



RTBU

transport **NOW**

THE NATIONAL
MEMBER
NEWSLETTER

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RAIL, TRAM &
BUS UNION

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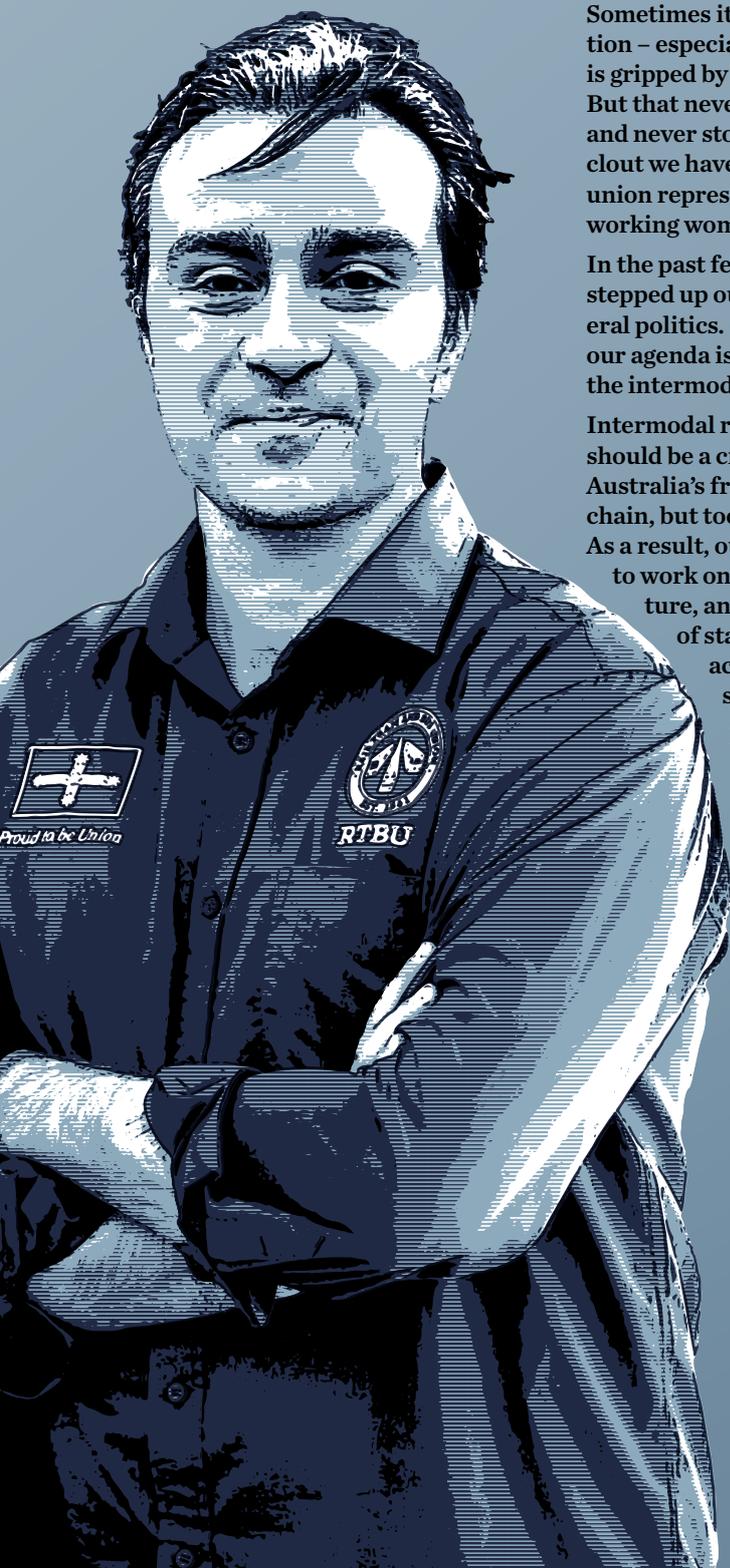
THE BUS HAS BEEN STOPPED



**Campaign by workers
forces Prime Minister
to abandon majority
of industrial relations
'omnibus' bill.**

Just a sec!

Our Union has always had a strong presence in the Federal Parliament. The high point was when one of our own, Ben Chifley, became the nation's Prime Minister. Since then, we have sought to ensure the needs of rail, tram and bus workers are always taken into account by Federal politicians of all stripes.



Sometimes it's hard to get their attention – especially when the parliament is gripped by scandal and controversy. But that never stops us from trying, and never stops us from using the clout we have as a national all-grades union representing over 30,000 working women and men.

In the past few months we have stepped up our engagement with Federal politics. One of the key issues on our agenda is to secure the future of the intermodal rail freight sector.

Intermodal rail freight services should be a critical component of Australia's freight transport supply chain, but too often it's overlooked. As a result, our members are having to work on substandard infrastructure, and under a mish-mash of state-based regulations, access regimes and safety standards.

Increasingly, rail operators are having to compete on uneven playing field against foreign cargo ships that don't pay Australian taxes or employ Australian workers.

In the short term, our priority is to make sure this situation

doesn't get any worse. Last year a Federal Government discussion paper proposed a range of changes to coastal shipping laws that would make it easier for foreign shippers to take work away from domestic rail operators. In response, the RTBU launched the *Keep Freight on Aussie Trains* campaign to protect jobs in intermodal rail freight sector.

But in the medium to longer-term, we need to do much more than simply protect our patch. That's why the RTBU has been lobbying for a national Rail Freight Industry Plan that would enable rail to carry a significantly greater share of national freight task, and employ more Australians.

Just last week we had a major win in this regard, with our proposal for a comprehensive review of the rail freight sector being included in the ALP National Platform for the next Federal election.

Of course, a commitment for a plan is just the very start, but it is telling that politicians are now starting to wake up to the issues in our industries. We *are* being heard.

Increasingly, rail operators are having to compete on uneven playing field against foreign cargo ships that don't pay Australian taxes or employ Australian workers.



All stops

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From page 1

Workers stop the bus!

Scott Morrison's so-called Industrial Relations Omnibus bill has fallen apart, after five of the six elements of the bill were rejected by the Senate.

The only section of the bill to pass relates to casuals. It inserts a statutory definition of 'casual employee' into the FW Act and allows Courts to offset casual loading paid against any amount being claimed by an employee when they have permanent entitlements. It also includes a casual conversion entitlement in the National Employment Standards.

RTBU members were at the forefront of efforts to convince Senators to reject the Omnibus bill. The union also contributed to the high-profile 'Stop the Bus' campaign, which saw a series of hard-hitting advertisements screened on commercial TV and across social media platforms.

National Secretary Mark Diamond said the Omnibus bill was a blatant attack on the rights of working Australians.

"The Omnibus bill would have made it even harder for Australian workers to negotiate fair pay and conditions.

"Everyone who participated in this campaign should be proud. We stood up for our rights, and we won. We stopped the bus."



Follow that train of thought. There's more to say after RUOK?

Most of us spend a lot of time worrying about our physical health, but sadly we often tend to neglect our personal mental health.

The RTBU has been working with the TRACKSAFE Foundation to raise awareness of mental health issues and encourage people to seek support when they need it.

The annual Rail R U OK? Day will take place on Thursday 29 April, and National Secretary Mark Diamond says this year's focus is on helping people to respond appropriately when a workmate says they're not OK.

"You don't have to be an expert to keep the conversation moving when someone says they're not OK," Mark said.

"By knowing what to say you can help a workmate feel supported and access



appropriate help long before they're in crisis, which can make a really positive difference to their life."

MAROONED: THE PLAY

Meanwhile, a powerful suicide prevention play, *Marooned*, recently played to packed crowds in Sydney - with support from the RTBU. *Marooned* was written and produced by former Melbourne tram driver Michael Gray Griffith.

HELP IS ALWAYS AVAILABLE

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, reach out to a trusted healthcare professional or call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

If you are concerned for your safety or the safety of others, seek immediate assistance by calling Triple Zero (000).

Rail R U OK?Day | 29 April 2021

If someone says they're not OK, follow that train of thought and keep the conversation moving. By listening, encouraging action and checking in you can help a workmate feel supported through all life's ups and downs.

Find more tips to keep the conversation moving at www.ruok.org.au



They've said they're not OK.

I'll help them open up by asking:



Follow that train of thought. There's more to say after R U OK?

Rail R U OK?Day | 29 April 2021





Bardo steps off the footplate after a lifetime of advocacy

After 40 years as a unionist, Allan 'Bardo' Barden is hanging up his boots and moving on to the next chapter of his life.

He leaves huge shoes to fill:

- » the youngest (and last) National Secretary of the AFULE;
- » ten years RTBU Assistant National Secretary (Locomotive);
- » seven years as NSW Locomotive Division Secretary;
- » three years as National Secretary; and
- » another eight years as Assistant National Secretary.

Allan has seen the union through amalgamations, privatisations, and bitter disputes. Through it all, he's built a reputation as a steady hand who ensures the union always stays true to its values, and true to its central mission of improving the lives of its members.

THE HOLIDAY JOB THAT TURNED INTO A CAREER

It could have been a very different life – as the young 'Bardo' was actually planning for life as a bookkeeper.

"It was way back in the end of '77, beginning of '78, and I was doing an accountancy course in TAFE," Allan said.

"A few of my friends were in the railway industry at that time, and the TAFE closed for Christmas break, and my mates were saying just jump on the railways for a short time and get some money.

"So I went to the railways employment office and I said, "have you got anything of a station assistant or anything like that?"

"They said, 'No, not really, but we've got one for a trainee engineman.'

"I thought to myself, 'What in the hell is an engineman?'. But then I said, 'I'll give it a go, put me in for it.'

"So it was by pure accident, but once I got up on to the footplate, I loved it, so that sort of cemented my career choice to become a driver."

BARDO VERSUS NIFTY

The incident that set Allan on track to become full-time union official, however, occurred back in the 1980s, when he was driving suburban passenger trains and representing his colleagues as a Workplace Delegate.

"I was going through the Sydney underground, and I was noticing some of these people coming out of the underground - like track workers, but they weren't track workers," Allan said.

"They were dressed in these overalls, and they had helmets on - like a space-man! They'd go to a bin just outside the Sydney underground and dispose of everything that they were wearing, and then they'd walk away.

So it was by pure accident, but once I got up on to the footplate, I loved it, so that sort of cemented my career choice to become a driver.



"I needed to find out what was going on there, and eventually I discovered they were testing for asbestos.

"So I challenged management about it. They said, 'No, that's just general cleaning duties and no one needs to worry about it', which made me even more concerned.

"I talked to the executives in the union, and they were supportive of what I was doing, and we found out that through contacts that the asbestos was actually in the mortar between the bricks.

"Eventually management finally admitted that the entire underground was built using asbestos mortar, but they insisted that it was sealed and all okay. We said, 'Well, if it's all okay, why are these guys coming out in spacesuits?'

"They couldn't really answer that, so we said, 'You've got 48 hours to do something about it, or we're going to stop the trains going into the underground to protect the health and safety



of our members and the traveling public.’”

The issue completely blew up in the media, and it became a political crisis for the NSW Premier, the late Neville ‘Nifty’ Wran.

“Neville Wran was having a bit of holiday at the time, so he rushed back to Sydney,” Allan said. “He would have got there about 10 o’clock, with just two hours left before we were to commence the shutdown.

“They agreed to do was vacuum out the entire underground and then seal off all the brick work along the entire underground network. And they would do that during the night - every night. They would start commencing the seal off straight away.

“It was about 10 minutes to midnight when the deal was struck.”

The threat to stop driving trains through the underground forced the NSW Government to address a dangerous safety issue. It was also a transformative one for the young train driver who first blew the whistle on the asbestos risk.

“I thought, “We can do things, and we can get the government to do things. We can use our resources to get deals done.”

THE POWER OF UNION

Through his long career as a train driver and trade unionist, Allan’s commitment and enthusiasm for the cause have never waned. Now he’s keen to encourage a new generation of rail and public transport workers to stand up for the rights.

“I urge everyone who joins the rail, tram, and bus industries to become a member of the union, because the union is not an outside entity,” Allan said.

“It is you, me, all of us - working together for a common purpose.

“Whether that’s standing up for a workmate who’s being treated poorly, negotiating for better wages and conditions, fighting government policies through community protests, or even banding together to put a new government in power – we can do all of that when we’re united as one.”

📍 Top, Allan addresses the 2017 National Council, middle, Les Moffitt (Qld), Allan, Noel Morris (Qld) and Helen Alesana (AusSuper)

Best wishes to Ray & Reg

An accident involving an Aurizon freight train and truck near Kalgoorlie in February has highlighted concerns over the need to get freight back on the tracks in Western Australia.

It appears that a road train truck drove into the train’s path, resulting in the collision and the derailment of the locomotive.

The train’s two drivers, Ray and Reg, were seriously injured in the collision, with Ray still in hospital at the time of writing.

📍 Craig McKinley with cards for Ray and Reg.



WA Secretary Craig McKinley took two get-well cards to Kalgoorlie, where the drivers’ friends and workmates signed them, before returning them to the injured men.

As well as campaigning to get more freight back on rail, Craig said something needed to be done about the size and volume of road freight transport itself.

“They hit a fully laden ore truck that was pulling three trailers,” he said.

“As a union the RTBU wants to see something done about the size - the tonnage - of these trucks.”

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau is investigating the collision.

Freight Delegates urge polities to Keep Freight on Aussie Trains

The RTBU's *Keep Freight on Aussie Trains* campaign moved up a gear during March, with a group of Workplace Delegates from across the country meeting with Federal politicians in Canberra.

The delegation included Simon Crisp (Queensland), Brett Dawson (SA/NT), Jamie Smith (NSW), Greg Sweeney (Vic), and David Bell (WA) – along with National Vice President Leanne Homes and Executive Director Stewart Prins.

Simon said the aim of the trip was to raise awareness proposed changes to shipping laws that will make it easier for foreign-flagged ships to take business away from long-haul rail freight operators.

“We spoke to the politicians about the benefits of rail to local communities, and the need for a level playing field across the different freight modes,” Simon said.

“All the MPs that we spoke to were interested and engaged in the issues, and some admitted that they had not previously considered the impact that



📷 Clockwise from top: RTBU delegates present campaign stickers to Hon Catherine King MP, Andrew Giles MP and Terri Butler MP.

changes to shipping laws can have on other elements of our transport supply chains.”

Meetings were held with:

- » Shadow Minister for Transport Hon Catherine King MP (ALP);
- » Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water Terri Butler MP (ALP);

- » Shadow Minister for Cities and Urban Infrastructure Andrew Giles MP (ALP);
- » Leader of the Greens Adam Bandt MP (Greens);
- » Member for Kennedy Bob Katter MP (Independent); and
- » Member for Herbert Phillip Thompson MP (LNP).





The Member for O'Connor (covering Kalgoorlie) Rick Wilson MP also agreed to meet with the delegation but unfortunately was called away for parliamentary business at the last moment.

The Union has also met with Labor Senators Glenn Sterle, Carol Brown and Tony Sheldon, along with Greens Senator Janet Rice, to discuss the campaign and the future of intermodal freight.

📷 Clockwise from top: RTBU Delegates present campaign stickers to: Hon Bob Katter MP, Patrick Gorman MP, Phillip Thompson MP, and Adam Bandt MP.





BRANCH NEWS VIC

RTBU joins rally to demand better tram access



The Victorian Branch has vowed to ramp up its campaign for better disability access to Melbourne trams if funding for essential changes is not forthcoming in this year's Victorian state budget.

In a historic rally, Victorian Branch members were joined outside the State Library by Friends of the Earth Melbourne to throw their support behind the Disability Resources Centre (DRC) in its fight for a public transport system that works for everyone.

The city centre came to a standstill while speakers outlined their experiences of not being able to use Melbourne public transport.

"Members of our community have been waiting to catch a tram for several decades," said Kerri Cassidy from the Disability Resources Centre.

"When 85 per cent of services exclude people who require level access, it renders the whole network unavailable for them,"

Trams are an iconic part of Melbourne life, but a recent report handed down by the Victorian Auditor General found that despite targets set for full accessibility by 2022, only 15 per cent of services are accessible for those with disabilities. At this rate the Melbourne tram system will not be fully accessible until 2066.

Victorian Branch Secretary Luba Grigrovitch has demanded immediate action from government.

"Victoria's ageing tram fleet should have been replaced and expanded many years ago, but these setbacks must come to an end," Luba said.

"As our organisations come together, we invite all Victorians to demand better – united we won't be silenced."

Despite 40 years of talk about accessibility, commuters are still waiting for action and investment to upgrade tram stops and purchase long overdue low floor trams.

The RTBU and DRC are holding continuing talks with the Victorian State Government and the issue has been

highlighted in the Victorian Branch's budget submission.

"They can't meet their disability access targets until 2066, but we are saying they need to put a plan into place that will get us there," Luba said.

"In the interim the government must prioritise small, short-term changes that would make a world of difference for people in terms of basic upgrades.

"This campaign is only hotting up. If we can't get some funding in the next state budget will be holding discussions with the DRC about holding a much bigger tram stoppage."

Almost one in five Victorians have a disability, but 71 per cent of people with disabilities say they don't take public transport because of barriers to physical access.

Accessible transport is vital for a wide range of people - including wheelchair users, people with mobility impairments, families travelling with prams, and many older Australians.

📍 Above, the rally in the Melbourne CBD

Union puts unsafe train plan back in the siding

NSW rail workers have chalked up a major victory in their fight over inadequate staffing and major safety issues of the Berejiklian Government's trouble-plagued New Intercity Fleet (NIF) trains

A recent Fair Work Commission decision means the State Government must now get agreement from the RTBU before making any changes to the role of guards or drivers.

The RTBU has long argued that staffing changes demanded by the NSW State Government to operate the NIF will undermine public safety.

"It was a hard-fought battle. Now we finally have the written confirmation that NSW Trains cannot do this!" NSW Secretary Alex Claassens said.

Under the proposal guards were going to be replaced with "Customer Service Guards" who would have a much-reduced safety role. Drivers would have had to monitor safety on board and on platforms through CCTV cameras. Workers argued this would lead to increased safety risks, such as the risk of a passenger falling between a train and the platform without being noticed.

The Union took its case to the Fair Work Commission, which found the changes proposed by NSW Trains should be treated as extra claims under Clause 13 of the Enterprise Agreement.

"These changes involved alterations to the classifications, working arrangements and payments of employees," Alex said.



"The Commission found that NSW Trains can't implement its proposals unless it is done in accordance with Clause 12, which outlines the process for making changes to the Enterprise Agreement.

"This means NSW Trains cannot bring in the new classifications of Intercity Specialist Driver and Customer Service Guard unless there is an in-principle agreement with the RTBU."

The RTBU has been battling the State Government since 2016 over plans for the NIF.

Alex said the Fair Work Commission decision also meant the State Government would not be able to introduce the new trains, which cost \$2.4 billion and are made in South Korea, without coming to an agreement with the union first.

"This decision quite clearly says we were right and they were wrong ... so it's back to the negotiating table for them."

📷 Above, artist sketch of the New Intercity and, below, new Intercity Fleet D set. Photo: William Thorpe



State election puts rail front and centre

The newly re-elected McGowan Government in Western Australia is pushing ahead with plans to reopen up to 300km of Tier 3 rail lines.

The Western Australian Labor Party made the future of grain lines a key part of election pitch to regional voters. And after its thumping victory in the recent state election, voters will be expecting to see some action soon.

WA Branch Secretary Craig McKinley says the union has long campaigned to return some of these closed lines to service, and any restoration of the freight service will be “good social policy”.

“These wheatbelt lines were lines leased in about 2000, consolidated and closed down,” Craig said. “Freight was taken off rail and put on road transport. “Their closure came at a huge social cost with the worst road accident rates in Australian on roads where these lines are closed.”

Craig, who has been briefed on a Tier 3 engineering assessment sent to Infrastructure Australia, says the West Australian Government is confident the project will get Federal approval.

If so the project would involve a complete rebuild with new earthworks, bridges, culverts, concrete sleepers, heavy metal ballast and heavy rail, all to mainline standard.

Routes under investigation include Merredin to Kulin, Merredin to Narrogin via Corrigin (the union’s preferred option) and York to Quarrading. It is likely that 150 new wagons will be built with work sites at Narrogin and Merredin.

“Our position is that content and jobs should come from the wheatbelt where possible,” Craig said.

“The State Government needs to provide greater recognition of the WA freight sector in general.

“The fully-privatised rail system that carries the backbone of exports in this state is being left to totally fend for itself, yet it’s critical to the state’s export potential.”

Meanwhile the WA PTA Branch has welcomed the McGowan Government’s huge METRONET urban rail investment.

But Branch Secretary Josh Dekuyer said that while the nine separate METRONET projects, including the much anticipated Morley-Ellenbrook line, were great news, the union was concerned about how they would be staffed.

“The expansion of the rail network here in WA, through Metronet, is an excellent thing for Western Australians,” Josh said. “Our concern is staffing levels.

“It’s all very well to say we are going to open this or that line this year or



early next, but who are you manning it with?”

For example, Josh said, the Forrestfield-Airport Link would require about 50 transit officers, but WA transit officer numbers were already stretched.

“The system is growing faster than they can recruit, and retention is a concern in areas such as transit officers and infrastructure workers,” he said.

“We want to see the McGowan government commit, like they have with nurses and police, to bolster these areas of concern.”

Importantly the RTBU also wants these workers hired as state employees, not as labour-hire contractors.

“Our transit officers are doing a terrific job on the frontline and we need to ensure we continue to attract and retain more people into the rail industry, creating more jobs for Western Australians,” he said.

“Infrastructure’s labour hire is bleeding taxpayer’s pockets dry.

“The government needs to invest in the state’s directly employed infrastructure workers, and bring protection officers back in-house, all of which will save money and increase safety.”

📷 Above, WA Premier Mark McGowan and left, Calingiri railway station.





BRANCH  NEWS **QLD**

Clearing the way for more female bussies

The Queensland Tram & Bus Division has been distributing 'Activist Kits' specifically tailored to the needs of Brisbane's female bus drivers,

Queensland Tram and Bus Division Secretary Tom Brown said the kits are part of a campaign – which was launched on International Women's Day - to lift the number women drivers, improve their work facilities and encourage more women to join their union.

"The common issues that we hear about from women members are that there are simply not enough of them, and the poor standard of facilities they are forced to use when on the road," Tom said.

"Fewer than 10 per cent of drivers employed by Brisbane City council are women. The council's target is only 10.5 per cent and they can't even meet that.

"When we do recruit women the facilities out on the road are pretty poor for men and pretty pathetic for women,

and that means it's hard to retain women drivers as well.

"The package was a note of encouragement. The situation is that women need to get active if they want to improve things. More female drivers means better facilities."

The kits contain a booklet, *A Woman's Place Is In The Union*, which Tom said was almost a subtitle to the campaign.

"It basically tells women what their rights are and what the standards should be for their work facilities. It shows them step by step how to get more involved."

The kit also contains a newcomers' pack, which Tom said encouraged members to find someone not in the union and have a conversation about joining, plus RTBU gear including a voucher for a union-badged T-shirt.

RTBU Delegate and Brisbane bussie Wendy Irving said facilities were a key issue for female drivers.

"The facilities in the workplace mean you are using port-a-loos, which are the most disgusting things, and we are forced to share facilities with men,"

 Above, RRTBU members at the March4Justice rally in Brisbane.

Wendy said. The floors were often wet and dirty and totally unsuitable for women.

"We are continually trying to get our own facilities, where at least we can get a bit of clean comfort."

Wendy said she was fed up with the standard "give the ladies a morning tea and they'll be happy" approach, and the information pack was a better way to get to more members.

"Being in the RTBU you don't get to catch up with all the women at the same time. It's not like an office," she said.

"They are all out doing their job at different times so can't all be in one place. But we wanted all our women to be involved."

She said the kits had been a hit, with their information on the union plus small gifts such as RTBU-badged nail files, mirrors, a tote bag and T-shirt.

"They are just little things women can use every day, to say we appreciate everything you do. People at my depot loved them."

At the time of writing the packs were still going out, but Tom said they have been an immediate success.

"One delegate tells me in her depot of 25 members, 17 have been handed out and she has already gotten back several shirt vouchers, and a new member has signed up," Tom said.

State Government late for the bus on overcrowding

Two's company, 40's a crowd, but the numbers hoping to ride Tasmania's buses are far more than that.

Media reports surfaced earlier this year of Hobart school children packed aboard buses, and in some cases being left behind, due to inadequate service capacity.

The reports detailed parents', students' and community groups' safety fears and were accompanied by images of young passengers crammed in buses, including a large number standing and holding on to rails.

There were claims by state government officials that the issue was due to back-to-school teething problems, but Tasmanian Tram & Bus Division Secretary Jody Nichols dismisses that. "It's always been a problem, on every trip,

on school buses and regular services too," Jody said.

"Hobart Metro says it always happens at the start of the school year and settles down, but I've been doing this for 30 years and it hasn't settled down."

Jody says the problem happens around the state, in centres such Launceston and Burnie, but it's worst in the state's capital.

"It's on school buses where we are leaving kids behind one; it's on (regular) service buses where people could be waiting as two or three buses go past as we can't fit them in as the buses are overloaded," Jody said.

"One person I picked up recently had missed four passing buses as they couldn't fit him in.

"Kids are being left behind, as we won't overload. Every bus has a limit to what is safe and allowable, and if we get to that limit we have to tell the school we can't fit more on."

He says in those cases the Metro has to find a spare bus to pick them up.

Jody says the RTBU has been putting pressure on the Tasmanian Government, and in some recent cases extra buses have been called in on some runs. But there are simply not enough buses.

"The State Government needs to spend more money, we need more buses and drivers," he said. "Metro doesn't dictate how many buses we have, that's dictated by the government.

"The government had to approve the recent re-allocation of a bus being taken from a back-up service run to be used as a dedicated school run.

"But all you are doing there is moving the chess pieces around."

STOP PRESS:

The Tasmanian Government has called a State Election for 1 May 2021. The RTBU will be campaigning for more resources to be put into public transport services.



📷 Above, News clipping from *The Mercury* newspaper, and left, a Metro Tasmania bus in Hobart.

Privatisation fight will go all the way to the South Australian election

The RTBU has vowed fight the South Australian Government's continued privatisation push all the way to next year's March state election.

RTBU SA/NT Secretary Darren Phillips said the Marshall government was intent on selling off even more public assets, with its rushed rail privatisation scheme just the beginning.

"The RTBU will campaigning all the way up to the next election," Darren said.

"This government is intent on privatising anything they can get their hands on. Rail was just the start with everything else - including roads and even hospital maintenance - next."

Darren said rail outsourcing continued to be plagued by staffing equipment and uniform issues.

Ahead of the January privatization, Transport Minister Corey Wingard admitted to a huge shortfall in staffing at the new rail operator, Keolis Downer, but insisted his government would not delay its rushed timetable.

Since then the new operator has struggled to find enough workers to keep the Adelaide network operating.

"There are not enough staff to fill all their positions. For example, Keolis

Downer needed 174 Train Drivers, but only 70 went across to the new operator," Darren said.

"The government has had to step in and act as a virtual labour-hire firm while Keolis Downer trains its own staff."

This government is intent on privatising anything they can get their hands on.

The problem, he said, would be ongoing, with four batches of train drivers still being trained between now and November next year, after which rail existing staff would be free to be redeployed elsewhere in SA Government roles.

The latest staffing issues follow an earlier RTBU win where the Rail

Commissioner failed to overturn a Fair Work Commission decision regarding redeployment, retraining and redundancy conditions.

The decision confirmed that rail workers could not be arbitrarily made redundant after 12 months if they had not been offered a suitable position in the public sector.

Darren said at the time that the Rail Commissioner's appeal had "exposed the real reason behind the Marshall Government's privatisation agenda: to put more South Australians out of work".

The RTBU has long said privatisation would eventually lead to a reduction of 132 jobs on the rail network, affecting local workers, their families and their communities.

The South Australian Labor Opposition has vowed to reverse the latest round of public transport outsourcing if it wins the next election.

📍 Workers at an anti-privatisation rally in Adelaide.

