

Newcastle call centre worker set to face chop

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Reported in the Newcastle Herald

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union has accused the Berejiklian government of “showing disregard for 71 people and their livelihoods” after the state’s transport authority announced it was considering closing a Newcastle call centre.

Rob Mason, the chief executive of NSW Trains, this week told employees that negotiations had begun to merge the existing Newcastle call centre with Service NSW to “streamline customer service offices”.

In an email seen by the Newcastle Herald, Mr Mason told employees they would “have the opportunity to be part of a priority recruitment process for a position with Service NSW in Newcastle – a process similar to that which has been undertaken with the Roads and Maritime Service”.

But there’s no information on how many positions would be open, and Alex Claassens, the secretary of the Rail Tram and Bus Union, said he believed staff would have to move off the NSW Trains Enterprise Agreement and would receive less pay.

A Transport for NSW spokesman did not deny this, saying staff should take “this into account” when considering whether to apply for a new role.

“It is not simply a matter of relocating roles from one organisation to the other,” the spokesman said.

“The roles and duties at Service NSW are not the same as those currently performed at TrainLink and will be remunerated at the level of pay and conditions in line with existing Service NSW employees.

“While we will be doing our best to minimise any disparity between NSW TrainLink and Service NSW pay scales, staff should take this into account when deciding between applying for a new role and taking one of the other options available to them such as a voluntary redundancy or redeployment.”

The call centre – located in Honeysuckle – is the NSW Trainlink Newcastle Contact Centre, used to make train bookings. It’s the latest in a long line of government offices to close in Newcastle,

including Births, Deaths and Marriages, the Office of State Revenue and the Broadmeadow Countrylink Office.

Newcastle MP Tim Crakanthorp said it was “just another kick in the guts for local workers”.

“The Government’s priority should be creating jobs not cutting jobs,” he said.

“This government has a habit of closing, moving or downsizing offices in Newcastle. I am appalled that the Government is allegedly sacking employees and asking them to re-apply for the same jobs.”

The Transport spokesman said the department had “provided counselling under the employee assistance program to any staff who request it and will continue to support them in any way we can”.

“We will also engage experts who will deliver skills training to help staff develop a career plan.”

But Mr Claassens accused the government of being “ruthless”

“Plunging 71 people into this kind of uncertainty is unacceptable, and quite frankly ruthless, the government needs to do better to conduct a proper consultation process to help ensure a clear future for these people.”

“Abruptly closing down a centre that has been providing excellent service to regional rail and coach customers for more than 10 years without offering security for workers conditions and entitlements and their future is just plain rough,” he said.

Read the original story in the Newcastle Herald [here](#).