

## Emergency buttons on new trains answered by call centre: union slams safety risk

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# MEDIA RELEASE



Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) NSW has slammed the unsafe operating model of new regional trains, revealing the emergency call buttons on the imported New Intercity Fleet will connect commuters on regional trains to a Sydney call centre, rather than an on-board guard equipped to respond immediately.

Commuters seeking urgent help on intercity trains must first go through a call centre monitoring 55 trains and 550 carriages. These Customer Service Coordinators are also tasked with providing information to commuters, crew and drivers, as well as managing on-board announcements.

RTBU NSW Secretary Alex Claassens says in an emergency, commuters need and expect a direct line to staff on the train, rather than being forced to go through a customer service call centre that is juggling all trains on the network as well as non-urgent inquiries.

“This operating model which responds to emergencies by triaging commuters through a customer service centre is simply unacceptable, both to the travelling public and the workers who are tasked with keeping them safe,” says Mr Claassens.

“This is part of an attempt by Transport for NSW to remove safety responsibilities from guards on trains, replacing them with customer service roles that have a lower classification reflective of their reduced role.

“Safety responsibilities are instead being transferred to drivers, who are expected to monitor the platform via dozens of tiny CCTV screens – all while trying to drive the train. It only takes a heartbeat for a child to slip through the gap.

“Making drivers responsible for monitoring passenger safety is equivalent to expecting pilots to perform safety demonstrations on planes: dangerous and absurd. Drivers already have a job, and it requires their full attention.

“While the NSW Government maintains guards will still be present, in effect these staff will no longer be guards, and these flawed trains prevent them from properly watching the platform for distressed commuters.

“The NSW Government must put commuter safety first. It must fix these flawed imported trains that are not suitable for our network and ensure they are properly staffed by workers who are equipped to keep the public safe.”