

Vomit and phone ban: Light rail drivers to take protected industrial action from Tuesday

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Light rail drivers from the Pymont depot will not answer their phone to the bosses from Tuesday and refuse to clean up vomit from Friday as part of protected industrial action.

About 60 drivers will take a range of actions – including the ban on the use of their personal technological devices, which management are not meant to use as a means of contacting workers, but do on a regular basis – from Tuesday 14 September.

Other actions being taken throughout the week include:

- a uniform ban (all PPE will still be worn)
- a ban on overtime working from Thursday
- a ban on using the Transdev app, which is used for service updates
- a ban on cleaning up hazardous waste such as vomit and urine from Friday. Cost cutting measures put in place in around five years ago mean that rather than take a vehicle containing hazardous waste straight in for cleaning, light rail drivers are now meant to put a powder substance on the waste product and finish the route before getting the tram cleaned.
- Not answering a two-way radio until they are completely stopped at a station.

The action comes in response to management's refusal to provide Pymont workers with career equality as part of current enterprise agreement negotiations.

"We don't want to have to take action, especially at a time when we're moving so many essential workers around the network, which is why we've chosen these actions. Our fight is with the company, not the public, but Transdev has left us with no choice but to take this action.

"All we're asking for is fair career progression, in line with other light rail drivers in Sydney," Tram and Bus Division President of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) NSW, Daniel Jaggars said. "Being a light rail driver is a career, and we deserve the same access to career progression as other drivers in Sydney.

Currently it takes five years to reach the highest possible grade for Pymont drivers, as compared with just three years elsewhere. Pymont drivers also get paid less than other drivers.

"This is about respecting a workforce who have gone above and beyond to keep our communities moving during the covid crisis," Mr Jaggars said. "Transdev rejected our claim for one agreement to cover all drivers in Sydney, and now they're rejecting this basic matter of equality too.

“It’s outrageous that a company as big as Transdev would insist on treating its workers with such little respect. We’re not asking for much, just the right to progress our careers like everyone else.

“No one wants to take protected industrial action, but we’ve been left with no choice. We can’t sit back and let Transdev treat our workers with such little respect.”