



Rail, Tram & Bus Union

Tram and Bus Division NSW Branch

5th March 2021

Dear Member,

On Monday you will have the opportunity to vote 'yes' or 'no' to the Award that will go with you through the transition to a new operator. This Award will be the base line for your working conditions and entitlements when we negotiate an Enterprise Agreement with your new employer. It is a good starting point for negotiations, but it is not perfect as an STA Award.

It is true that Bus Operators have been offered a tiny 0.3% pay-rise, along with almost 500,000 NSW public sector and service employees, from rail workers and nurses to teachers and emergency workers. This came after the Government tried to freeze wages entirely (no pay increase at all!). The 0.3% is the result of a legal decision by the Industrial Relations Commission who decided 0.3% was better! It is a complete slap in the face, and when you add inflation to the mix, we are going backwards.

The first thing the RTBU did was to look at options to fight this. Now, with privatisation getting closer and so much uncertainty, most members have told us they are more interested in working to keep the conditions we already have – and that they will not take or support industrial action over this.

But the pay offer is only part of the picture. We have entitlements that are NOT in our Award. The relationship between the RTBU and STA has meant that everyone knew what we had and how things worked. The problem now is that the STA is not going to be the employer. Because of this, our focus in this Award negotiation was to have the entitlements that are in STA policy, included in the Award.

The work to secure our entitlements begins with this Award but it is only the first step. The second step is negotiating with the new employer to replace the Award, and to get the entitlements that the government will not give us now, **including a better pay rise**, into the new Agreement. The government has made it clear that they will not accept any more changes to the Award than the ones you are voting on. If we don't accept the offer and take a dispute to the Industrial Relations Commission, the Government will fight us and they can withdraw everything we have won in this negotiation. Also remember, it was the Industrial Relations Commission who gave us only 0.3% in the first place.

Some very important things ARE included in the offer, like the STA definition of a Shift Worker. This is why we have 5 weeks annual leave with leave loading. No other bus drivers in NSW have 5 weeks annual leave and the loading attached to it. If you do the math on that entitlement alone, it is worth far more than 0.3%.

Australian Rail, Tram & Bus Industry Union *Tram and Bus Division*

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Also remember that when we are making that second step, negotiating with a new operator, we will be seeking to put in proper pay rises equal to, or better than, our usual 2.5%. How hard we have to fight depends on who gets the contract. Some companies see their employees as nothing but replaceable things that cost them money. Some companies see that if they treat their staff well, they get better performance from people and that saves them money in the long run. Whoever it is, they will be wanting the business to transfer across smoothly and that gives us bargaining power.

Some people are pushing a 'No' vote, but they have not been involved in the negotiations and are speaking without the knowledge that comes with that. Ultimately people will vote as they choose, but everyone must understand that what we have won can easily be lost, including the 5 weeks annual leave. In the current situation, with the whole public service being hit with a 0.3% pay-rise offer, the Government has made it clear there is no chance of getting anything better.

In Solidarity,

Tram and Bus Divisional Secretary and President