

# THE *TRANSPORT WORKER*

## DEC 2023

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

**NZCTU**  
Kauae Kaimahi

**NZCTU**  
Te Kauae Kaimahi

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# NZCTU: Discussing our future



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Union stalwart and friend to many, George Whyte is laid to rest in his beloved South Island.



**COVER PHOTOGRAPH:** For the first time in many years the NZCTU hosted a national conference of affiliates - this time to discuss our future. (l to r) Gemma Thomas, Todd Valster, Nici Benington (Dairy Workers Union), Rebecca Hauck and Raava Nia (ETU).

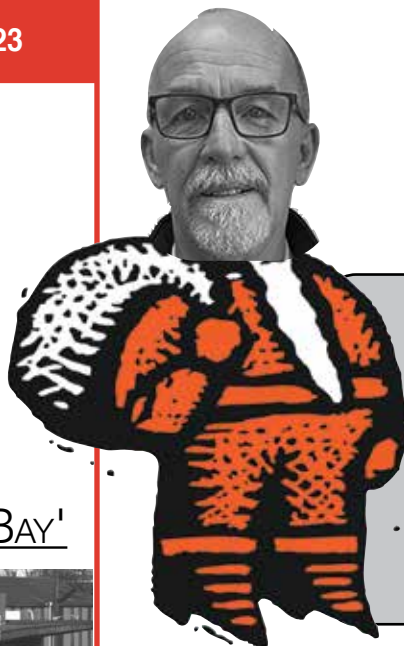
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**Todd Valster**

**General secretary RMTU**

WISHING ALL OUR UNION MEMBERS A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR. FROM THE PRESIDENT, GENERAL SECRETARY, NMC AND STAFF.

## Counting the positives

**W**ELCOME to the last *Transport Worker* for 2023. It has been a very busy year for the RMTU and next year looks as if it will be full on as well. During the year we supported the Future of Rail Conference in Wellington. This conference was well attended with a very positive vibe from almost all of those who attended. It is important we continue the dialogue regardless of the government at the time. We believe New Zealanders want more transport options other than just buses, planes and cars.

The procurement of 18 x 4 car tri-brid trains for inter-regional travel in the lower North Island is an excellent example of rail travel for the future. Recently a team of RMTU delegates met at the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) to discuss these new train sets. It was a positive first meeting and we look forward to be involved in this procurement.

### Amalgamation

It was a long process but finally we have joined forces with the Amalgamated Stevedores Union. This amalgamation did not require any changes to the RMTU name, nor governance and rules. We welcome all the (now) ex ASU members into the RMTU and look forward to organising and training our new members and delegates in preparation for bargaining in 2024. Definitely stronger together!

### Thank you

In October, our administration officer, Debby Green, resigned. We thank Debby for all the hard mahi she did for the RMTU for the last six years and we wish her all the best on her next journey. We have been advertising for a new admin officer since September but, at this stage, we have not been able to find a suitable replacement.

While we had previously stated there would be RMTU Women's Council elections this year, it has been decided to let the current team carry on until an election in 2024.

### International solidarity

I recently attended the International Centre for Labour Solidarity (ICLS) Steering Committee meeting in Bangkok. The ICLS is made up of representatives from most of the Asian/Pacific rail unions. While this meeting is about planning for the ICLS's main meeting, one of the highlights was the passing of three 'peace' resolutions to be sent to the United Nations. These resolutions sought peace in Ukraine/Russia dispute, the Middle East and the South China Sea.

The Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) held their national conference in Brisbane in November. Wellington rail branch secretary, Richard Pearce, RMTU



vice president, Howard Phillips and I attended on behalf of the RMTU. The RTBU is similar to the RMTU in that they too amalgamated in the 1990s. The RTBU has ambitious plans for growth and unity. One impressive initiative is the plan to provide rail training and H&S rep training. The RTBU recently purchased a training organisation so they can provide this training.

## 2024

Next year we will be focusing on improving our Union communications and updating the RMTU website. We will also be delivering on resolutions passed at our last Biennial Conference on electronic voting, inertia voting and rail percentages for ratification.

I wish you a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to working with you in 2024. 🇳🇿

## Top apprentice



*Ben Bishop, a KiwiRail mechanical engineer at the Dunedin depot won this year's KiwiRail Roy Sullivan Apprentice of the Year. The RMTU was part of the judging team for this award. There were some outstanding candidates which made the judging difficult. Well done to all that made the shortlist and well done Ben.* 🇳🇿

# Retiring from active membership

**P**ORT TARANAKI stalwart, Biggles Maindonald, is retiring from active membership of the RMTU. Over the years he has made significant contributions to the Union.

Biggles first became an active member after being made redundant in 1995 from Shell Todd Oil after some 17 years. After reading an advert in the local paper for a security officer for Westgate Transport at Port Taranaki he thought: "What the heck – if I am successful then it's a stepping stone until I find something more suitable."

He was successful and employed once again and began his new job just a short while later on December 19 with Westgate Transport.

After completing a three month probation he was told 429 people applied for his job with a short list of ten.



"It was overwhelming to be told these stats," he said. "Back then, my manager John Whitfield said we made the right choice, welcome aboard to full time employment."

During that probation period he met many people from management and other departments, eventually meeting the RMTU sub branch executives and delegates. Conversations soon turned to what the RMTU could do for him.

They acknowledged his past experience including 17 years as a delegate with the union during his previous employment.

Becoming a delegate came first and was quickly endorsed by his colleagues. In 1996 he became an active member of the sub branch of Westgate Transport at Port Taranaki (re-branded later as Port Taranaki Ltd - the Westgate).

Over a few years he was nominated as a conference delegate representing the branch where he met many other people from within the RMTU.

He became secretary/treasurer for the local branch and with mentoring from the branch chair, Dan Manu and head office inspired delegate training, he said his confidence grew.

Dan retired in 2019 and Biggles took over reins as acting RMTU sub branch president until he was nominated and accepted the

# Building bridge resilience

## Future-proofing our bridges to overcome worsening weather conditions

**R**ECENT speed restrictions in the upper South Island have been causing no end of headaches for locomotive engineers based in Picton. The issue stems from a number of bridges between Picton and Spring Creek being old and in a state of disrepair. Many local locomotive engineers with long memories knew this issue had been getting worse for a number of years and felt promises had been made many times about repairing them yet they were still decaying.

The issue came to a head when the speed on some bridges was reduced to just 10 kph and passenger trains banned from the route. Some work was done and the speed restrictions were lifted to 25kph but the LEs felt their safety did not have the

same priority as passengers. Reports of bits falling off bridges and bridges creaking and moving were also not inspiring confidence.

With the LEs escalating their concerns through their team leaders to management a meeting was called at the end of October between the KiwiRail asset engineers, structure maintenance people and the drivers. The meeting was well attended and started off a little fiery with our members questioning whether they were only to be given assurances to merely shut them up without any actual action taking place and to see the issue drag on for years to come.

### Difficulty staying awake

The speed restrictions were particularly felt by the LEs at 0600, driving into Picton af-

ter a long night shift where crawling along at slow speeds added an extra 20-30 minutes to the last part of the journey. They were finding it difficult to stay awake especially as the most tedious part of the journey is at the very end.

Our engineers admitted the current situation is as a result of years of managed decline and underfunding. Not having enough money to repair structures has meant years of temporary speed restrictions which some times morph into permanent speed restrictions. Sometimes we need to have long memories to remember why they are even there at all.

What ensued was a very interesting conversation about bridges and much was learned.

position of president.

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Dan for all those years. Believing in me and trusting me to the level where he felt I was ready for the next level in my career path with the RMTU."

### A highlight

One of his many highlights was Memorial Day, 28 April, 2003. The service was held outside the old main office, where he unveiled a new plaque between the company flag poles remembering RMTU members who had lost their lives on the job.

This plaque was designed and made by Biggles whose cousin is a monumental mason and donated the cost of the plaque.

"Under his supervision I completed it and approaching the CEO of the company, Roy Weaver, with a request to place it. He agreed and said there was only one place to install – between the flag poles."

This year he decided to stand down as an active member of the RMTU.

"Making this decision wasn't easy," he said. "The fellowships among the brotherhood and sisterhood is a memory I will treasure for the rest of my life. However, it's time to plan my retirement though

many will recall I have been nominated as the official conference photographer. Who

support you gave me over these many years.


"To Todd Valster I personally thank for



knows, I could still be passing by while you are in conference! May be I'll call in and take a few photos."

Finally, he sincerely thanks key people within the organisation including Wayne Butson, Aubrey Wilkinson, Howard Phillips, Dave Marden, Andrew Kelly, Shane McNae, Karen Fletcher and Allan Addison-Saipe.

"It is a great pleasure and honour meeting you all and getting to know you. I thank you all for your education, guidance and

your guidance, education and support over these past 27 years. It was a great pleasure working along side you especially while we were in negotiations. We had our battles, so to say, but we fought well and we were successful. And to all RMTU members old and new of this amazing fellowship it has been an honour to be part of this Union. The RMTU is a strong union – a family if you wish. Remember, Stronger Together, Safety First, United We Stand." 



There are over 700 bridges in the South Island, many made from hard wood timber which is very difficult to source these days. It used to come from Australia but is no longer available due to increasing bush fires. The only real source now is from central Africa where the ethics around milling rain forest timber in this day and age is questionable. Either way, it is an expensive and difficult resource to locate which means the future of those wooden bridges is on shaky ground.

The problems will only get worse for this crucial part of the network.

## Gateway to SI

Picton is the gateway to the South Island network and the tonnage of freight through is expected to triple with the completion of iRex. So while procrastination is a KiwiRail super power it really is not an option. With many wooden bridges in the network over 80 years old a solution needs to be found.

It was at this point the good news started to enter the conversation. Remedial work had been carried out on the bridges between Picton and Spring Creek to get through the next months with extra members (not RMTU!) being put in to strengthen bridges. It was lucky the appropriate timber was available in Southland. Hopefully this will not put back a similar project in that part of the country. All the bridges have been assessed and plans are in place to have them all either repaired or replaced in the next



*Wairau Bridge*

# PORTS RETIREMENT PLAN ARE YOU A MEMBER?

The Ports Retirement Plan is open to all port workers.

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



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Retirement  
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## ◀ 18-24 months.

An interesting fact about bridge engineering is the rule bridges are engineered to a factor of two, which is to say they need to be able to hold twice the weight they are rated for. If for any reason that number drops below two then a speed restriction will initially be applied before it can be raised back to number back and repair work completed before the restriction can be lifted.

Repair work on the bridges will include re-sleepering and pier replacement in some cases however some bridges will need to be replaced entirely.

## Aggressive catchments

The question is: how do we build resilience into the network around our bridges given the increased frequency of severe weather events. A question was asked about why smaller water ways often had bridges instead of culverts. The answer? This country has quite aggressive catchments and while water way may be a trickle most of time it can quickly become

a raging torrent during flooding events. The current thinking is to have bridges made from either concrete or steel using a modular design, with ballasted beds able to be lifted onto piers and can be topped by flood waters and not swept away. After floods the ballast can either be replaced or washed and in the case where part of a bridge is washed away, it could easily be

replaced by stock already on hand.

While specific bridges may require specific designs, especially in cases where they span wide rivers like the Wairau, this approach could be far more cost effective, making bridges safer and quicker to repair.

Maybe, just maybe we could then see fewer speed restrictions on the network.



Bridge over Wairau river.

# \$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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# Bringing back the Bay Express

By Paul Callister & Michael van Drogenbroek

**H**AWKE'S BAY'S last passenger train service, the Bay Express, stopped running in 2001.

This year the Save Our Trains group have been holding meetings in towns and cities across New Zealand to encourage a revival of passenger rail. This includes meetings in Woodville, Dannevirke, Napier and Hastings.

In contrast to New Zealand, in most parts of the world there is an expansion of inter-regional passenger rail with super-fast bullet train networks which New Zealanders can only dream about. But there are also trains which run at 160 kilometres per hour (kph) on the same narrow-gauge track as we have here. Our neighbour has one running in Queensland, as do the Japanese. There is also a worldwide revival of night trains.

Modern trains feature easy access for prams, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and bikes. They have on-board toilets, cafes and wifi so business travellers can work on the train. Unlike the electric or hydrogen powered planes still on the drawing board, there are already trains powered by overhead electric lines, battery or hydrogen.

Even if propelled by diesel motors, they are still very low users of energy and create much lower emissions per kilometre than planes or cars. Modern trains can operate as hybrids – known as bi-mode – of diesel and battery, or even Tri-mode as is being proposed for the lower North Island rolling stock where there is electric power overhead, a battery which can be charged and an onboard generator to charge the battery when overhead is not available.

When powered by electricity, train emission profiles are extraordinarily low. British data comparing the all-electric Eurostar with flying the same route shows it produces just 6 grams/km/person compared with the 255 grams for the plane. Without the option of rail, on a per capita domestic basis, New Zealanders emit seven times more domestic aviation emissions than people living in the UK and nine times that of Germany.

So why, unlike the rest of the world, do we not have a love affair with trains?

## Local train history

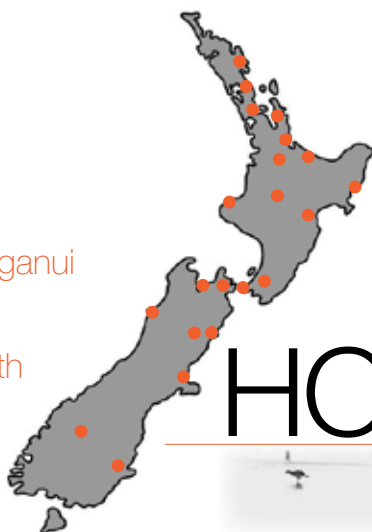
Andre Brett, in his 2021 book, *Can't get*

there from here, provides an explanation.

In a section titled '2001-2002 The Regional Passenger Train's Annus Horribilis', the demise of the Bay Express is set out. This was a period post privatisation of the railways and Brett argues poor marketing, asset-stripping, ageing rolling stock and a failure to upgrade infrastructure meant trains which ought to have been viable were not.

In late 2000, the rail operator company, Tranz Rail, offered its long-distance trains, including the Bay Express, for sale with tenders closing in early 2001. One successful buyer was Australia's West Coast Railways (WCR). According to Brett, WCR indicated a willingness to negotiate with central government about subsidies and other support services to keep the Bay Express running. Initially a subsidy of \$200,000 to \$300,000 per year was suggested. A campaign to keep it going was led by Napier's then-Mayor Alan Dick. But it seems later WCR asked for a subsidy of \$1 million per year. No support from government nor from key councils along the route was forthcoming and the service stopped in 2001.

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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*The old Bay Express on a run to Wellington.*

The lack of support for rail in 2001 was in contrast to that given to Air New Zealand. At this time there was a growing list of airlines around the world facing financial difficulties. On October 3, 2001, Helen Clark's Labour government put together a large rescue package arguing that a national carrier was essential. Exactly four days later on October 7, 2001, the Bay Express and other major passenger rail services ceased running.

In 2003 the government agreed to renationalise the national rail network and in 2004 Ontrack was formed as part of the rescue package. Toll NZ took over the rail operations and reintegrated and put the West Coast Railways Tranz Scenic operation back into its business.

However, whilst the rail network received much needed investment in the rail freight business, long distance and Inter-regional passenger rail continued to suffer from a lack of investment and no government support.

The Northerner overnight passenger train between Auckland and Wellington closed in 2004 and even the Overlander train, the last remaining passenger train between Auckland and Wellington, nearly

closed in 2006 and was only saved by a last good will gesture from Australian operator Toll Holdings after a massive backlash from communities served along the line.

The Labour Government renationalised the above rail operator in 2008 and named it KiwiRail and it wasn't until 2009 that a National Government finally agreed to invest \$40 million in new passenger rolling stock for trains on the Coastal Pacific and Tranz Alpine routes. This rolling stock is now stretched to run all three remaining – largely tourist-oriented – trains.

Fast forward to the 2020s and there were signs the Labour Government would at last reinvest in inter-regional passenger rail. In 2018 they agreed to support a service between Hamilton and Auckland on a five year trial. It was launched under the name Te Huia and, whilst it had a rough start due to Covid restrictions limiting people's ability to travel inter-regionally, it is now going from strength to strength.

In 2021 the government also agreed to invest in refurbished interim carriages to replace the ageing Capital Connection rolling stock running between Palmerston North and Hamilton. And in the May 2023 budget government announced funding for

a new fleet of 18 four-car, tri-mode trains to run between Wellington and Masterton and Wellington and Palmerston North. It is hoped this order may be the start of a rolling stock procurement for other parts of New Zealand.

## So, what about Hawke's Bay?

Why should we be considering bringing back passenger rail to Hawke's Bay? And more importantly, would such a service be used?

A number of things have changed since 2001.

First, and we would argue most importantly, we have a climate crisis. We need to rapidly and substantially reduce transport emissions. Trains provide a good way to do this.

Also of importance, the population mix is changing. Hawke's Bay is projected to be one of New Zealand's fastest growing regions. In 2018, it was estimated 172,000 people lived in the region. This is projected to reach over 202,000 by 2048, two years before we need to be net zero for emissions. More people means a greater potential user





*The old Napier Station could be brought back to the life it was designed for.*

base for the train.

But the population is also ageing. In 2001, when the Bay Express ceased operation, just 13% of the Hawke's Bay population was estimated to be 65 or older. But by 2033, this could reach 24% and by 2048 it is likely to be just under one-third. Many will be in their 70s or 80s and while most will live in the larger areas of Napier and Hastings, significant numbers will settle in the smaller towns across the region.

At any age not everyone is able to drive – or wants to drive. But at some point in our lives, most of us will no longer be able to do so.

Longer distance buses are important. But they do not provide the experience trains, especially modern trains, provide. NZ buses do not have on-board toilets or cafes. They are a real challenge to use if passengers are differently abled. At some point electric planes may well provide some inter-regional services. But given the significant electricity requirements to run them and the need to buy new planes, airfares are not likely to be cheap. And they will not be easily accessible for those living in the smaller towns.

With the procurement of the new trains for the lower North Island, they could form the basis of a national standard for future inter-regional longer distance passenger trains. Like an aircraft they can be configured differently internally with various seating arrangements – such as differing pitch for longer distance journeys as well as

have areas for server cars for a cafe.

In the recent parliamentary select committee inquiry into the future of inter-regional passenger rail in New Zealand, Hawke's Bay rail services were specifically mentioned. The inquiry recommended that scoping studies be progressed for inter-regional passenger rail services that included the following:

- a) Auckland–Wellington
- b) Auckland–Tauranga
- c) Napier–Wellington
- d) an extension of the Capital Connection service to Feilding.

It also noted that further investigation of other potential inter-regional passenger rail routes be undertaken to meaningfully compare and identify the costs, benefits, and risks associated with different opportunities.

We need to realise though, that a new Napier–Wellington service would require some substantial investment into new infrastructure and rolling stock.

Whilst the railway station still exists in Napier (used currently for other purposes) there is now no train station in Hastings and there is no rolling stock available for this service. Other towns, such as Woodville, Dannevirke, Ormondville, and Waipukurau are fortunate their railway stations largely still exist. Only relatively modest rehabilitation is required so challenges on this route are not as large as they are in some other parts of New Zealand. The Napier–Wellington rail corridor has capacity for a new

service, but some upgrading work would be needed to bring the track up to reasonable standard for a modern rail service at reasonable speed.

A new service could see a train departing both Wellington and Napier each morning around 8 am and returning to their origin cities each afternoon. To begin with two train sets would be required thus providing two return services a day. Transit time is about five hours, but this could be improved over time as track upgrades allow. The trains currently being procured for the Palmerston North to Wellington line are to run at a top speed of about 120 kph after track upgrades.

To bring back passenger services, non-partisan, cross party, central government support is needed. With this support in place, the next steps can be delivered for a sustainable future with rail passenger services to Hawke's Bay and other parts of New Zealand. 🌐

This article is republished with permission of the *The Bay Express*. It was first published in their magazine *Baybuzz* (November/December 2023).

■ **Dr Paul Callister is an economist whose research centres on sustainable transport, particularly long distance bus and rail networks and options for decarbonising aviation.**

■ **Michael van Drogenbroek is a transport consultant and advisor at Heriot-Edievale Ltd with 30 years plus experience.**

# Working at height

**T**HE Union is very concerned that KiwiRail has been slow to act on this issue despite being alerted to the risk.

In August this year RMTU reps from the mechanical industrial council met to discuss the Unions concerns about working at height without adequate fall protection.

RMTU H&S delegates took photos showing the risk of falls and lack of safety protection in their work environment.

## Listing the risks

The risks included working on top of locomotives without adequate scaffolding or harnesses, large gaps between the platform and the locomotives, use of unsecured ladders and a workplace culture which accepts working at height without protection is accepted practice.

Despite falls from heights being a critical risk for KiwiRail staff, there is no companywide 'Working at heights' policy or standard.

Due to this lack of standard, each depot has developed its own systems resulting in some depots having substandard systems for managing the risk, including lack of training and safety harnesses.

Good workplace design, including permanent scaffold to access the top of the rail vehicle, is the best approach.

Palmerston North's depot was a good example of this.

Without a standard approach there is no KiwiRail wide assurance process for checking if the risk is being managed.

The Union urged KiwiRail rolling stock asset services to do the following:

- Issue a safety alert to stop all working at height work which doesn't have adequate fall protection.

- Develop a company-wide standard for working at height.

- Review each depot's risk register to ensure working at height is identified and the risk is assessed for each task involving such risk.

- Develop safe operating procedures and training for all working at height tasks.

- Eliminate (where possible) the task of working at height.



*Photos from Westfield showing safety rigging and scaffolding.*





■ Work with the RMTU and HSAT at each depot to make sure controls are fit for purpose and don't introduce unintended consequences.

## Very serious incident

On Sunday, October 29, a KiwiRail, telecommunications technician suffered life threatening injuries from a fall of approximately 10 metres from a radio mast (see photo opposite). Worksafe NZ are investigating the incident.

Following the incident KiwiRail met with RMTU reps to assess the risk of working at height for 'climbing' work in network services.

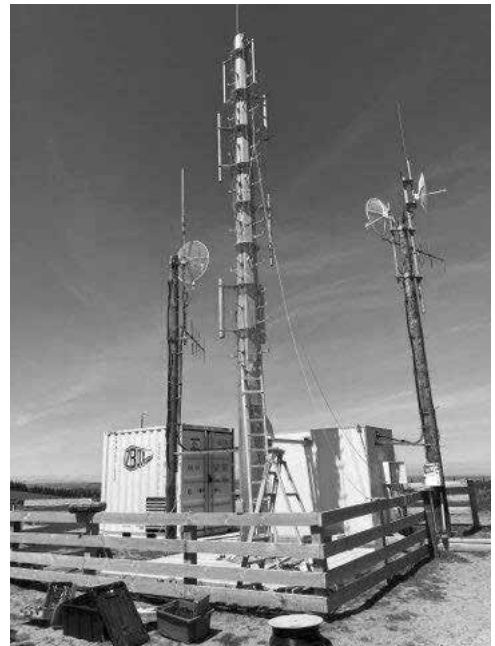
Further risk assessments for working at height have started for rolling stock asset services, freight, and container terminals. The next step will be making sure the fall protection systems

are in place and being used for working at heights work.

The KiwiRail worker, and RMTU member, was working as a telecommunications technician. He was immediately taken to hospital and is currently receiving treatment. At the time of writing this, he remains in a serious condition with multiple injuries.

Following the incident KiwiRail has met with the RMTU mechanical council delegates to do a risk assessment for working at heights and to develop a working at heights standard for rolling stock.

Next steps include the depots reviewing tasks which require working at height and, in consultation with HSAT reps, make sure the systems and equipment are put in place to keep workers safe. 🇳🇿



*An example of the mast the technician fell from.*

## Good practice guidelines

■ Eliminate the hazard of working at height: eg, Use long-handled tools from ground level or build structures at ground level and lift into position when finished.

■ Isolate people from the hazard by using edge protection, a guard-railed work platform (eg, scaffold or elevating work platforms), or use a total restraint system to prevent people being near height hazard.

■ Minimise the distance and impact of the fall. Only take this step when you've exhausted both elimination and isolation as controls. Use a fall arrest or work positioning system ie: personal fall minimisation method. Or use safety nets or soft-landing systems to minimise a fall to any worker at height.

■ MONITOR your approach to working at height safely and constantly assess your approach to ensure it is fit for purpose.

■ NOTE: It only takes a fraction of a second to fall, so short duration work at height should be treated the same way as any other activity at height. Appropriate fall prevention controls should be put in place, regardless of the time duration of the task.

■ The process should be documented, and reviewed with workers and their H&S reps regularly.



*Clear and present dangers and hazards.*



# LEs fed up with the F-word

**S**OME 380 LEs loco engineers (LE) from Auckland One Rail (AOR) and KiwiRail were recently surveyed by the RMTU on workplace fatigue. Approximately 95% of them said they had been fatigued at work and, most worrying, one in three said they had made operational errors due to fatigue.

Fatigue affects workers in the same way that drugs and alcohol do. A fatigued worker will have slower reaction times, difficulty communicating and filtering out distraction, reduced ability to problem solve, and even inability to respond to unexpected events. In some cases, fatigue cause people to have micro-sleeps (a brief loss of consciousness) which they may not even be aware of.

LEs surveyed said their fatigue-related errors included having a SPAD (signal passed at danger), poor train handling, excessive train speed, misjudged stopping distances, over shooting platforms and micro-sleeps.

These errors reflect rail industry research elsewhere that finds "due to their schedules, loco engineers are likely to experience elevated fatigue at work, which has marked safety consequences. Research shows that LEs who are fatigued use brake less and travel at faster speeds."<sup>1</sup>

KiwiRail LEs said the causes of their fatigue were due to a high number of A shifts, shifts starting at around 2300, and finishing after 0400. Other causes include changing shift patterns and insufficient time to recover from sleep debt caused by shift work.

## Work/life balance

A lack of work/life balance and the ability to have quality time with loved ones was raised by many LEs as major issues. One LE showed the researchers their master roster which gave only two weekends off in 28 weeks. To make matters worse, days off are mostly used to recover from sleep debt or prepare for the next night shift. The shifts have been described as inhumane by some due to the lack of quality time off.

AOR staff said the main cause of fatigue was very early start times, late finishes

and extended hours of work. Jarring shift changes make it hard to regulate sleep and get good quality sleep.

For example, staff will work a week of shifts finishing at 2.30am, followed by a shift rotation of 5.30am starts. LEs say it's hard to adapt to a totally different roster when you've become used to going to sleep at a certain time. When this keeps changing the sleep debt just builds up, which causes impairment and ill health.

The RMTU is compiling examples of rosters which cause excessive fatigue.

Some examples from LEs include:

- Only 12 days off in 10 weeks (many of those single days off).

- Six sleep pattern resets in a two-week mini-roster.

- Book on time changed to 2335 rather than 2300 so fatigue FAID<sup>2</sup> score would look better. Even the change in hours was going to cause more fatigue not less.

- Four-night shifts in a row, followed by a single day off followed by three more-night shifts.

- Two night shifts followed by eight day shifts in a row (ie: no days off).

"Six days on, followed by one day off, followed by six days on one day off. . . and that was a training roster."

LEs have accused KiwiRail of manipulating the rostering rules to get more shifts in a row without providing a two-night sleep opportunity.

One LE said: "For me starting 0240 in the morning and starting 0400 is the same thing. It takes the same amount of energy and fatigue preparing and working those shifts. The second week of that mini roster doesn't look good either. Doing two A shifts then no rest and rostered on again." It is a ROM compliant.

Confidence to report fatigue to management is low in both Auckland One Rail and KiwiRail. Reasons for not wanting report include:

- Anytime you use the F(fatigue) word you are put into a category and watched.

- (I) don't really like to let the team down, even though I'm taking the risk of being fatigued.

The RMTU has discussed the survey results with AOR and KiwiRail.

Currently there are no national standards or guidelines for managing fatigue in the rail industry in NZ.

One of the benefits of the Union surveying LEs nationally is the opportunity to gather information to lobby Waka Kotahi and the rail providers to work with the RMTU to create a national standard or industry guidance for fatigue risk management in rail.

## Time for rail guidelines

We've worked with industry to develop fatigue management guidance in the ports sector, why not rail?

Ten things to improve fatigue management

- Two nights off minimum to recover from shift-work (eliminate single RDOs).

- Employ more LEs so depots are working at establishment levels.

- More consistent start times in the rosters.

- Improved allocation of weekends off.

- Gradual shift rotation so it's easier to adapt to sleep change patterns (soft starts to critical shifts following time off. eg RDO, 1800; then a 2200 start.


- Eliminate train for car running to reduce motor vehicle risk.

- Anonymise fatigue reporting to counter fear of retribution.

- Reduce the FAID score so rosters are not so fatiguing, and review whether FAID is fit for purpose.

- Double staffing of LEs for shifts over eight hours.

- Better engagement and cooperation with workers and their roster delegates to continuously improve the roster and find ways of reducing fatigue.

The third rail operator to survey is Transdev Wellington. RMTU LEs there will receive their survey prior to Christmas. 

<sup>1</sup> Dorrian, Jillian & Roach, Gregory & Fletcher, Adam & Dawson, Drew. (2006). *The effects of fatigue on train handling during speed restrictions.*

<sup>2</sup> FAID is a computer software tool that assesses the likelihood of fatigue based on the working hours roster.



# Fatigue training

## Port Marlborough

**T**HE Rail and Maritime Transport Union's own health and safety organiser, Karen Fletcher, recently spent two days at Port Marlborough offering fatigue training to a mixture of members and managers, from the chief executive to the cleaners. In two sessions over those more than 40 staff from the port learnt about the signs and effects of fatigue.

This bespoke training was developed by Karen for Worksafe Reps and is an excellent look at the causes and effects of fatigue. In particular, it showed how it can affect shift workers in our industry. As we all struggle with overtime and availability issues it is well worth taking the time to do this course and raise your awareness in your work place.

The course was well received with plenty of positive comments with most people learning something new either about themselves or the science of sleep.

Some important things to remember when managing fatigue:

- Your need two full nights in bed of unrestricted sleep (no alarm clocks!) when



*Staff presenting back to the group.*

you are changing shift patterns and recovering from sleep debt.

- After being awake for 17 hours you are as impaired as an individual at the drink drive limit.

- Lack of sleep can cause catastrophic health issues,

- \* Fatigue affects mental health and



*The 'ruler drop' test*

relationships.

- Lack of sleep can cause accidents and lack of productivity.

- A fatigued person has little ability to assess their own impairment, problem solve, filter out distractions and problem.

The RMTU is committed to educating people for the effects of fatigue and is actively promoting healthy rosters. 🇬🇧



*(l) Port Marlborough delegates.*



*(r) RMTU H&S organiser, Karen Fletcher, leading the course.*





# ITF Women Transport W

It was an absolute privilege for us to get the opportunity to represent our Union at the ITF Women Transport Workers Conference on September 25-28 in Saly, Senegal. Each day of the conference was filled with empowering and inspiring stories from incredible wahine from all over the world. Stories of strength, sacrifice, hardship and hope. With 250 wahine in the room, from 65 different countries the amount of power, aroha and unity in the room was incredible to be a part of.

Hearing the different experiences and challenges which wahine worldwide have had to face empowered us and gave us so much perspective.

Some of the shared issues discussed at the conference were around the gender pay gap, sanitation rights and required PPE being designed for men and not women in the transport industry. As well as this there were discussions on ending systemic exclusion and ending violence and harassment against women in the workplace.

Here are some stories, ideas and empowering messages:

*Jennifer Murray – Railways Canada/bargaining committee:*

Jennifer spoke about the Nova Scotia shipyards only having five female workers out of a total of 600. A company filled with predominantly white men who were not open to change or allowing more women coming into the company. She spoke about a free 14-week, career exploration programme designed to support women with an interest in working within that industry or wanting to know more. The programme takes you through the trade and gives you an insight to what diplomas you may need to qualify for different roles within the industry. More than 1000 women have joined the course over the years. She said the working culture has completely shifted after implementing the programme. The programme objective is to attract diverse women, support apprenticeships and to develop strategies to keep women in the trades for longer. She said the key is transformative change. Step into the discomfort



and everything is possible.

*Julie Porter:* Julie spoke on the systematic exclusion of women. She also spoke on critical analysis of systems of exclusion and gender based economic violence. She said that education for men is important in surpassing this issue as it allows us to form alliances and strengthen gender equality.





# Workers Conference 2023



She also spoke on the idea of creating support groups for women in the work force and challenge the discrimination.

**Sheela – India:** Sheela said that in her country women who stand with the union are at a disadvantage in

their workplace. She said they have no place to go to the toilet or to sleep at night when on shift. She spoke about the struggle they face around being asked for inappropriate favours by male workers. Women are being failed deliberately due to companies and colleagues not wanting them to work in the industry – they had no voice. Sheela said there is so much exclusion and so many challenges they face in India. She also spoke about some positive progress they have made. They are now entitled to six months maternity leave and two in

case of a still birth. As well as this they are now also entitled to mental wellbeing services for themselves and their families. They have also pushed for changes around time changes in shift hours so that woman can get home safely before and after work. Sheela said, "We will keep moving forward and reach our objective."

**Louise Skrywer:** Louise worked in aviation for 16 years and said being a woman in a male dominated industry has been hard. In order to be a crew, you have to look a certain way. Heels and tight-fitting clothing. Louise said to align yourself with your employer it is our duty to change the perception on how women should look.

**Rebecca Kwashie - Ghana:** Rebecca spoke about how having women on the committee is a great thing. She said they know firsthand the struggles we face and what should be prioritised going forward for the women. The most important thing is that women are at the table to move forward and make change.

**South Africa:** A woman representing South Africa spoke on how it is important we all have an understanding of health and safety and the policies. Employers must

not influence the policies. All incidences may not be inspected. Health and safety committees must have strong women who understand that women can do everything. We need to see our demands put on the table. She said a collective voice is power.

**Cristina – Mexico:** Cristina spoke on the digital side of the industry. She said that four out of ten women have no connection to the Internet, or no resources for connection – nor any knowledge or skills on how to use them. She said that education and training needs to happen. Train women to do the jobs of the future. Make our countries more inclusive. 🌐

Scream

So that one day

A hundred years from now

Another sister will not have to

Dry her tears wondering

Where in history

She lost her voice.

– Jasmin Kaur

# Shaping our future

**T**HE long awaited New Zealand Council of Trade Union (NZCTU) Biennial Conference, Anga Whakamua: Shaping our Futures was held on October 25–26 2023 at Te Papa Wellington. Due to COVID it has been four years since the union movement has been in one room for this long overdue hui.

NZCTU president Richard Wagstaff, NZCTU secretary Melissa Ansell-Bridges, and NZCTU vice-president Maori Syd Keepa delivered a full two days of guest speakers, workshops, beautiful waiata and connecting and reconnecting with our brothers and sisters from the union movement.

Dr Veronica Tawhai lecturer of Maori development in policy and politics at the school of Maori studies, Massey University gave a very informative and enlightening speech about the Treaty of Waitangi and the issues surrounding it.

Felix Anthony, another powerful guest speaker and president of the International Trades Union Congress-Asia Pacific (ITCU-AP), emphasised how lucky New Zealand is to have a strong union movement and how we need to use our strength and voices for our brothers and sisters around the world who are still being imprisoned for being in a union – or worse, being murdered for standing up and fighting back for workers rights.

Some guest speakers:

Tim Sutton (UnionAid executive director), Craig Renney (NZCTU economist and policy director), Morgan Godfrey (journalist and political commentator), Saunoamaai'i Dr Karanina Sumeo (equal employment opportunities commissioner at the New Zealand Human Rights Commission), Max Rashbrooke (political commentator and writer), Neale Jones Managing (director of Capital GR) who raised the following points - and more:

■ How do we get people more engaged in the government, democracy and unions. Quote from President Biden "bottom up, middle out"

■ Living in communities means connecting with our communities for politics and good community life"



*Above RMTU delegates and other union colleague (l to r) Gemma Thomas, Todd Valster, Nici Benington, Rebecca Hauck and Raava Nia. (below) Sam Kabui.*

■ Stay courageous we need to support our brothers and sisters.

■ The time is now. The union movement can be in a powerful position. Organise the union movement now and pool your talents from the grass roots!

And last but not certainly least, one of my union crushes, Sally McManus secretary of the Australian Council Trade Unions (ACTU) Sally has been the ACTU secretary since 2017 – the first woman to hold this position since the creation of the ACTU in 1927. I have seen Sally speak at a rally in Australia, what an amazing privilege to see her again in person. I also had the pleasure of schmoozing with her the night before she spoke at the conference and got to talk shop for just a few minutes. Sally's speech focused on Aotearoa New Zealand and the change of government. As an advocate for workers' rights and her brothers and sisters across the ditch she had six things she wanted us to know from her experience.

1. Try and transition as quickly as you



can. We are in a different government (Labour to National) so be ready for change, make the change, this is an opportunity to show off the union movement!

2. Defend! Fight tooth and nail! ORGANISE!

3. Stay united! All unions unite and fight!

4. Don't just be defensive, create or win new territory. Campaign! Be seen.

5. Use the time you have wisely. Research, agenda, organise, get the details.

6. Older generations of unions are born out of fights, tell the stories, share the experiences.

Some great advice from Sally for the mighty RMTU to take home and digest and get ready for this National government which will no doubt put a few spanners in the works. Our union movement needs to be ready for this bumpy journey.

Take care and be safe out there, my brothers and sisters. 🇳🇿

**Rebecca Hauck**



# Powerful conference message

## A second review of the conference

**A**S women's representative for Port of Tauranga and recently NZCTU (New Zealand Trade Unions) women's rep I attended my first NZCTU biannual conference 25-26 October held at Wellington's Te Papa Venue.

It was truly a privilege to join such a variety of union reps at the NZCTU Biannual Conference as women's rep for Port of Tauranga. It was also a truly amazing of strong intellects from New Zealand's leading industry sectors.

This event really opened my eyes to so many facets of union culture.

Among the informative talks from the CTU panel were empowering and encouraging speakers who shared experiences, knowledge and views from a union perspective.

We were very fortunate to have Sally

McManus – the first women secretary for an Australian union since 1927! She shared some very valuable points for the delegates including to stay strong and to keep pushing forward especially in light of NZ's new government.

Other points of note:

- Transition quickly and fight for territory to keep it.
- Use smart strategies and research public opinion and look for the long term. Winning advances workers' rights.
- Stay united.
- Create and win new territories. Use time wisely and key into the agenda on how to achieve, campaign and change bigger leader changes in government. Work on detail and what is needed in policy and be prepared for election change.
- Use time wisely: research and develop

an agenda which supports industrial action.

Upon reflection I found the message very powerful. It gave support to for delegates and union members alike to hold strong together.



## 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.**

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

#### Contact:

ADMIN PO Box 813,  
Wellington  
Telephone: (04) 499-2066  
Fax: (04) 471-0896  
admin@rmtunion.org.nz

# An appeal to save our assets



*Keep Our Assets attendees*

**Mark Wilson, Lyttelton branch secretary spoke to the Keep Our Assets conference.**

**G**OOD EVENING, I'm Mark Wilson, a stevedore from the Lyttelton Port Company. I'm also the branch secretary of the Rail Maritime and Transport Union of Lyttelton. Together with the Lyttelton Branch of the Maritime Union, we have almost all of the workers on the wharf, in the workshops, or on the water in our Unions.

Tonight, I'd like to focus on who we are, what we have done and what we do well. I'll leave the privatisation case studies for another day, but let me say all of our members are aware of what any type of privatisation brings – a compromise to worker health and safety, decreased wages, profits go offshore, infrastructure get run down and the environment is degraded.

There are plenty of such examples online. You could start with NZ railways, Air NZ, or any other state owned or council owned piece of infrastructure, but there are a number of ports in there too.

The RMTU or its previous iterations, has been on the Lyttelton wharf protecting workers' rights since the 1930s. There are generations of stevedores intertwined with the port and the union and within many families around Lyttelton and through the tunnel. For some it's in their blood, and unfortunately everyone knows a brother, a father, a friend, or a work mate who didn't make it home – most know more than one.

**Well, I'm happy to speak the truth. We have nothing to hide, and it's very clear what our objective is: Getting our members home safely, ensuring they are compensated fairly for their work, and keeping our Port in public hands.**

The wharf is an inherently dangerous place to work.

I remember I couldn't get a mortgage without life insurance when I told the bank I worked at the port. When things go wrong, you often don't get a second chance. However, you could be deceived by what you read in the newspapers. It seems the ports have headline appeal and so some things maybe brushed over to fill the narrative, and there certainly is a lot of storytelling and manipulation going on presently by all sorts of people who have a direct line to an eager pen-smith.

Well, I'm happy to speak the truth. We have nothing to hide, and it's very clear what our objective is: Getting our members home safely, ensuring they are compensated fairly for their work, and keeping our Port in public hands.

The Port works 24 hours, 7 days a week, 364 days a year, rain hail or shine. We bring the vessels in, we discharge them, we load them again, and repeat. We also store cargo and deliver to trucks and rail, we maintain pilot launch boats, tugs,

ship-lines vehicles, cranes, straddle carriers, container fork hoists, front-end loaders, bulldozers, a bucket wheel, a ship loading jet slinger and conveyor-belts. We operate, maintain, and repair them. The operation is large, it's constant and we deliver a safe, productive, sustainable and essential service to Canterbury, from the flash shops in Merivale to the supermarkets, from robotics to milk powder. We are the oil that keeps the Canterbury economy going – we are its infrastructure.

Reliable and dedicated, though some people may like to continue with very dated stereo types, we have kept the port running through COVID and other civil emergencies, such as the Canterbury's earthquakes. Aftershock upon aftershock occurred in Lyttelton - the epicentre – yet we came to work. Under a state of civil emergency, getting emergency supplies to Canterbury, operating cranes and straddles on damaged unstable land and broken wharfs - we did it. The CEO of the day received a performance bonus taking his pay to \$1.28 million for a number of years, yet we never saw him in



# George William Whyte

## 1941 - 2023

**F**AMILY, relatives, friends and workmates gathered at 1pm on Saturday 18 November to remember and farewell George Whyte.

The RMTU was formally represented at the service by past general secretary Wayne Butson, who, given their long association over many tough Tranz Rail years called George, and the Whyte whanau, friends.

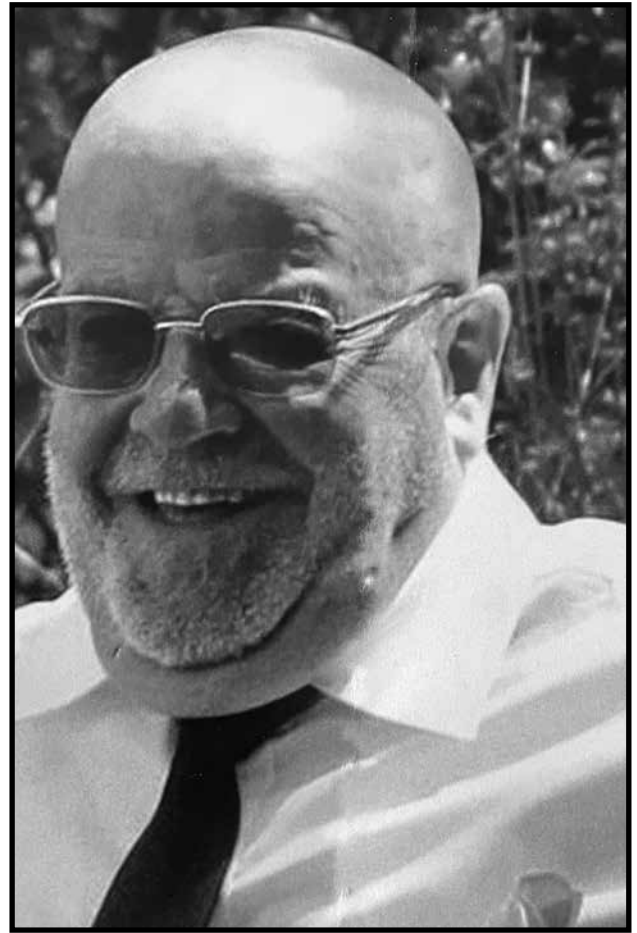
Particularly when George was a branch officer of the West Coast branch of the RMTU and the West Coast was under job attacks.

George joined the Union on 9/12/1962 and left on 9/12/2013 - after 51 years of loyal Union membership and service.

Shortbread, Belgian biscuits, birds, chain smoking and a wicked sense of humour were amongst the topics remembered at the service by speakers.

As Paul Corliss observed, George was a staunch advocate for his union mates and members, a skilled loco engineer and a "delightful" longstanding friend!

"Right away" and "guard aboard" was called and George departed from the funeral home to his final destination at Gladstone Memorial Park Cemetery where he was reunited with his life long love Elaine where they will lie together for eternity.



*George's coffin draped in an RMTU banner*

Lyttelton once. We just did our job.

And that's what's happening right now. The Port is working safely and efficiently, we are working, and the profit is coming back to the people of Christchurch.

Another thing happening is the ongoing focus of Lyttelton Port, to maintain, improve and protect the harbour and its environment and surrounding areas, through relationships with local community groups, iwi and residents of Lyttelton, coupled with action and a realistic expectation of sustainable and responsible growth.

Now you may wonder what the RMTU is

doing saying these things about the present management of LPC, aren't you supposed to have an adversarial relationship with them upstairs?

Well, we actually meet quite often and have a good working relationship and have committed to work together to deliver profit to Christchurch whilst making our work environment as safe as it can be.

Lyttelton Port has immense potential. We have been through some pretty tough times and have done well.

If allowed to continue to sustainably develop, the whole of Lyttelton Harbour is

going to become an even better place to live than it is presently. The fact that short term thinking can cloud long term aspirations and planning is unfortunately the cause of some of our city's big mistakes, as well as some plain stupid decisions being made nationally.

One would hope we start learning from our mistakes.

Don't sell infrastructure. You lose as soon as you do, and you'll never get it back.

Our Port is not for sale.

Our infrastructure is not for sale. 🌐

## NORTHLAND RAIL

### Giant slip among many tests resources in the north



*Giant slip testing resources*

**T**HERE'S movement on the Northland Auckland Line though not train movements – as yet. However, moving 35,000 cubic metres of earth from the one slip sight at Tahekeroa which covered roughly 400m of track is a good start. There are also still 110 moderately damaged sites and another 33 major sites to repair. Our hard working track teams

have already repaired more than 50km of cyclone damaged track with plenty more to come before the line is reopened sometime next year, the prediction is March but it's a 'wait and see' type of situation.

How about that pay rise? Job well done to the bargaining team for making that happen. I know there will be a few gangers around that will be happy to shout you

a drink for your efforts. And it looks like there's good news on the horizon for our brothers and sisters in the field engineering teams with efforts being made to find a place for them in the MECA, which is great news for anyone wanting to move up into an engineering role.

Stay safe and look out for each other.



## AUCKLAND RAIL

### Driver door operations has reared its head again under a new guise

#### Back to the future

**A**UCKLAND ONE RAIL (AOR), the company which won the Auckland metro network tender for running passenger trains in Tamaki Makaurau, have informed the RMTU they want to introduce a change to the EMU door operations known as a single stage door operation (SSDO). This is essentially driver door operations (DDO) – with a twist.

DDO came out of the 2018 dispute between Transdev Auckland (TDAK) and the RMTU. The original aim was to introduce DDO with the aim of cutting costs by

removing train managers from the most of the passenger services. The RMTU and its members fought hard to ensure this risky undertaking didn't occur and eventually DDO was shelved.

TDAK, Auckland Transport (AT) and the RMTU then engaged in a High Performance High Engagement (HPHE) process to look at the variety of possible ways to cut down dwell times – the time it takes when stopping at platforms to disgorge and take on passengers. This was referred to as 'the challenging issue'. The facilitated working group ran from April 2018 through until January 2022, during which the process

was slowed down because of the pandemic.

AOR, when taking over the tender, were required to continue any current agreements between the RMTU and TDAK. Now, AOR have withdrawn from the HPHE process and are seeking to enter into consultation with the RMTU over the introduction of SSDO. Under SSDO, the train manager would undertake the first platform pre-departure safety check and close all doors when it is safe to do so. The driver would then undertake the final platform pre-departure safety check and apply traction, utilising external side-mounted CCTV cameras and an in-cab monitor. AOR



are claiming the proposed modification - or SSDO – could save a possible ten seconds per platform stop and thus reduce journey times.

There are a number of concerns for the RMTU. First there is a real concern this proposal will compromise the health and safety of the public and AOR staff. A company cannot introduce change to the running of the Auckland Metro Network

unless it is as safe, or more safe, than what is currently in place.

Second, the RMTU believes this is a step towards removing train managers from the trains altogether. AOR is claiming this is not the case, however, we have already seen AOR cut jobs with the disestablishment of on-board supervisors and platform supervisors. The latter are key players in maintaining health and safety on the

country's busiest platforms in Britomart and Newmarket.

Third, there is no guarantee SSDO will cut dwell times.

The RMTU and AOR are currently in bargaining and the RMTU has brought SSDO into the bargaining process, looking to negotiate AOR back to the HPHE process. Watch this space. 🌐

## BAY OF PLENTY RAIL

### Introducing the branch's new secretary/treasurer

**M**Y name is Gustavo Oliveira (pictured) and I am the new treasurer/secretary for the Bay of Plenty rail branch. I took over the role from Christie Yule, and on behalf of all of us: a big thank you for all your services, support and hard work.

I am originally from Brazil and I have been working for KiwiRail for two years. I have recently been signed off as a locomotive engineer. I really



enjoy working for KiwiRail and being a locomotive engineer, it is a childhood dream of mine which I thought would never come true. But here I am and for that I feel very lucky, privileged and grateful.

I strongly believe a big part of what makes KiwiRail a great company to work for are the people who are quite simply great. Another big part is the support the

Union provides for us all, whanau included, for the benefit and well-being of the collective.

I will do my best in my new role to support and help our invaluable members as much as I can so we can keep having a good, safe and friendly place to work.

If there is anything I can help you with please feel free to contact me. It's a privilege to serve and represent you all.

We dream together and we grow together.

Gustavo Oliveira

rmtu.boprail@gmail.com 🌐

## HAWKE'S BAY RAIL

### Ormandville Viaduct continues to get special attention and care



*Ormandville Bridge.*

◀ **G**REETINGS all, from sunny Hawkes Bay.

The Napier branch welcomes Jamie Maki to the track team. Meanwhile the structure teams have been busy out of town giving the Ormondville Viaduct a massive, though albeit overdue, make over. The attached photo shows the south end of Viaduct where all the hardwood running beams are being replaced with new I-beams. Teams are gearing up to go on the first weekend of many block-of-lines, starting November 11.

The signals team have been involved in the rebuild out at the Awatoto Bridge

217, as well as completing reliability and equipment upgrades on CTC equipment and power supply gear.

Track teams have been putting in the hours over the winter and spring months, installing and repairing culverts and slips to make the Wairoa section of the PNGL safer.

Internally the teams here in Napier are working at completing jobs with no lost time injuries (LTIs) or accidents, along with trying to re-shape our safety mindset and culture.

Finally on Friday September 15, Bridge 217, which was severely damaged by Cy-

clone Gabrielle in Awatoto, was reopened by CEO Peter Reidy. The opening was attended in large by the staff, contractors and the Palmerston North teams who helped make the reopening possible and get freight moving on the PNGL again! 🇳🇿



## NAPIER PORT

### Hastings/Napier line now reinstated

**N**INE months have passed since Cyclone Gabriel wreaked havoc on Hawke's Bay, and while progress is being made, the region still faces significant challenges. Many residents are still waiting for insurance companies to settle their claims, and the allocation of land categories by councils and governments remains a pressing concern.

One of the critical areas affected by the aftermath of the cyclone is the transport industry - port and rail. Thankfully, due to the hard work from KiwiRail, the main line from Hastings to Napier has now been reinstated. Six dedicated RMTU members will continue to work at Port Otago until mid-December. Meanwhile, Napier Port's container volumes has suffered a setback due to the ongoing rebuilding of the Pan Pac ill, which sustained severe cyclone damage.

Undoubtedly, these are trying times for everyone involved in the transport and logistics sector in Hawke's Bay. The hope is things will begin to improve for the region soon. Everyone is eagerly awaiting government support for the clean-up efforts, although no one is overly optimistic, given the bureaucratic delays that often accompany such processes.

An employment freeze is still in place as a response to the reduced demand for services in the cyclone's wake. However, it is anticipated this freeze will be removed as business volumes gradually recover.

Despite the challenges, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon.

The resilience and determination of the people in Hawke's Bay are driving the region towards recovery. The community remains steadfast and determined to rebuild

what was lost and come back stronger than ever.

Additionally, there is a ray of optimism as the busy cruise ship season is about to commence. This brings an opportunity for the region to showcase its resilience and hospitality to visitors from around the world.

In conclusion, Hawke's Bay continues to face significant challenges.

The road to recovery is long, with ongoing concerns about insurance claims, land categories, and the rebuilding of essential infrastructure.

However, the spirit of the community remains undaunted, and there is hope that with time, support, and determination, Hawke's Bay will emerge from this challenging period even stronger than before. 🇳🇿

## PALMERSTON NORTH RAIL

### Mourning the loss of a quiet and valued colleague: Simon Stichbury

**L**AST time I wrote the branch notes, we were saying happy retirement to one of the gentlemen of the Palmerston North branch due to illness: LE Simon Stichbury. Unfortunately, it is with great sadness we must say farewell to Simon. His sunset arrived peacefully early on Tuesday 31 October 2023.

I had known Simon since I was a kid. He was my dad's fireman and I spent many a cab ride with them. He was always the quiet gentleman on the other side. I re-

member having a laugh with him last year while doing his last mainline observation, at how things had turned full circle, with my dad teaching him, him teaching me and then this – me doing his final mainline observation before his retirement. He had a love for cars and was the proud owner of one of the first Nissan Skylines. Over the last few years, when not at work he could often be found volunteering down at Esplanade Scenic Railway, where he enjoyed keeping the track tidy and participating in

events. He was and will forever be a very well-respected LE and I've never heard a bad word said about him. Simon sadly leaves behind his wife and three children. Simon you will be missed by many. Travel well our friend.

In other news, the EF saga continues, and the hope is to have the refurbished ones out within a month or so hauling tonnage and making money, with another one due up from Hutt Shops anytime soon. We hope all the testing and all the little issues ▶



were discovered. We will ensure the rest are put into service asap.

Staffing in the yard remains an issue, making it hard for staff to get leave. We are doing the best we can, and the company has an active recruiting programme in full swing. Hopefully the recent pay rises may inspire more staff to hang round – or join in.

Meanwhile in loco, we have our work cut out for us with 16 new LEs in training. Luckily, they are a good bunch and make our minders' lives reasonably easy.

The milk season is in full swing, it started with a few hiccups as was to be expected, due to the new tanks and pipe work in the loading bay. But all the issues seem to have been ironed out.

Currently our mechanical staff are going through a slight restructure with little consultation being given by management and due HPHE process being followed.

It would seem someone is trying to put their stamp on things with little respect to staff opinion. We hope that common sense prevails.

Unfortunately, our infrastructure crew have suffered some serious incidents lately with staff being injured, some seriously, which is of great concern to everyone. I implore all staff to please take your time and assess your situation properly before



(above) Simon Stichbury (right) with his whanau prior to leaving KiwiRail after 46 years' service.

(below) Members gathered at the Palmerston North depot after the service for Simon.



rushing in. Follow processes and if in doubt don't do it and don't be afraid to ask questions. Remember we also have the red card if you are being pressured to doing something you think is unsafe. Just say no! The Union will back you all the way.

With the festive season approaching, I think we are all hoping for tonnage to pick

up. Word on the street is that it may not, I guess we'll see!

Anyway, I hope you all get to spend some quality time with family and friends! From the Palmy Branch we wish you all an awesome Christmas and merry New Year!

Be safe! 🌐

## HUTT WORKSHOPS

### Recognising a good year for the workshop - with challenges ahead

**W**ELL here we are, we've got through another busy year and are looking forward to a two-week Christmas closedown to engage in some much-needed R&R.

The site has once again completed a large number of locomotive overhauls and 100s of rotatable' refurbishments, as well as staff sent around the country to assist other depots with their maintenance tasks. This is a magnificent achievement for our small, but skilled, workforce.

Another milestone was the renegotiation of the MECA for another two year term. The pay and conditions were entirely appropriate for the conditions we find ourselves in and credit must go to both parties (KR and RMTU) who got around the table and fleshed out an agreement in good time. That

speaks volumes for the industrial maturity we have attained over the years.

As you read these notes, we should be aware of the make-up of the new government and the identity of our shareholding ministers who will no doubt play a part in our future(s).

We are fortunate senior management representatives appear to have been ensuring the lines of communication with all major parties were kept open in order we get a fair go from the new government. Older hands will know that we've been a political football in times past and we need a fair chance to connect with, and grow, New Zealand. I also hope the occasional political appointments near the top do not negatively impact our direction as we progress along our journey in the pending

Above/Below Rail formats. At the time of writing the associated restructuring was still being worked-through. We look forward to the resulting structure and the challenges to make it work!

We have some good people on our team and we want to keep them with a steady hand on the tiller.

Another challenge before us all is the collective effort to address our safety culture. The Mirror Walk 'roadshow' finally came to Hutt in October and we quickly channelled our people through it to give them an appreciation of the task ahead. It was met with mixed reaction, which is normal when your audience comprises technical people who like to fix things (albeit with a hammer, ring spanner and a knob of grease). Our three work stream

representatives are Rob Gordon (WS-1), Kasia Kurene and Myles Carter (WS-4).

Continuing with safety, we hope our distant colleague who suffered a severe fall from height up country in October continues with his life-changing recovery.

At industrial council level we have Rob, Kasia and Myles on the mechanical council, with Myles also representing us on the administration council. The issues before those councils are many and varied. Some can be addressed quite quickly, but most are extensive and need time to be worked-through. We are grateful for the work carried out by all representatives on their respective councils.

Another on going topic is of leave. Over the decades, the labour union movement has put extensive effort into getting very good leave entitlements for everyone. Please ensure you use it well to enjoy the intended benefits.

We honoured our undertaking (actually our requirement) to hold our AGM in September. We had a few changes of committee mem-

bers however we retained a dedicated crew to carry on with the duties that come our way from time to time.

Team leader and other vacancies (including mechanical inventory) continue to be filled with only a handful outstanding at the time of writing (Nov).

A final farewell was given to one of our

more colourful characters: Kevin 'Doc' Watson (see photo attached) after an equated 41 years-service over two stints with the train company. We wish Doc well in his retirement.

Until next time, take care everybody and enjoy your Christmas break. 🇳🇿



*Kevin (Doc) Watson at his retirement function with Myles Carter.*

## WELLINGTON RAIL

### Staffing shortages continue to present problems to services.

**S**PRING has brought change to Wellington with ferry passengers having sailings cancelled and long delays with tightly packed ferries making school holiday travelling challenging. Change has also arrived with the new government in the process of getting itself established at the time of writing.

Transdev Wellington (TDV) have seen the arrival of transport officers on board the trains (warranted officers able to issue fines for fare evasion) and heat boards have been exploding onto the network like mushrooms.

Wellington Rail branch has some new executive members bringing fresh ideas and energy to the branch. Expect to hear

of branch meetings to be held soon at Wallaceville (train control facility) in November and Kaiwharawhara and Wellington Freight next year.

TDW members are still struggling with cancellations or reduction of services due to staffing shortages, an ongoing issue. Payroll concerns have been diminishing with an increased effort from both TDW and delegates. Expect to see payslip examples and "how to read" guides in staff amenities shortly.

The branch farewells Barry Weallans, Dave Poat, Mark Wolstenholme and Victor Hodgson who have retired in the last few months.

Metlink services have been running a

trial between Trentham and Upper Hutt utilising the bi-directional capabilities of the new infrastructure to try and alleviate some of the timetable constraints from running Wairarapa services past units at Upper Hutt.

It will be interesting to see how it goes. Passengers seem to have adapted to it fairly well so far.

The RMTU have run a survey gathering data from Auckland One Rail and KiwiRail LEs about how fatigue is seen and managed within their workplaces with some surprising results! TDW members can expect to see one show up in their inbox soon.

The cycleway between Melling and Petone stations has opened, more construction around the harbour is still ongoing



with islands and embankments growing along the foreshore.

Wellington Station has seen some changes coming with W1 road closed pending installation of new points and track realignment.

New traction pole foundations and

signalling equipment is being installed for upcoming network improvements and Plimmerton Station will undoubtedly see changes over the holiday with Block Of Line.

We hope you're able to take some time off for a well earned rest over the summer

and are able to recharge and spend time with those close to you.

For our colleagues who will be putting in the hard yards working over the holiday period and with the maintenance and upgrade of the network, stay safe, your mahi is much appreciated. 🌐

## NELSON PORT

### This round of bargaining proving to be contentious.

**H**ELLO from Sunny Nelson. It has been another busy few months for the branch and port here in Nelson. We have just started another round of bargaining. These yearly bargaining sessions are getting quite stressful and so we are hoping to be able to secure a two year deal which will be worthwhile. We thought we had an easy bargaining session coming up with only a few remits but it would seem (though many members guessed) that parts of the stevedore PPT roster and the remits which were agreed to be sorted during the last term, had not been done and have now being lumped into this round. Now we have discussions and confusion as to where the percentage for those remits sit.

The stevedore roster trial has been through one three month trial and is now

undergoing a six-week trial, having put into place newly tweaked ideas which came out of the first trial period. For the most part it seems most people are happy with the roster. It will take some time for everyone to slot into the new way of working until it becomes the norm.

The casuals, as always, are exploited and undervalued with fewer rights under the law. They have found themselves working a lot more to fit into the new roster system as there are not enough PPT workers to actually fulfil the requirements of how the roster would work when the required amount of PPTs are employed with contracts. They continue to work on call, at any time of the day and night and any day of the week, sometimes at short notice, even though we are constantly reminded it is our choice.

However, we do it mostly with a smile on our faces and a spring in our step.

The gate/security is undergoing discussions to set up fatigue risk guidelines, possibly the last area in the Port which desperately needs such work and proper guidelines to be adhered to.

Luckily we have other fatigue guidelines already set up so we can mostly go off of those and we have Karen Fletcher to throw ideas around as well.

Lastly, a massive thank you to all our delegates and the great work they do and all the newbies who stepped up to be a part of the delegate family at our last AGM. We will be getting some Delegate training in December to get everyone up to date!

In solidarity, comrades. 🌐

## CANTERBURY RAIL

### Concern about new Waltham yard. Is it fit for purpose?

**T**HE Canterbury rail branch has seen various changes happen around our depots – particularly with the approaching new Waltham super depot.

Most of our RSAS teams will be filling the depot but senior management has not, until recently, involved the guys on the ground with how the depot is going to be manned.

This has been the cause of a huge amount of uncertainty which shows serious poor decision making by certain managers.

Also with the new Waltham depot the CPAD has failed with its consultation around contractors doing rail work on site and having equipment there for our teams to do the work in a timely manner.

This is also causing issues.

Will the depot be fit for purpose or will there be a large amount of rework needed to accommodate all the work groups who are suppose to moving in there next year?

All this has been happening with RSAS senior management carrying out a restructure.

The good news, there will be a new super depot at Waltham next year at some point.

We are fast approaching the end of the year and the festive season so let's hope lots of our KiwiRail teams are allowed breaks during the Christmas period and can come back refreshed in the new year. 🌐



*Todd Valster (l) and Ian Stewart at the Canterbury Rail AGM after Ian was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for the many decades of supporting members. Ian retired after 51 years service.*

## WEST COAST RAIL

### Slip and derailling inside tunnel closes track for up to 10 weeks

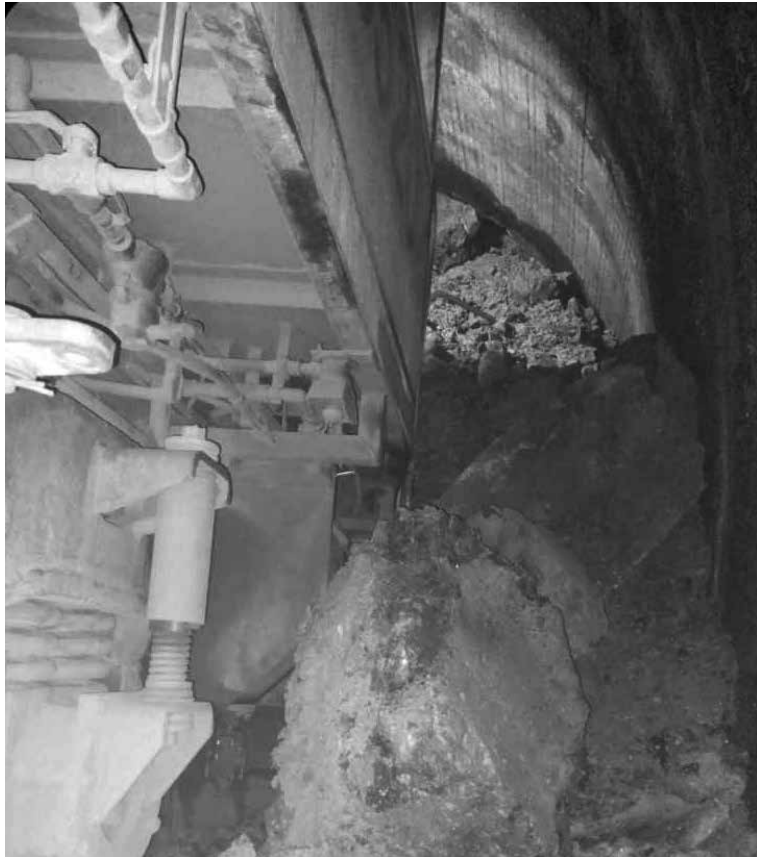
It has been busy times on the West Coast these last few months with staff shortages, slips and signal failures. In operations, shunters are struggling to keep things ticking over with a variety of staff absences and tight rostering coinciding with others on annual leave, leaving the only option in many cases, the good will of our members to help out.

In loco it's much the same, amplified with the retirement of stalwart Eric Crisp. While we have two trainees and more on the horizon we still have three or four senior LEs already over retirement age and our warnings of keeping the staffing levels up have gone unheeded.

As no doubt you will have already heard we had a significant event in the Buller Gorge with an empty coal train hitting a slip and derailling the lead loco inside a tunnel, no less. Fortunately there were no injuries though it has highlighted the need to review the procedures in this key part of the coal route. This will keep the track side busy with a timeline of 6-10 weeks to reopen, on top of other planned maintenance.

Signal faults have also raised questions about how we operate in some areas and the deferring of upgrades to signal systems, specifically on the Midland Line with one area now into more than a year of failure with no fix on the horizon.

In spite of all this our members keep on keeping on trying to get the job done as best they can and again I remind all of our members to stay safe, follow the rules and if you are not sure, just say NO. 🚧



*A ground view of the DX wedged in the blocked tunnel.*

## OTAGO RAIL

### Now is a vital time to promote local passenger rail.

THE general election results will be finalised by now, but at the time of writing special votes have just been counted, resulting in a slight loss for National and gains for Greens and Te Pati Maori. Essentially the same as election night result. So we will have three years or more of anti-worker and anti-community legislation and a scrap for any worthwhile funding on infrastructure and public transport. It is worth noting that the four MPs elected from the Dunedin area (none from National Party) are all in support of passenger rail returning to this region. A vital time to be organised and to articulate the need for a well resourced rail network.

At KiwiRail freight operations short staffing is still an issue, particularly in the shunt yard. Kudos to KiwiRail's recruitment

drive which is addressing this. And thanks to our members for stepping up to fill shifts and keep the customers' needs met. A reminder though, stay safe and rested as the hours are mounting up. Despite the employer's good recruitment efforts, the staffing issues would have been relieved somewhat if KiwiRail had retained the staff numbers at Balclutha over two years ago instead of flying in the face of the court ruling won by RMTU and if KiwiRail senior management had not told an outright lie regarding re-instatement following the Covid vaccine mandate being lifted. This behaviour makes it pretty difficult to trust the employer, despite all parties wanting good faith dealings.

Congratulations go to Dunedin-based LE Neil Williamson on becoming the South

Island LE KIC rep. Based on Neil's communications already following the election process, the SI LEs will be well served having their issues championed at national level. Well done Neil.

Dunedin Railways have a busy cruise ship season starting. Our branch is watching closely as owner Dunedin City Council considers its long term future after mid 2024, when a 2024 - 2034 long term plan will be enacted following consultation.

Also of interest at KiwiRail networks are rumours of Martinus NZ, a large and well resourced rail contractor already embedded in the north with KiwiRail and City Rail Link, is spreading its tentacles south. We are all aware of KiwiRail's commitment in the MECA to train and utilise their own people and equipment, and they should not

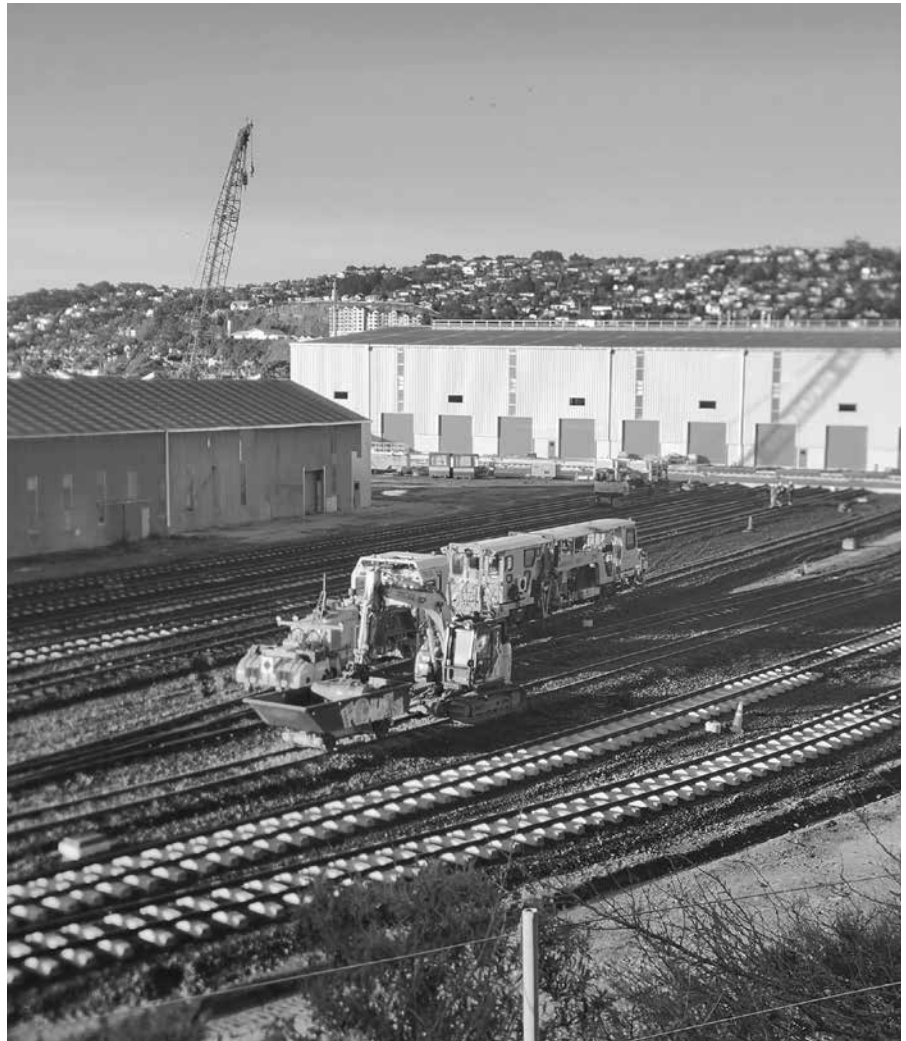


use the clause as a cop out to allow their in-house capability to be reduced any further (or not increased). Like other sectors, KiwiRail networks has an ageing workforce, the effect of which seems to come in waves, so it is important for the employer to plan well in advance to maintain and rejuvenate its skilled workforce.

Our RSAS members have been operating in two shifts at the loco depot while the Hillside site is nearing completion of the first replacement workshop, and KiwiRail is also recruiting for trades people and assembly workers to join them in 2024 to roll out new freight wagons as well as carrying out maintenance on locos and wagons from the brand new facility. An exciting time and something to build on!

To finish, a message repeated from our AGM earlier this year: We have quite a few new members of late and it is great to see a lot of interest in the workings of our Union with some taking on delegate roles. It is important we continually have new delegates step up, getting training and carrying out the work of our branch. This can range from keeping notice boards and info platforms updated and representing fellow members and lots in between. So please have a think about getting involved.

Stay safe out there, enjoy time with family and friends, and a very merry Xmas from Otago Rail Branch! 🌐



*New track being laid at the new Hillside Railway Workshops.*

## **SOUTHLAND RAIL**

### **Staff waiting on outcome of investigations following flooding**

**G**REETINGS to all members from sunny Invercargill where staff are anticipating the big decision on the Ohai Industrial Line as an engineering review is currently being carried out due to recent weather events causing damage to the line and some bridges.

The general consensus around the depots does not bode well.

For the last month we have trucks transporting coal containers from Invercargill CT site to the Bathurst mine, thus creating more carbon emission and further wear and tear to already poor condition highways.

It is a damn shame the line north of Makarewa is solely reliant on the coal from Nightcaps. As well as the current coal

contract, we really hope this is not a matter of sitting on hands. Maybe the company can try their absolute hardest to actively search and secure new business for a line of around 60km which passes through so much logging territory as well as other potential business ventures of western Southland.

'Mothballed' is a word which holds little promise of a future for this historic line, as has been proven time and time again for a once grand national network.

With the current low freight volumes, one does wonder if KiwiRail is being aggressive enough in their sales department in this area.

We also look forward to the new DM

locos making an appearance, as continually cancelling trains due to loco availability and staffing issues without providing special services must be making an impact on our customers.

On a lighter note, a big congratulations to Sai and his family on their new arrival. I'm sure she will keep an already busy household even busier!

Congratulations also to Vic Lavender for her new arrival. The HSAT looks forward to your top tier minute taking on your return.

We also see the resignation of Daniel Weatherall from the Invercargill Combined HSAT, and thank him for all his endeavours over the many years.

Stay safe out there. 🌐

# An ACC win!

Union wins cover for LE concerning Whole Body Vibration injury

**K**IWI RAIL loco engineer Warren (Rowdy) Robertson (pictured right) had pain and soreness in his neck for years before suffering a neck injury whilst putting up an awning on his caravan. An LE for 44 years, Rowdy operates the scenic passenger trains and freight in the upper South Island.

After the pain and pins and needles down his arm didn't resolve, Rowdy's GP referred him to an orthopaedic surgeon. Scans revealed osteoarthritis – no soft tissue between the vertebrae – a condition which develops over time and is not related to a one-off incident.

Medical treatment included computed tomography (CT) guided injections. This was initially successful but unfortunately pain and stiffness in his neck returned. Rowdy noticed the pain was aggravated by rough riding conditions in the loco, particularly the "sideways movement of the train".

At this point ACC transferred the injury claim to KiwiRail's injury management provider Work Aon to manage it as a work injury. Unfortunately Work AON declined ACC cover saying the osteoarthritis was caused by degeneration (ageing) rather than an injury.

Rowdy sought advice from other LEs who had similar neck and back trouble. The sum of their advice was to contact the RMTU, where the Union's lawyer challenged Work Aon's decision and lodged a gradual process claim saying the injury was caused by rough riding in locos and whole-body vibration.

Specialist advice was sought from occupational medicine specialist David McBride, who said in his report the characteristics of Rowdy's work environment pointed to whole body vibration. He said it was difficult to find data relating to whole body vibration associated with cervical spinal degeneration, but referred instead to research into spinal degeneration of



helicopter pilots who had a higher proportion of osteoarthritic changes in their neck. McBride said rotary wing aircraft (helicopters) have a remarkably similar vibration exposure profile to locomotives.

In his opinion, the injury was caused by cumulative exposure to shock vibration, accounting for the gradual changes over time.

Following the specialist report, Work Aon accepted the gradual process argument.

Rowdy says he now has peace of mind knowing if his neck injury flares up again it will be covered by ACC and he will be able to access medical treatment and ACC down the track, if he needs it.

He is really grateful to the Union for organising his legal support. In addition, he is grateful for the support of the New Zealand Railways Welfare Trust who contributed to the cost of CT-guided injections in his neck after ACC declined cover.

Rowdy has also been given exercises by a physiotherapist to help ease the pain in his neck and is always careful with his posture when operating the loco.

He knows of retired LEs with neck and back problems and wonders if their problems may have also been caused by whole body vibration. He encourages them to reach out to the RMTU for support accessing ACC.

The RMTU encourages LEs to write up locomotive faults, such as vibration, in the 54D book as they occur, so mechanical staff can measure the vibration and mitigate its cause. Additionally, the record remains a handy reference for the future.

Rowdy said it was a long process to get ACC cover and he's happy to share his experience with any members wanting to know more about it. 🌐

Contact him at:  
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