

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
Minister for Transport
Leader of the House

Level 10, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart TAS 7000
GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001
Phone: 03 6165 9405 | Email: Minister.Abetz@dpac.tas.gov.au



Meg Brown MP
Member for Franklin
Email: laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au

19 MAR 2025

Dear Ms Brown

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 4 March 2025 in Parliament, regarding public transport management.

As I have raised in Parliament before, there is a national heavy vehicle driver shortage of approximately 25,000. Unfortunately, Metro is no different to others in the transport industry where recruitment and retention of bus operators continues to be a challenge.

Metro has a broad approach to recruitment and retention, aiming to attract, engage and retain staff by improving the overall employee experience through addressing key touchpoints in the employee lifecycle. Metro also aims to improve recruitment and retention through strengthening the employee value proposition to better align with employee expectations and market trends through focusing on wellbeing and engagement activities.

Metro has also put in several measures to assist retention of bus operators. Efforts include increasing wages, developing a comprehensive health and wellbeing strategy, focusing on safety including actions directed at anti-social behaviour, and continuing the journey of focusing on learning and development for its people.

The Tasmanian Government is pleased to support Metro in its efforts to recruit and retain drivers and has committed \$14.1 million over four years in this year's State Budget to support the ongoing provision of services. That is in addition to our \$8.1 million package in late 2023 to increase driver wages, introduce safety measures, support rostering, and to make timetabling improvements.

Metro's new Bus Operator Enterprise Agreement was finalised by Fair Work Australia in February 2025. This agreement includes wage increases of 13.5 per cent 3.5 per cent and 3.5 per cent over three years. It also included a \$500 sign on bonus on a "yes" vote. This new agreement has put Metro's drivers in a highly competitive position within the market.

I'm advised that 90 per cent of Metro's Bus Operators participated in the vote, with 91 per cent voting in favour of the agreement. This decisive result is a strong statement of support.

Pleasingly, this work is starting to see results and Metro has now restored its first tranche of suspended trips. In November 2024, Metro returned 26 trips Monday to Thursday and 25 on a Friday, or about 15 per cent of suspended services.

Regarding network planning and route management, this is the responsibility of the Department of State Growth.

Greater Hobart has changed since the current urban network was introduced in 2016 and will change even more over the coming years. That is why our Government committed \$15 million over four years at the 2024 election to expand bus services to growing communities and schools.

We have also tasked the Department of State Growth with fast-tracking its review of the Greater Hobart bus network in response to driver shortages and service reliability issues. The review will deliver updated public routes and timetables that are more reliable, improve access to jobs and amenities, and make better use of available funding to benefit the most people.

The review will be guided by extensive public and stakeholder consultation, as well as historic customer feedback, data sources like school enrolments and census, and principles like aligning services to need and demand.

The Department and its consultant will undertake the review in two phases:

- Phase one – focussing on timetable adjustments to restore reliability – will be completed by mid-2025 and implemented over the following six to nine months
- Phase two – a more in-depth route and timetable redesign – will be completed in December 2025 followed by an implementation phase to be determined.

You can stay up-to-date with this project via www.transport.tas.gov.au/public_transport/projects

Regarding dedicated school services, the Department works closely with the Department of Education, Children and Young People and bus operators to match services with enrolment numbers and patterns as far as is reasonably practicable. For example, the Department has expanded school bus services in 2025 in response to growing demand to:

- introduce a new service from Spring Farm/Whitewater Estate to Kingston High School and Kingston Primary School
- introduce a new trial service to cater to the new Legana Primary School
- vary existing school bus services to cater to the new Brighton High School
- extend the Ellendale to Westerway school bus service to commence at Ouse
- adjust Taroona High School bus services going to South Hobart.

Thank you for raising these matters in Parliament, I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Abetz', written in a cursive style.

Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Transport