

Union accuses Transport Minister of using COVID-19 crisis as excuse to push privatisation agenda

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The NSW Transport Minister's use of the COVID-19 crisis as an excuse to push forward his plans to sell off the state's transport assets, like our buses, is nothing short of disgraceful and disrespectful to the people of NSW, the union representing tram and bus workers said today.

Transport Minister, Andrew Constance, is [today reported as saying he sees transport asset sales as part of the "silver bullet"](#) required to help NSW recover after the coronavirus pandemic.

Tram and Bus Division Secretary of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union Secretary, David Babineau, said while of course there will be a need to rebuild after the COVID-19 crisis and for government to lead the way in that process, using the current crisis as an excuse to push his wildly unpopular and unsuccessful privatisation agendas is opportunistic at best.

"The Transport Minister is effectively saying that selling the rest of State Government assets - our assets - is the only way to help the economy recover," Mr Babineau said.

"This is a government that has overseen transport projects like the recent light rail project which have blown out by billions of dollars, and the new metro which is several billion over budget. Now the Minister is trying to lecture us on rebuilding the economy? How has the privatisation of electricity worked out for the taxpayer? This system seems to be about taxpayers funding projects which get sold to private companies who charge taxpayers a premium to use them for the rest of their lifetime.

"Bus privatisation has proven to be a disaster so far, with Newcastle and the Inner-West suffering

from stop closures and service cuts. To try to ram through further privatisation at this time is disgraceful.

“This global pandemic is still very much upon us. The Transport Minister oversees a transport workforce of thousands of people who are currently putting themselves and their families in harm’s way in order to keep our communities moving. Our tram and bus drivers are out there every day, still pushing for basic things like personal protective equipment. He should be focused on ensuring they’ve got everything they need to keep everyone safe, rather than running around crowing about how he’s found an excuse to push his unpopular privatisation agendas.

“One of the many things the COVID-19 health crisis has taught us is that we actually need to keep more of our assets in public hands, but that seems to be lost on the Minister.

“Our state’s transport assets should remain in the state’s hands.

“Trying to use our state’s suffering as cover for his unpopular agendas is disgraceful.”