

Speaking notes - Hearing Stream 6
Ms Michelle Grinlinton Hancock

1. Wairarapa Line, Melling Branch and Gracefield Branch all traverse Lower Hutt. There are approximately 670 trains per week on the Wairarapa Line, a further 115 trains per week on the Melling Line (when operational), and an additional 60 commuter trains per week serving the Wairarapa.
2. Growth in these lines is expected over the life of the Proposed Plan. KiwiRail seeks to protect its ability to operate, maintain and upgrade these lines into the future.
3. KiwiRail seeks a 5m setback for all new buildings from the rail designation boundary in all zones. The setback applies to new developments only, not existing buildings.
4. KiwiRail's experience is that there is a lack of situational awareness about the safety risks of operations within the rail corridor. KiwiRail keeps a record of near misses and incidents on the rail network, and the unfortunate reality is that near misses and incidents are not uncommon.
5. Data for the last 10 years shows more than 160 near misses with a person / trespasser (not related to level crossings) in the Lower Hutt District. These near miss events must be considered from a locomotive engineer's point of view where evasive action needs to be taken up to 800m away. The locomotive engineer does not understand a person's reason for trespass. All they know is that there's a potential for an incident and they need to take evasive action, which is limited to applying the brakes. The 160 near miss events don't show the true extent of trespass into the rail corridor – they only reflect the ones where evasive action has needed to be taken by the locomotive engineer.
6. I have personally traversed the rail line from Wellington to Upper Hutt and I was astonished by the number of trespass incidents just in that short ride. These are low probability, but high consequence events – the rail corridor and trains are unforgiving, and the consequences can result in fatalities.
7. The setback's primary function is a safety buffer. It protects the safety of the corridor and of people living and working next to it.
8. If the line is fouled or visibility is obstructed for any reason, then what is required is the slowing of the train and potentially the application of emergency brakes, stopping until clearance is given by train control. This can mean trains are held at stations, which has a domino effect on all trains running at that time in the line, and the wider network. It can take up to a kilometre for a train to stop depending on its speed (generally running at about 80 km/h).
9. We have carefully considered the options available to us to address this very real safety risk and in my view the 5m setback approach is both reasonable and pragmatic.