

The Hon Eric Abetz MP
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Minister for Transport
Leader of the House

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Ms Helen Burnet MP
Member for Clark

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Email: laura.ross@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Burnet 

Thank you for your constituent question asked on 15 May 2024 in Parliament, regarding Metro Tasmania's temporary service adjustment.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that the reliability of the public transport network and access to services is of key importance to commuters.

With record low unemployment, public transport providers and heavy vehicle operators across Australia are reporting difficulties associated with attracting and retaining drivers. I understand the driver shortage to the transport industry is estimated to be 25 000 and this has also impacted our largest Tasmanian-owned public transport provider, Metro.

In 2023, Metro took the difficult step to suspended some of its less frequented services across Greater Hobart, while maintaining its more popular services to reduce daily unexpected, cancelled trips. Importantly, dedicated school services remain unaffected, and Metro continues to protect and prioritise high demand general access services.

Metro advises that the adjustments have allowed customers to better plan their travel with greater levels of confidence based on the updated timetables that reflect the temporary service adjustments.

Metro continues to take steps to address the driver shortage and implement longer-term measures to recruit and retain bus operators as they progressively restore services. This includes actively recruiting new staff via online ads, targeted recruitment campaigns in specific locations and through partnerships including the Glenorchy Jobs Hub and not for profit employment organisations such as BEST employment.

In addition to recruitment activities, Metro's retention strategies include dedicated and targeted driver assessments, coaching and mentoring, and health and wellbeing programs for bus operators.

The Tasmanian Government has also provided an \$8.1 million support package to help Metro overcome its driver shortage and restore full-service delivery. Funding covers a range of initiatives including personal safety, a pay rise and more attractive rosters to recruit and retain bus drivers.

The timeframe for reintroducing services will depend on the outcomes of Metro's recruitment and retention efforts. Metro has recently reviewed the service adjustment and determined that a staged approach to restoring services will be implemented as staffing permits. This will allow Metro to further stabilise its workforce and provide certainty for customers at a time when the labour market is extremely challenging.

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

Yours sincerely

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

Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Transport