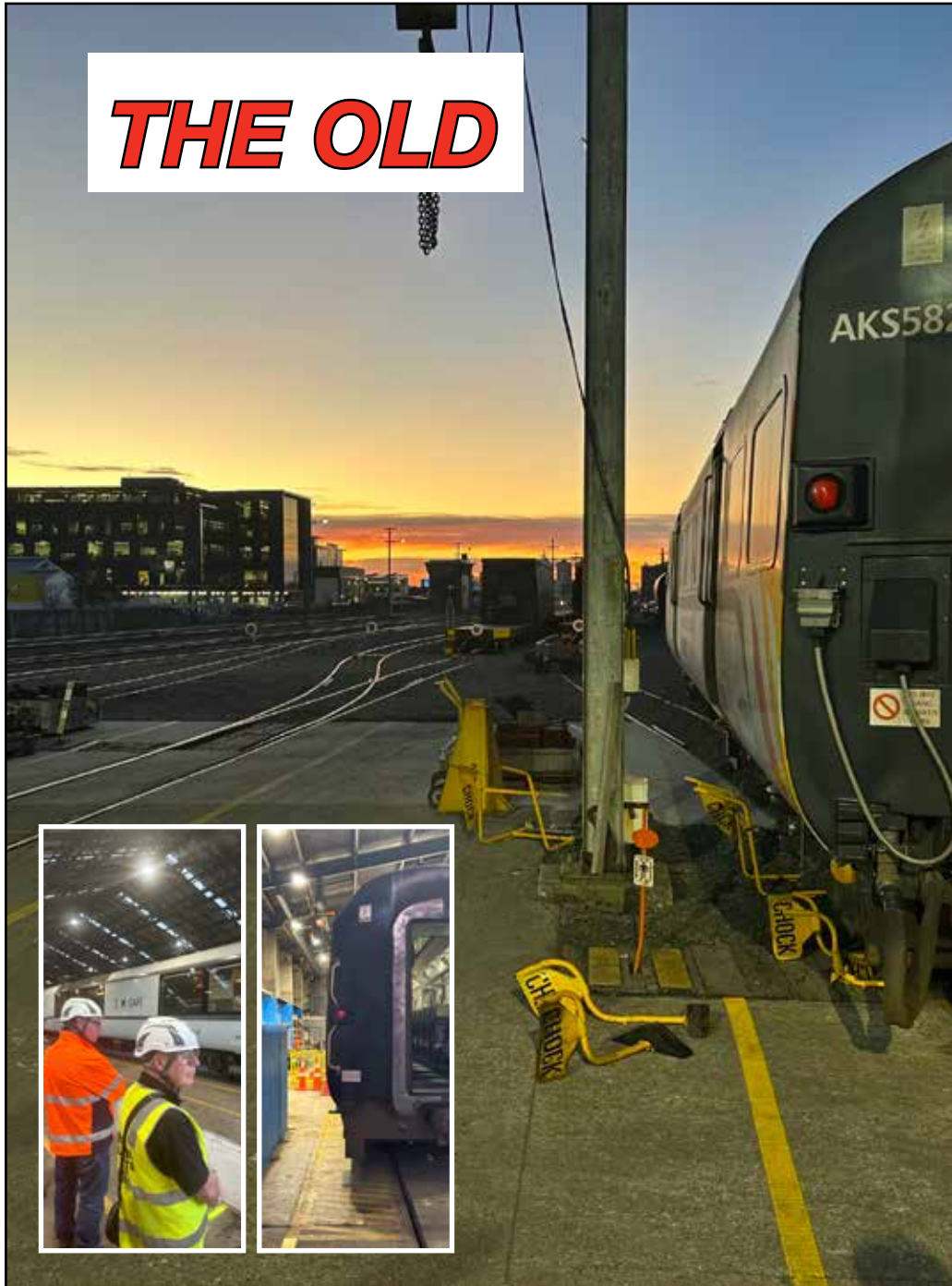
Yard upgrades will provide 10 roads plus a kilometre of rail within the building itself which will accommodate plenty of space – something which has been sorely lacking in the old facilities.

MCC members also visited Addington to see the difference between the old and new facilities. It was quickly evident that space was at a premium at Addington and that the move to Waltham will be big positive change.

Given that change is not always embraced in rail let us hope this is a good one 🇳🇿



b takes shape near Christchurch



RMTU WOMEN

The RMTU fully supports equal opportunities for women and men



Hana Martin

Hana Martin – Lines supervisor and relieving pilot boat deckhand at Lyttelton Port.

KIA ORA! My name is Hana Martin. I was born in Oatautahi/Christchurch and raised in Te Waipapa/Diamond Harbour (my favourite place in the world) by my incredible dad (my favourite person in the world). For as long as I can remember I have been in love with anything and everything to do with the sea.

My friends and family are convinced I have salt water running through my veins. Surfing or being on any kind of boat is when I'm really in my happy place.

I have worked at Lyttelton Port Company for one and a half years. My main role is lines supervisor which involves supervising the mooring and unmooring of ships from the wharf side as well as making

sure the people dealing with them remain safe during the arrival and departure process. When I'm not on the wharf I work as a relieving pilot boat deckhand. This requires me to assist the pilots with getting on and off ships safely as they enter and leave our harbour. I really do get the best of both

Hana Martin

I see good people working tirelessly, people that are so skilled and so talented in what they do.

They deserve better.

worlds – on the wharf and on the water.

I have been a member of RMTU since starting at LPC in February of 2022 and I have been an RMTU LPC women's delegate since March 2023.


Being a people person I naturally wanted to be involved as a delegate as a huge part of who I am is about supporting and helping people and I especially to woman as I am able to strongly empathise and relate to them.

I am also involved in learning. There are so many awesome people I get to meet

through this and to learn from. Different perspectives, different mindsets and a lot of knowledge and experience.

What I see as an important issue for workers in our industry is how undervalued we are in what we do. The hours, the jobs, the skills aren't often acknowledged and given what they deserve and it's devastating to see that up close. I see good people working tirelessly, people that are so skilled and so talented in what they do. They deserve better, they deserve more. The operation that exists goes forward because of them.

What I would say to women school leavers who are thinking about a career in this industry, is to let go of the fear, self doubt, expectations and stereotypes and be open to having what could be one of the best experiences and opportunities of your personal development and your career.

It's really easy to live through other people's experiences before you have even had your own. Let your own experience speak for themselves and take it as it comes. You'll never know if you don't try. 

An engineer for 62 years

LEAVING the tiny Bay of Plenty village of Waimana was a huge jump for 17 year old Keith Turuwhenua who had never ventured beyond the Bay, but he still remembers his grandfather's parting words of advice: "Find a job, Keith, and keep it for life."

And he did just that. Sixty-two years later Keith retired from KiwiRail to a fan fare of fond farewells accompanied by his family and friends.

"Wonderful years," he told *The Transport Worker*. "Like my city family."

Keith was eldest child of five and, as was customary back in the day, he lived with his grandparents from an early age and attended the mission (parish) school in the valley.

"A whole lot of us to live with them even though our parents lived just down the road. Every day we would milk the cows before school and collect some vegetables from the garden."

But when it came to secondary schooling he had to travel to Opotiki each day by school bus. There he continued to pursue his dream of returning to the land.

"I studied agriculture until my grandfather told me how things were changing and small farms were no longer practical and I should seek work somewhere else," he said. "The trend was towards larger and larger farms and there wasn't much space left for small farms."

That was when he started looking towards the city and towards something

mechanical.

He acquired an apprenticeship at the New Zealand Railway Woburn Workshop and started there in March 1961 qualifying as a turner in 1966.

Although returning to his country home full time was his ideal he found himself wedded to a life in the big city – and to Rail. He only once came close to breaking that bond when a close friend decided in 1966 to join the New Zealand armed forces and fight in Vietnam.

"I thought that would be really exciting so I asked him to wait just seven months until

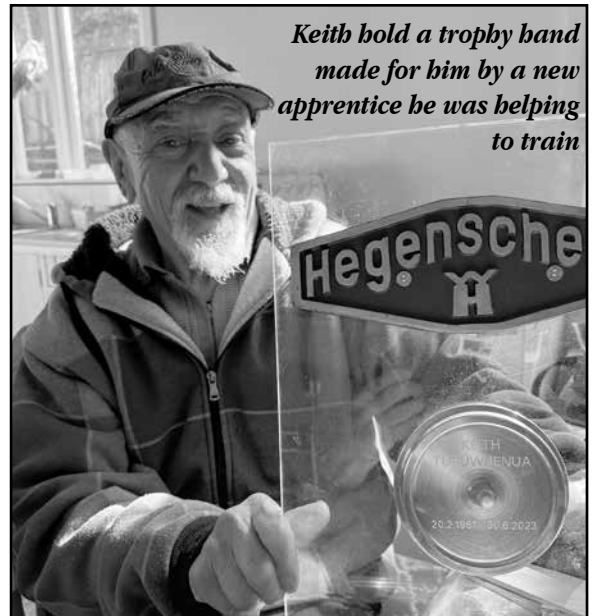
I finished my apprenticeship, then we could join up together. But he said 'No'. He was impatient to get started so he went right away and I stayed," said Keith.

That's the closest he came to breaking his connection to Rail.

For his first three years in the Wellington region he stayed at The Avonhurst Maori Boys' Hostel on The Terrace. The building is long demolished but he enjoyed the experience staying there three years – a year longer than average.

Meanwhile he honed his skills at the Woburn Workshop moving to the Wellington/Thorndon yards in 1977 some 10 years after he qualified and he worked there through to retirement in June this year.

Throughout, he was a Union member



Keith hold a trophy band made for him by a new apprentice he was helping to train

and has strong memories of various union actions including the 1967 Railway strike when he joined 2,293 members of the Railway Tradesmen's Association (RTA) May 7 on an indefinite strike over margins for skilled tradesmen opposing a National party policy of the time. The strikers persevered and the workers won.

"I remember picking up freshly donated vegetables during the strike and meeting at Trades Hall," he said.

Now nearing 80 he has a significant backlog of his own projects awaiting his attention in front and behind his and in many of the rooms within – plus a little more hunting mixed with trips home to the valley it all started around Waimana.

Ka pai Keith! 🇳🇿

Manu moving on



Manu (third from left at the front) among colleagues from the workshop.

STAFF at Hutt Shops shared a farewell lunch in honour of Manu Barclay who is leaving after 15 years. Manu, who worked in heavy fabrication and has been the RMTU chair and loco delegate as well as boss of the Hutt Shops BBQ, is moving to the Wellington Wagon depot where he is looking forward to learning C-checks and being more out in the field.

Manu said he'll miss the people of Hutt Shops the most. He has enjoyed seeing new apprentices join Hutt Shops and learn important skills such as welding.

Good luck with your new role Manu! 🇳🇿

Ongarue disaster – 100 years

It has been 100 years since the Ongarue disaster involving the Auckland to Wellington overnight train which derailed at Ongarue north of Taurarunui after hitting huge boulders in a massive landslide across the track.

Seventeen people died and 28 were injured as the flimsy wooden carriages folded. Acetylene gas lighting caused a fire in one of the carriages.

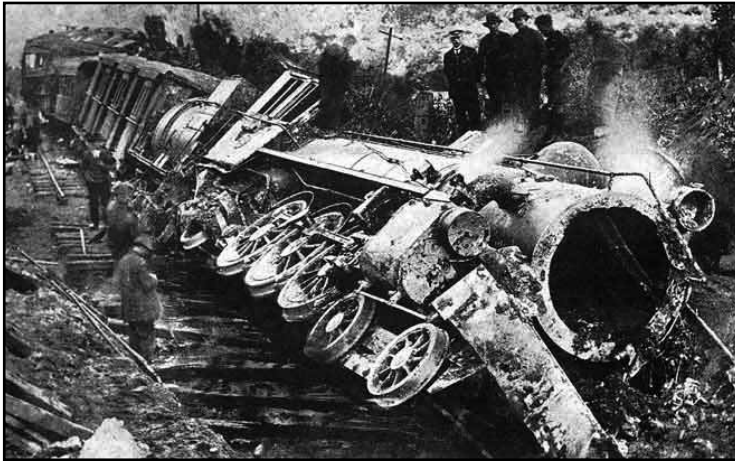
Railway & Locomotive Society historian Bill Prebble says it was the first major train catastrophe when passenger rail travel was in its heyday.

He says given the road conditions and lack of cars at that time, lots of people went by train.

The photo shows the wrecked engine, still steaming, and embedded in the slip while behind are the derailed carriages. 🇳🇿



The newly unveiled memorial and plaque at Ongarue.



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.

You could be next to miss out!
For as little as \$219 a year your future – or those of your next of kin – could be better assured.

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



Prime Minister Chris Hipkins can be spotted in the centre after shouting morning tea for the construction crew.

Celebrating KR's new train control centre

KIWIRAIL CEO Peter Reidy welcomed PM Chris Hipkins last month to its new control premises in Wallaceville where train movements across most of the country will be centred. “Our national train control team are a vital part of our business, and so we’re

pleased to be able to provide a modern and sustainable space for them to carry out their critical function,” he said.

The new site, well away from Wellington Railway Station presents an excellent resilience profile, with low risk from tsunami, liquefaction, ground shaking and slips.

Another new control centre will be built in Auckland and be ready when the new City Rail Link is completed.

Train control’s 25-year old computer system is also being replaced within the 2700 square metres space which includes a 1300 square metre control room. 🌐



KiwiRail CEO Peter Reidy and PM Chris Hipkins.



Geoff Young with 54 years in Rail is flanked by RMTU general secretary Todd Valster and PM Chris Hipkins.



Ex-delegate Carey Sullivan chats to PM Chris Hipkins..

Stars align

STAFF at Otago Rail gathered in time to celebrate Matariki and the aligning of its related stars. In the photo (r) Kane Holmes demonstrates how to make yourself look like a Matariki star. He described, when he was kid, his dad told him to pick any star in the sky and follow it. And that is how he learned about Matariki and all the other stars around his star. (below) Some of the Otago staff impressed with Kane's performance! 🌐



NORTHLAND RAIL

AGM focusses on election concerns for the region if Labour departs

TId Line) cyclone recovery and NRU (Northland Rail Upgrade). Due to the cyclone it's looking like we won't have any trains running on the NAL until after Christmas, which has been both a blessing and a curse, but the track, structures and signals teams can now carry out major renewal works without having to clear track for trains. On the other hand the freight and operations teams are having to push back against management demands to work outside of their region without much – or any – consultation. Hard mahi all round.



We held our AGM on August 18 with a couple of guest speakers, one being our new general secretary Todd Valster. Congrats again Todd and great to see you in Northland. Our second guest was Whangarei Labour candidate Angie Warren-Clarke (pictured left), former Labour list MP for Tauranga. Angie did a great job of fielding questions from our members and distinguishing the big differences between Labour and the blue team for our first time voters. The biggest difference for us in the RMTU, is Labour's commitment to rail. This election will be a big one for Northland, as it will decide on the fate of

the Marsden Point spur to Northport which will ease road congestion and create more employment opportunities for the region. More importantly it will create greater job security as the Nats have plans to build a new road to Northport and abandon the rail project. A worse possibility would be a Nat/Act coalition which would pull our PGF (Provincial Growth Fund), which is currently paying for the NRU project north of Whangarei to reopen the line to Otira.

Last at the AGM the branch voted unanimously to support the platform supervisors and their plight with Auckland One Rail. In the event of industrial action we will be donating food vouchers from our branch funds. Kia kaha! 🇳🇿

AUCKLAND RAIL

Discussions to engender more participation from members

THE Auckland AGM was held on August 9 and the general secretary, Todd Valster, was in attendance. With branch secretary Chris Leigh standing down, there was a need for a replacement and former branch secretary Leighton Mosese stepped up and was elected unopposed. The branch welcomed him back as he had previously performed the role with distinction.

The branch thanks Chris for all the hard work he has done while in the role. Also

voted onto the executive was Chavaun Hill as the youth representative. All other branch roles saw the re-election of the current office holders unopposed.

There is a big year ahead in Auckland. First off the block will be bargaining for the CAF and Auckland One Rail (AOR) collective agreements before the end of the year. CAF, who maintain the Auckland Metro locos will be ending the contract with Auckland Transport in 2025 and this work will come under the contract AT have with AOR. One

of the key goals of the CAF bargaining will be to ensure there is a transference of undertakings to ensure the CAF members are taken on by AOR with their terms and conditions intact. We enter the AOR bargaining following almost two years of anti-union attitudes and behaviours from the Company. As always, the RMTU will be entering into negotiations in the spirit of good faith. We can only hope the Company reciprocates. 🇳🇿

NAPIER RAIL

Temporary conditions dominate while dealing to storm aftermath

HELLO from the other Bay of Destruction, as we all know a certain cyclone paid a visit in mid-February resulting in all the Napier rail based staff sitting around at home until early April when the south line was reopened and, hopefully, will reopen back to Napier as this journal is published.

The Napier team have been working from a temporary base in the Hastings yard where all services from Palmerston North finish or start their journey. We have

a temporary Napier Port pulp unloading site set up in the Watties Tomaona siding to enable Hawkes Bay's profit-making train to be unloaded and road bridged onto Napier. To enable this job to be undertaken temporary flood lighting was installed to assist with night time shunting. This was arranged by local RMTU and KR managers to ensure this valuable train was able to run its Monday to Friday schedule. During daylight hours Watties still loads out its daily South Island wagons.

The Hastings Toll freight centre was turned into a temporary container transfer site to handle all of Napier Ports container traffic to and from the ships. Once the Awatoto Rail Bridge is fixed we can again cross the river. This is programmed for mid-September so maybe, by the time you read this blurb we could be operating back out of our home base of Napier yard.

Recent happenings in the Hawkes Bay have seen loco engineers Leo Jones and Wayne Kempton take retirement and LE

◀ Rick Lister appointed as team leader for Napier with Martin Glover appointed acting team leader. Congratulations guys.

Also by the time these notes are printed William Rutgers and Stan Smith will have obtained their loco engineer tickets and will be out solo, thus relieving a little bit of pressure on the roster. We welcome Dylan Mc Cavanna and Mike Foote as new rail operators in Napier which allows Jamie Kauika to progress into loco trainee training and Blair Parkinson and Jason Finch to up skill to remote control operators. On the network side we have had Mark Goodman from the structures gang retire after 47 years with an awesome spread put on by the team. Gabriel Heta has also left after three years.

Napier branch welcomes Roger Crook to the structures team.

North of Napier a lot of work has been undertaken to make the track safe. Decision are still being made.

Track teams have upgraded the Napier yard while there were no trains running. Also the re-instatement of track south of Napier is coming along extremely well. Three piles have been completed and stumped at Br212 in the Karamu Stream north of Hastings by the bridge gang.

Meanwhile, extensive work and strengthening is still on going at the Ormondville Viaduct with the hardwood running beams on the south end of viaduct being replaced with steel I beams.

Napier signals team have been busy with upgrades getting everything up to code ready for running services to Napier and the Port.

Nga mihi - stay safe. 🌐



Both photos show Bridge 217 at Awatoto on the Palmerston North/Gisborne line not far from completion.



NAPIER PORT

Still dealing to after effects of Cyclone Gabrielle

WHILE it has been seven months since Cyclone Gabrielle hit our region, things are far from back to normal. Pan Pac is still non-operational which is approximately 35% of Napier Port's work.

The rail link between Hastings and Napier is still down and approximately 40% of fruit in the region was destroyed.

Some staff have been redeployed to

Port Otago. Thank you to the management of both ports and to RMTU members for making this happen.

I know our team have been made to feel very welcome.

There is a labour freeze currently in place which hasn't prevented six of our members from being made redundant. Our local branch executive pushed hard to make the redundancies voluntary.

There are a lot of tired people around as they are doing a lot of outside port work in their communities with clean up and general wellbeing.

On a brighter note, as damage slowly gets repaired and more comes online things should start to improve.

It has certainly been a reminder that everyone is in different situations and it's ok not to be ok. 🌐

HUTT WORKSHOPS

Work space in the workshop with jobs lining up

GREETINGS from the Hutt Workshops with just a short update this time. Our passenger projects office staff have finally been shifted out of their leaky offices allowing the building to receive a bit of lick-and-a-promise and hopefully make the office area a little more inviting and comfortable to work in.

The commissioning and testing programme for the new wheel-shop is progressing. Some SHE (safety, health and environment) issues were identified and are being attended to. By the time you read these notes, they should've been put to bed to the satisfaction of all.

We have noticed an upswing in Opex work arriving to assist depots with overdue locomotive checks. We are happy to assist our depot cousins and continue to play our part in supporting the operation of the business.

The next couple of years will be tough for the business, however, by now we should have heard how the MECA wage

round went. On the one hand the Company will want to control its costs but on the other it will want to go some way towards retaining its high-quality staff against a background of a difficult labour market. A contributing factor to the problem is the Company being a market-median payer. To offset this, it needs to ensure the other half of the equation – ie: conditions – is enhanced to provide the resulting 'balance'. This is very difficult during a time when staff chase the almighty dollar. We have had more staff resign and fly across the ditch to the lure of better pay and conditions. As we have been trimmed down and tightened-up, there is not a lot of 'fat' in the system and staff are feeling the pressure of work-overload. Whilst the mantra is 'safety first', and production second, we know from our incidents and accidents staff feel pressured (nationwide) to 'get it out the door'. This can only be tolerated for so long by younger staff who eventually decide they've had enough and shoot-through, leaving the

remainder to continue the struggle with fewer colleagues at their side!

HPHE projects we have in our laps at the moment include: bogie overhauls, T/L training, store relocation, courier drop-off point and paint-shop training and progression pathways.

We hope to have our AGM in September provided we can locate a suitable venue.

Our main inventory team are progressing the partial relocation to an adjacent suburb and it will need to be treated like a military operation to ensure its success.

Team leader and other vacancies continue to be filled with only one outstanding at the time of writing (Aug).

Finally, it's election year. This is your chance to have your say in the future direction of the country (and indeed) your employer. Mark October 14 in your calendars and ensure you have your say!

Until next time, take care, think safe and be safe out there. 🌐

WELLINGTON RAIL

Slow progress repairing long term pay errors

PAYDAY pain persists as Transdev Wellington (TDW) members continue to fight for their correct pay entitlement each pay. Some delegates and company representatives operate a "pop-up" shop to help members after each pay day. To be fair, TDW management has been working with the RMTU to quickly resolve many of these issues and there are fewer as time passes.

Many of our members feel this should not have been an issue and should have been resolved before now. The root cause has been the imposition of an Australian pay system. Hello, isn't this New Zealand? Square pegs and round holes sort of stuff.

An unacceptable part of this sorry saga has been the process of recovering alleged over payments. Members have complained that notification is usually followed by a demand for immediate repayment. We say what about following the legal process?

Another rub for our members has been the difficulty in matching rosters with pay dockets.

Rotum staff are also experiencing difficulties with pay.

We don't think this is satisfactory, and as the advert says "if pain persists, see your doctor". We need the "doctor" to look into this. A quick permanent fix is needed.

And now some good news. By the time this goes to print, the branch annual general meeting will have been held. Thank you to those members who stood for executive positions and all the hard work put in by our delegates over the last year. There have also been some new faces refreshing our delegate line-up. It is good to see new talent to add to our experienced pool.

Fifa has been and gone. Many of our staff worked extra hard to accommodate extra capacity and extra services during that event. On-board staff in particular bore the

brunt of heavy passenger loadings during a continuing shortage of train managers and passenger operators.

Passenger operators' pay is due to increase to \$26 per hour with the cost of the living wage rise in September this year. Hopefully this will attract more recruits.

After many months of talk and playing pass-the-parcel with GWRC, agreement has been reached for polo shirts and lightweight windbreakers to be a uniform issue option for on-board staff. Thanks are due to members of the uniform committee for their persistence to achieve a good result. Discussions are on-going for trouser options.

Wellington railway station is a quieter place after the exodus of train control, KR rosters and authorities staff to a new facility at Heretaunga.

A big welcome to new members in the Wellington branch. It is always good to see new faces joining the team. ▶



The Minister of Transport, the Hon. David Parker unveils the newly refurbished Capital Connection passenger train.

A very welcome addition to passenger services is the new Capital Connection train. After years of doubt over the future of this highly valued regional rail service, it is great to see public support and see how lobbying can have a good outcome.

August also sees the retirement of Wellington Rail branch stalwart Harvey Paterson. Harvey has been an incredible support for members. He has been instrumental in bargaining and has fought long and hard to maintain and improve our terms and conditions. The branch wishes Harvey all the best for his retirement and thanks him for his 22 years of service.

At the time of writing, the general election looms large. We hope everyone will exercise their democratic right and vote. This election will be particularly important for rail. A right wing government will not favour it. 🇳🇿



NELSON PORT

Starting the busy season with full sheds!

NELSON branch is ticking along nicely at the moment, although in a couple week's time we are losing our HR super women Nicky Dowling, who is off to Port Marlborough to an HR position. She will be missed greatly at Port Nelson as we have worked very closely with her over the last couple of years and appreciated her efforts to work more cohesively with us at the RMTU and to improve working conditions throughout the Port. We wish her well at her new job and Marlborough are very lucky to have her.

Updates from Quaypack Wine reveal the wine is now finished and the empty bottles and our trucks are most definitely picking up. We are averaging a half a dozen trucks a day during the harvest then all of a sudden it ramped right up to over 30 trucks within a day. It is settling down a little now but still with spikes here and there depending on when the product needs to get over here to be packed. However, all in all, it is much busier which is nice to keep the work day going fast.

Also this year is a first for starting our

busy season off with full sheds. In previous years during harvest when bottling stops we usually nearly empty them right out of the building. This was been due to the overseas markets deciding to slow down on purchasing last year's vintage which often left us with a whole heap of storage, keeping our sheds near full. So now we are using up roadways and doorways to keep all the product inside. It is causing some issues with traffic flow and cross overs, but we keep the safety side of it foremost in our minds and to keep the port running is for

◀ the moment what we have to work with. Stevedoring has been trialing a roster for past three months and about to hit its second three months of trial period. For the most part it has been going well and problems which arise are being sorted as we go along with regular roster meetings with the group.

Using HPHE guidelines has set the roster group in good stead for dealing with problems as they arise. It seems for most part, the PPT and FFT stevedores are generally happy with the roster and of course as a spin off at present, until the right numbers are reached of PPT/FFT to run the roster efficiently and effectively, the casual work pool are getting a bit more work for those who want it.

Our monthly consultative meeting with Port exec are going well. It has been good to keep on top of things. Some issues are still slow to resolve due to people with the right information being sick or away or just generally busy in their own departments. However with the regular meetings it can be kept in the forefront of people's minds and issues cannot be forgotten or swept under the carpet.

Progress is always being made and that is a good outcome. In past years we had struggled and are now hoping with Nicky leaving and Lorna being the go-to person, that it will continue in the same way moving forward.

A successful AGM was held last week. Andy Kelly attended with a good over view

to promoting the Ports Retirement Fund, which we now have as an agenda consultative item to get up and running better in Port Nelson.

We have a few new delegates voted in. It's really nice to see a couple of the younger generation voted in so very happy we can still forge on promoting our succession

Remits were high on the Stop Work Agenda and we have a few really good remits this year rather than the dozens of previous years! Other than a big glitch where some of the stevedores were paid to highest skill level remits from last year's bargaining and is still not sorted. This was agreed to be dealt with within the last term.



Consultative team farewells Nicky Dowling at Port Nelson.

planning which has been the branch executive's goal for the last few years. Pleased to it is progressing well. Our delegates are a great bunch of people and very engaged in their positions and the Union.

They are so appreciated in all they do for our members and what they achieve for our branch.

It is a bit of a sore point with the stevedores as they see it as a lack of acting in good faith to get things done. We will include them into this year's remit list but begs the question they should not really have a financial impact or inclusion on this year's remits. Watch this space.

In solidarity, comrades. 🇺🇲

MARLBOROUGH PORT

Many improvement projects on the go ahead of busy cruise season

PORT MARLBOROUGH members, together with the bargaining team are relieved their pay negotiations are now signed, sealed and delivered for the next two years – a process which took longer than recent experience. Thanks to Allan Addison-Saipe and the bargaining

team for getting us across the line. In the port there are a number of capital and R&M projects on top of iRex, with a plethora of contractors and traffic management to navigate on a daily basis. Some examples are the shifting and expansion of the scaling shed in the log yard,

ongoing paving works, wharf maintenance and a recent harvest of Port-owned forest. Around iRex, there is a lot of enabling works like shifting things in order to make things happen. The Waikawa Marina expansion is close to its official opening in September.

There have been a number of new hires ▶



Marlborough branch stands strong.

and changes at management level which means a desk reshuffle and a reorganisation of workshop storage areas into office space for Port operations and the marine team. The radio room is also set to be shifted into that area.

On a union level there is an interest based problem solving (HPHE) approach for our Port services members to find a better shift roster to tie in with a revised FRM policy and the new PIA fatigue management

guidelines.

A busy cruise ship season is just around the corner and advertising for casuals will soon begin.

There is a changing of the guard at our executive level with the president and secretary stepping down after our recent AGM. Our branch also includes Rail and our new president has been appointed from our wonderfully capable Rail sister, Tania Haraki. Your scribe wishes to acknowledge

our outgoing president Grant Herbert for his 22 years service of work and Union membership – over half of that in executive positions. At our AGM he was able to inspire a number of new people to step up into executive and delegate positions through his wisdom, passion and mana. Thank you Herb.

Going forward, our branch remains strong going forward under capable and strong governance. 🌐

OTAGO RAIL

Contract negotiations progressing well and may soon be ratified

KIA ORA comrades from the deep south of Otepoti Dunedin. Mother nature has surely been showing us that winter is definitely here. I acknowledge all my brothers and sisters out there doing the mahi in the sun, rain, sleet, wind, and snow. Keep up the good work team.

Negotiations and bargaining are going strong for KiwiRail and Toll with the latter's negotiations and bargaining soon to be ratified, so watch this space.

KiwiRail and all the RMTU council reps met on July 25/26 to exchange claims. A smaller RMTU team will be meeting with KiwiRail on August 8 and 9 to discuss the claims further and hopefully get closer to a ratification.

Our Dunedin Railway brothers and sisters are still working from a purpose

built tent to do everyday maintenance of the locos and passenger carriages. Their smoko room, fortunately, is in the main railway station where it's nice and warm.

Dunedin is still on struggle street with recruitment, but it is getting better. Infrastructure/track gangs have increased their headcount from 42 to 51. There will be five gangers nearing retirement and managers are looking at a succession plan for them. Signals staff are all soon to be retiring with two new staff on their books.

There was an expo in the Town Hall over a month ago to recruit to the networks and infrastructure teams, and I've been told it was packed. Well done to all those involved and a big shout out to the new staff in the gangs. You all are doing some incredible work out there.

Operations are still severely short of staff. There are a lot of new trainees from rail operators to LEs (locomotive engineers) and more recruiting and interviews are happening.

The high season isn't too far away and the Dunedin yard as well as Mussel Bay and Back Beach down at Port Otago are – and will be – having some major upgrades. Winter conditions, new workers learning the ropes of the railways and staff working extra hours is potentially a deadly cocktail.

The goal of the day and everyday is get home safely and in one piece. I cannot stress enough how important it is to look after yourself as well as your workmates. Take care, and stay safe out there.

I kotahitanga – In unity. 🌐

Otira centennial



The onboard Tranz Alpine team dressed up for the centenary.

I boarded the Trans Alpine at Springfield at 09:20. It was full, people were all excitedly talking about their links to the Tunnel, Otira, West Coast and the railway. As we glided alongside the Waimakariri Gorge, the views were spectacular and the viewing platforms packed with people taking photos.

We stopped at Arthur's Pass to prepare for the tunnel while the Scenic train crew had a photo call with their period costumes they were wearing for the occasion.

As we exited the tunnel we exchanged waves with the many people gathered at the viewing area before pulling into Otira Station.

The atmosphere was amazing. Hundreds of people sharing their stories and commenting there hadn't been this many people in Otira for decades. (around 600 that day)

We queued for refreshments. The ginger slice was particularly good and we listened to speeches which prompted further memories.

The weather turned cool as the plaque was unveiled with tears in eyes as it was recounted how much hardship was borne by the workers digging the tunnel.

Then it was back onto the train to head back east. The light was fading and the snow on the mountains was framed by a blue sky turning to sepia as night loomed. A magnificent view but very cold though not so in the cosy warmth of the train as we smoothly made our way.

As I departed at Springfield and watched the train disappear down the tracks, I reflected that I had been part of something very special. 🌐

- Andy Woolhouse



(l to r) Andy Woolhouse and Mark Heissenbuttel and the Otira plaque.



(below) A model of a EO class locomotive and coal wagon presented to the Otira team. It will be kept at the station.

