

## Transport workers welcome fines for despicable attacks on frontline workers

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Media release, 19 April: The introduction of fines and potential jail time for anyone caught spitting or coughing on transport workers, including bus drivers and other frontline workers, is very welcomed, the union representing transport workers said today.

The NSW Government today announced the \$5000 fines and potential jail time for anyone found to be deliberately coughing or spitting on public officials such as healthcare workers would now officially be extended to all workers.

Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) Tram and Bus Division Secretary, David Babineau, said the changes, which come after pressure from unions, are unfortunately required during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Our bus drivers and other transport workers have been on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis, putting their health and safety and that of their families’ on the line in order to keep our communities moving,” Mr Babineau said.

“While the last few weeks have brought out the best in many people in our community, our frontline transport workers have unfortunately also seen the worst, with a disturbing number of incidents involving people spitting and coughing on frontline workers.

“Our bus drivers and other frontline transport workers have shown we’re willing to do whatever it takes to get our community through this crisis. The least we should be afforded is some basic respect.

“While of course most people do the right thing, there’s a small minority of people who think it’s funny or acceptable to cough or spit on workers. That’s why we need these fines in place – we simply can’t have that kind of vile behaviour continue.

“It’s good to see the NSW Government take action to address this despicable behaviour. No worker, whether they’re a bus driver, a nurse, a supermarket worker or anyone else, should ever have to put up with being abused at work.

“It doesn’t get much lower than coughing or spitting on people at any time, particularly during the current pandemic. We need to take a zero tolerance approach to this kind of carry on.”