

New InterCity Fleet a disaster waiting to happen

Categories : [Media releases](#), [News](#)

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Media release, 13 May 2022: The New InterCity Fleet poses an unacceptable safety risk to the travelling public, rail workers say – a view which has the backing of an independent assessment as well as the Federal Court of Australia.

Rail workers' renewed safety concerns about the NIF follow a decision by the Employment Relations Minister, Damian Tudehope, to yesterday declare he believes all negotiation around safety with the union over the NIF trains should be abandoned and that the trains should run, even despite the extensively documented safety issues.

Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) NSW Secretary, Alex Claassens said the Minister's comments show a complete disregard for the safety of commuters and disrespect for workers. He says the Minister is also misrepresenting the findings of the regulator.

"Rail workers have long said they will refuse to drive the New InterCity Fleet until the significant safety issues are adequately addressed – a decision that has been backed by a Federal Court ruling. As soon as those safety concerns are addressed, we'll happily operate them," Mr Claassens said.

"Rail workers have been raising serious safety concerns about this fleet for years – even before the trains landed in Australia. But the NSW Government has been fighting back because it doesn't want to pay to fix the safety problems.

"Now we've got an Employment Relations Minister, who has no oversight of transport and hasn't been involved in any discussions around the NIF in the past, weighing in. It couldn't be clearer that this is a case of politics and money being put ahead of safety and common sense.

"These trains are a disaster waiting to happen and there is an independent safety assessment, among other things, that confirms that. Rail workers will not drive a train that we know will put the safety of the travelling public at risk. It's as simple as that.

Mr Claassens says the safety concerns stem from the fact that train guards are unable to adequately monitor the platform during departure.

"We have been in discussions and court battles for years trying to get these safety issues rectified. Just when we thought common-sense and public responsibility was finally going to prevail, a couple of NSW Government Ministers have decided to blow things up to make a political statement.

“We had a letter from Transport sent yesterday which said they agreed changes needed to be made, former Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, publicly said guards were here to stay – yesterday’s actions were clearly motivated by politics, not safety or commuter interest.

“The NSW Government is deliberately misrepresenting what the regulator has said about the NIF – it doesn’t even give a statement on what it considers to be safe or otherwise. It’s time these NSW Government Minister stopped with the deceit and political game playing and started focusing on fixing the safety issues so we can get these train on the tracks. Quote from an independent safety assessment conducted in February 2021 by RMAAs: *"In my opinion there will be an unacceptable risk to the travelling public if the NSW Trains proposed operating model is implemented. Particularly to the most vulnerable of the travelling public, children and movement impaired passengers."*