

Media Release: On-demand transport could be a stepping stone to future investment in Newcastle

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Date : 3 October, 2019

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The Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) NSW has cautiously welcomed the addition of new on-demand services to Newcastle's public transport offering, hoping that if properly managed, it could increase public transport patronage and prompt investment in higher capacity vehicles and full route services.

RTBU Divisional Secretary David Babineau said the popularity of recent additions to Newcastle's transit network, including park-and-ride services and the new tram line, demonstrate that choice and convenience are key to meeting commuters' needs but that integration and planning must be put first.

"We welcome the move to diversify Newcastle's public transport offering and design services that suit the needs of the public, we hope that this time it can be done in consultation with the people of

Newcastle and in a way that encourages the growth of public transport as a whole,” said Mr Babineau.

“We must be cautious when implementing this radically different operating model. With services departing immediately when ordered, steps must be taken to ensure drivers are not overworked and have regular rest throughout their work day, just like in any other job. Driver safety is obviously another key concern.

“The vehicles themselves are very low capacity at six seats and lack some important features like safety screens. But this is a first step, and hopefully the first of many, towards an integrated solution aimed at genuinely growing the network and not just playing more games with the travelling public.

“While the Union always supports the creation of jobs, the transport network of Newcastle has suffered a lot of political interference that has not benefited the public. Hopefully this trial can be done properly and the games can come to an end.”