

**Submission
No 79**

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

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As a bus operator with State Transit Authority (STA), I was sold by the NSW government as chattel to Transit Systems Australia (TSA) with no severance pay, just a new uniform. At the first "coffee club" meeting conducted by General Manager Len Kidd, he boldly stated "Nothing will change".

The first thing that TSA did was re-write the rosters, displacing long standing "legacy" drivers from the more lucrative (penalty-laden) rosters and replacing them with newly employed, cheaper drivers. Equally galling, TSA shaved running times and layover times and meal times. This resulted in the first half of many straight shifts finishing so far into the already shortened meal time, that a crib break had to be paid. Morale began to fall as we realized what privatisation was beginning to mean to the worker at the coalface. At the next opportunity meal times were snapped back and running times were relaxed. So much for the corporates knowing how to do it better.

At the first Easter Saturday of TSA employment, we were not paid the public holiday. My understanding is that this dispute went to three courts before TSA paid it; by then we were due two Easter Saturdays, and morale had slipped further.

TSA attempted to bring in a new annual holiday scheme whereby flexibility for the workers was jettisoned for bureaucratic simplicity for the administration. A scheme already rejected in State Transit days, it was reintroduced by Jamie Sinclair who had championed it at STA. It would have forced drivers into a rotating annual leave window, which advanced one month each year. It was a diplomatic disaster, further eroding morale.

As the court cases built up, and judge after judge made unfavourable comments about there being two unions in the one workplace, it became apparent that the new employees - those who had never worked for STA, only TSA, were being paid less, had less annual leave, and were becoming generally disgruntled that their lot was not as "rosy" as that of the legacy (ex-STA) drivers. Morale was dipping before our very eyes.

Now, after another roster re-write, many drivers are rostered to spend their meal break at another depot, damaging those drivers' work/life experience by limiting their time with peers. Now also, despite hosting their own BBQ at Leichhardt last XMas, TSA has refused permission for any depot to have BBQs due to Covid19 social distancing protocols.

This is not to forget the removal of bus stops, the re-routing of popular routes (389, for example), the changeover of drivers at ridiculous times (at 5:38 in the morning, for example), all of which effect the long suffering public transport user.

A public utility is not meant to make a profit, its meant to provide a service at taxpayers' expense to the public at large. A private company - family owned to boot - cannot increase profits within their contract with the government without disadvantaging the workers, the ones they laud as the face of the company, the coal face of the business.

Privatisation has led we the workers to no longer feel but rather know, that we are valued less than the furniture, mere expendable "units". Costs are cut at our expense. I submit that

neither the workers involved in this industry, nor the travelling public, have been well served by privatisation.

Thank you

Sam Tierney