



# Rail, Tram & Bus Union (NSW Branch)

30 July 2024

Hon, Jo Haylen MP  
Minister for Transport

Hon. Jenny Aitchison MP  
Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

**By Email:**

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Dear Ministers

## Sydney Trains' Regional Signal Boxes and Complexes

Following from the RTBU's amendment to the Building Sustainable Communities Chapter of the NSW Labor platform by the State Conference relating to the issue of the consolidation and upgrade of manned regional signal boxes.

To commence the process of engagement on this issue, we seek a meeting with relevant staff from your offices and other stakeholders to discuss the issues at play and arrive at a position acceptable to regional communities, the union, and the Government.

For completeness, we **attach** to this letter a copy of the alternative business case put forward to Sydney Trains during our process of engagement with them. We believe this document contains a practical alternative to the current proposal.

In order to engage on the topic, we have subject matter experts who will be vital to ensure the success of this engagement who can be made available.

Please reach out to the writer to arrange an appropriate time to meet.

Kind regards

**Toby Warnes**

Secretary

Australian Rail, Tram and Bus Industry Union (NSW Branch)

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ORGANISING WORKERS IN THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY  
PROTECTING AND BUILDING RIGHTS AT WORK

# Regionally Manned Signal Boxes and Complexes; Too Good to Lose!



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## Acknowledgment:

The information provided below was provided by Members and Delegates of the Signaller Sub-Division of the RTBU, for which we are grateful for their dedication to maintaining the integrity and safety of jobs associated with keeping trains running throughout the network in the metropolitan and regional areas.

## Executive Summary

Sydney Trains are considering closing our local rail signal boxes and relocating our signalling work to Homebush Control Centre, to be named the “*Regional Control Centre*”. In the event the proposal goes ahead, it will result in a daily commute of 3+ hours for long-term loyal workers and a loss of local jobs and knowledge while compromising safety. We are calling on Sydney Trains and the NSW Government to instead invest in upgrading the regional signalling infrastructure. We believe this is the best way to provide a safe rail network for commuters and families to travel.

## Definitions

Word/Terminology	Definition
Signaller/Area Controller	A signaller operates signal equipment to control the running of trains, records the details of trains that pass, sets areas of protection so track work can be completed safely and notifies the control centre in cases of delay or accident.
Signal	A visual display device which conveys instructions or provides prior warning of instructions regarding the driver's authority to proceed.
Signal Box/Complex	The place where points, signals, interlocking apparatus or signal control panels are operated.
Area of Control	The extent of track subject to the control of a single signaller. Includes any automatic signalling supervised by the signaller.
Section	The line between the departure end yard limit of one location and the arrival end yard limit of another location. A section consists of one or more blocks.
Panels	A microprocessor interfacing between the operator interface and the signalling interlocking and building the information sets required from the input data elements.
ATRICs	Advanced Train Management System
Authorise	To give formal written, spoken or signalled authority for an action.
Level Crossings	A location where the railway line and a road or pedestrian walkway cross paths on the same level.
Automatic Level Crossing	A level crossing equipped with flashing lights, audible warning devices and, sometimes, half boom barriers, which are normally

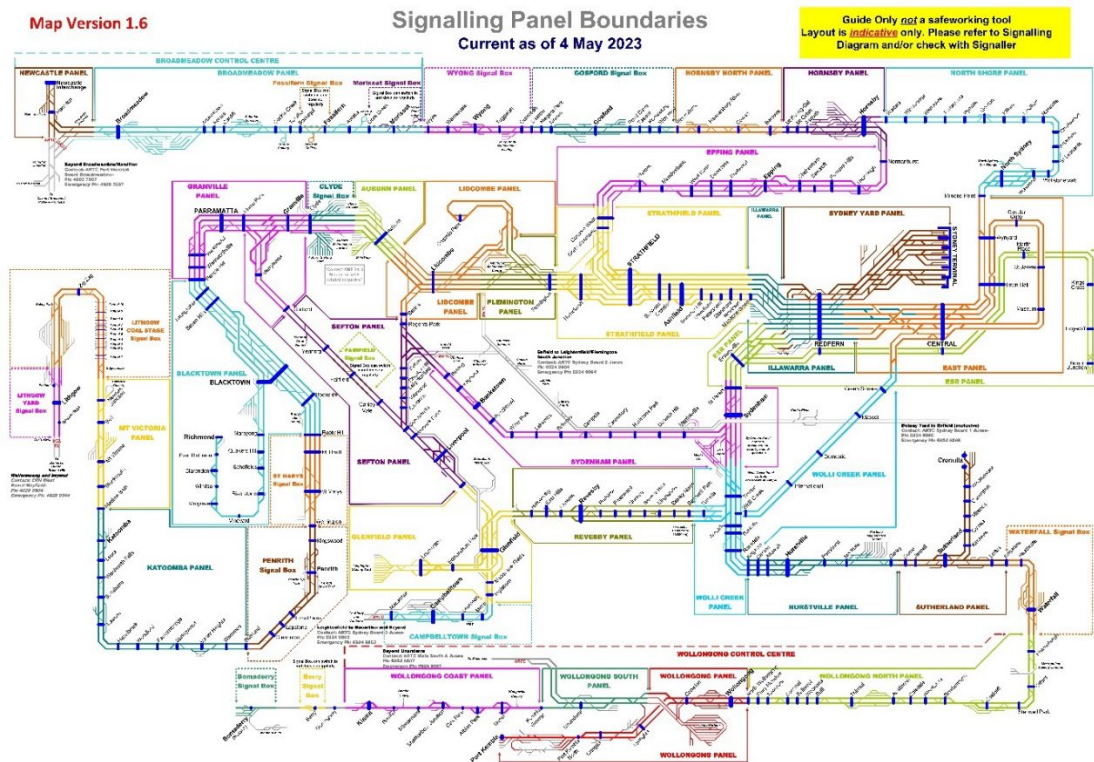


	controlled entirely by the approach of a train and not normally interlocked with the signals.
Degraded Mode Conditions.	The state of the part of the railway system when it continues to operate in a restricted manner due to the failure of one or more components.
Degraded Mode Operations with Train Protection (TPC)	This is operations with TPC; but when some part of the TPC system has failed. E.g.: Failure of signal equipment, train-track communication, driver display, services or some operating parameter of the System is not yet validated.
Manual Block Working	A method of special working which ensures sole occupancy by manually maintaining the block behind a rail traffic movement.

## Signalling Panel Boundaries

The map below illustrates the areas of control under the various signal boxes and complexes.

Figure 1 - Signalling Panel Boundaries



## Business Requirements

On a rail transport system, signalling control is the process by which control is exercised over train movements using railway signals and block systems to ensure trains operate safely, over the designated route and to the correct timetable. Signal boxes and complexes interface with the Signaller and signalling equipment.

## **RTBU Combined Position on the Sydney Trains Proposal.**

### **Infrastructure Division:**

*“The Infrastructure Division disagrees with the proposed relocation of regional Signal Boxes or Complexes to Homebush creating a Regional Operations Centre. It’s much more efficient to physically interact with the Signallers as you can discuss worksite protection, plans and upcoming work without being on the phone. I believe this practice is a much safer option for all parties as there is a true appreciation of the safety risks. Furthermore, there is a greater understanding by Infrastructure staff of what the Signallers require to ensure a safe work environment.”*

**Jonathan Parker**  
**Secretary**  
**RTBU Infrastructure Division NSW**

### **Locomotion Division**

*“This is an impractical and short-sighted strategy to reduce regional boxes for one signal box located in Sydney covering the regional areas.*

*Regional working has a lot of intricacies regarding safe working from single line Bidirectional working to numerous level crossings both marked and unmarked. Trains are worked regularly under systems of safe working, i.e. SPA, Pilot Staff, Electric staff. There are local interlocks, sidings, yards and regionally a hell a lot of freight movements throughout the system which requires and in-depth knowledge of the area and the working. Some areas also still operate under the semi sphere signalling system and axles counters. A lot of the work is through local knowledge and operation.*

*The other issue is which has occurred previously is if this box goes down for any reason there would not be a train movement within its boundaries stopping trains almost everywhere in the state.*

*We don’t support the movement of regional signal boxes to a central Sydney bases signal box.”*

**Paul Dornan**  
**Assistant Secretary (Passenger)**  
**Locomotion Division**

### **Guards Sub-Division:**

*“The Guard’s Sub-Division does not agree with the proposed closure of Regional Signal Boxes or Complexes and moving the functionality to a more centralized location.*

*It has been in my experience that those in a centralized area like Homebush may not have the full knowledge of the areas that they control, which has the potential to lead to misinformation and issues regarding movements in degraded conditions. Having someone*

*locally who knows that particular part of the network is more beneficial to the rail operator and the staff who traverse through the area they control.*

*Intercity services operate within many isolated locations which are subject to adverse weather conditions, including lightning strikes, landslides, flooding, wash outs, rockslides etc. These can have catastrophic consequences for these services and infrastructure. Local Signal Boxes are best placed to more effectively deal with these contingencies compared to centralized locations which are remote to the issues at hand.”*

**Aaron Donaldson**  
**Guards Sub-Division Vice-President**  
**Central Intercity Guards Secretary**

*“It is the opinion of the Guards Sub-division that the removal of Regional Signal Boxes would pose a significant safety risk to passengers, crew and the potentially the general public.*

*The signallers that man these regional locations provide local knowledge and familiarity which is invaluable in the event of incidents for both recovery and providing relevant information to Train Crew and relevant services.*

*We believe that the movement of Regional signalling to a centralized location would not only pose safety risks as stated above but would also have negative operational impacts.”*

**Andrew Sloan**  
**Secretary**  
**RTBU Guards Sub-Division**

## **Safety Issues:**

There are significant safety risks linked to Sydney Trains’ proposal which include the following:

1. **Risk to Signallers/ACs:** Fatigue is a factor that impacts shift workers as part of the course of their everyday lives, which is acknowledged by Sydney Trains via their fatigue management system. It is of grave concern that Sydney Trains have proposed for regional signal boxes/complexes to be relocated to Homebush and appears to disregard studies conducted into fatigue management.

An example of how this change will impact these workers is presented below:

- a) Example 1:

Currently, an Area Controller working out of Broadmeadow Complex completes an afternoon shift. They will have a reasonable distance to travel home, allowing them to manage their fatigue and family commitments.

- b) Example 2:

In the event the Sydney Trains proposal proceeds the Area Controller is now forced to travel to Homebush for duties which will involve about an extra 4 hours travelling time. Furthermore, extra costs are involved if the Area Controller drives due to additional wear and tear on their vehicle.

In the event the Area Controller uses public transport, there is the additional issue of shifts aligning with trains home in addition to extra travel time; such, if they work the afternoon shift at Homebush and finish at 2200hrs, they would be arriving at Strathfield by about 22:09 hrs for the train home only to be waiting at Strathfield for about one hour as the next train departs Strathfield at 23:01hrs arriving at Fassifern at 01:18 hrs.

As seen from the above example, the proposal from Sydney Trains does not make sense for many reasons, especially on the safety of Sydney Trains' Signallers and Area Controllers.

2. **Level Crossings:** Level crossings feature significantly in regional areas, and while already acknowledged as a safety risk, these issues will be exasperated if this proposal proceeds. This is supported by the media release from Hon Jenny Aitchison, the NSW Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, 7 July 2023. <sup>1</sup> When considering the above, it is acknowledged that numerous level crossings are in extreme proximity to schools, hotels and other public areas; therefore, the safest option is for regional signal boxes and complexes to remain to enable exceptionally skilled Signallers can continue to ensure all risk to the public has been mitigated when using level crossings.

## Cost to the Local Community

Further to the above, if the proposal proceeds, the proposal has not considered the cost to the local and regional communities.

According to the preliminary economic modelling undertaken by the Regional Australia Institute, <sup>2</sup> it's reported that filling identified positions such as nurses, call centre workers, carers, and sales assistants would create an immediate 1.76 billion dollars in direct wages paid to regional workers. It is further noted that the NSW Government is committed to job growth in regional areas of NSW. Further, the NSW Government released in the 2023-2024 NSW Budget a 5.2 million dollar to establish Future Jobs and Investment Authorities <sup>3</sup> with regional authorities assisting to develop new industries and economic opportunities as NSW builds its renewable energy capacity. Rail should be included, extending to the maintenance

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<sup>1</sup> Hon. Jenny Aitchison 2023; 'Media release - Level crossing safety trial gets underway'; 7 July 2023; <https://www.jennyaitchison.com.au/news/media-releases/media-release-level-crossing-safety-trial-gets-underway/>

<sup>2</sup> Houghton, K; Barwick A & Pregellio, S 2023; " *Regional Jobs 2022: The Big Skills Challenge*"; Regional Australia Institute; Canberra; [https://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Files/Regional%20Job%20Updates/The\\_Big\\_Skills\\_Challenge\\_Report.pdf](https://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/Files/Regional%20Job%20Updates/The_Big_Skills_Challenge_Report.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Minister for Finance, Minister for Natural Resources 2023; " *Securing regional jobs and encouraging investment in Minns Government's first budget*"; 19 September; <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/securing-regional-jobs-and-encouraging-investment>



of regional signal boxes and complexes. The aforementioned are some examples of the myriad of resources available that clearly identify the need for regional areas to retain local government jobs.

It is further noted that the Australian Government has committed 222.3 million dollars to the Regional Jobs and Investment Packages (RJIP) <sup>4</sup>to assist regions throughout Australia in stimulating long-term economic growth and delivering sustainable employment. 10 regions have been selected to be part of the RJIP, of which NSW North Coast receives \$25 million and South Coast receives 20 million dollars. There is no reason why Sydney Trains could not approach the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science's Business Grants Hub to seek funding to construct a North Complex and refurbish the Wollongong Signal Complex.

For the reasons provided above, it is obvious that the identified regional complexes and boxes should remain in their regional areas,

## Member Survey

The survey was constructed of 12 questions, which was a combination of dichotomous questions, comments and finishing with gathering personal information as seen by the questions replicated below, followed up an image of the survey.

- Question 1: Participants work location.
- Question 2: Whether participant agreed with the Sydney Trains proposal of the creation of a Regional Operations Centre based at Homebush.
- Question 3: If the participant answered Yes, what was the basis of this response.
- Question 4: If the participant answered No, what was the basis of this response.
- Question 5: If the participant was located at the ROC, are they willing to participate in the campaign to retain vital local jobs.
- Question 6: Targeted question for those directly impacted by the proposed change requesting they advise what the impact would be for them personally.
- Question 7: Targeted question for those directly impacted by the proposed change Requesting they advise what the impact would be for their families.
- Question 8: Targeted question for those directly impacted by the proposed change concerning the idiosyncrasies of their areas of control and why it is vital to have signalling controlled by those that live and work locally to make for a safer environment for all.
- Question 9: Name of participant.

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts; "Regional Jobs and Investment Packages"; (nd); [Regional Jobs and Investment Packages | Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts](#)



Responses to questions 2 - 8 evolved around responses in the comment form and, as such, are provided below under the headings of Reasons to Maintain Regional Boxes/Complexes, Specifics for North, West, and South finishing with Member's stories advising of the impact of this proposal was to go ahead to them and their families.

### **Reasons to Maintain Regional Boxes/Complexes:**

- I am of the belief that a Regional Operations Centre should be built IN THE REGIONS, and thereby providing regional jobs, similar to what UGL Kangy Angy Maintenance Centre for the NIF as an example for the northern region and the XPT Replacement maintenance centre at Dubbo.
- has done with Regional Linx. I do not support the creation of a Regional Control Centre within the metropolitan area of Sydney.
- This is an English based idea, putting all control in one spot doesn't work one power outage at Homebush and nothing will move From Lithgow - Wollongong- Newcastle. Awesome. Just moving us from Homebush to the R.O.C , has doubled my travel time if I go by car, and tripled my travel time by train. On a normal shift if I go by train is now a 12hour day for an 8 hour shift, fatigue is through the roof, but it doesn't count because it's not actual working hours. I pity the poor colleagues who don't live within Sydney metropolitan area. Work, life balance, is non-existent at this point in time.
- The regional complexes have a functional dynamic, providing an acceptable work/life balance and local knowledge. If the complexes are closed, a lot of important knowledge will be lost. A majority of people won't move to be closer to the new location, instead taking voluntary redundancies where offered.
- Unnecessary relocation of staff to a completely different part of Sydney, increasing the requirement to commute and traffic to a already congested roads.
- Keep the smaller boxes open so the workers don't have to travel so far for work.
- It is unnecessary relocation of staff to a completely different part of Sydney, increasing the requirement to commute.

### **Specifically North Boxes/Complexes:**

- Commuters in our local area would be greatly disadvantaged, due to the fact that we are the locals with the best knowledge about running the train network in our area. There is no reason we cannot run trains in our area. There are plenty of empty railway buildings in the Newcastle area to operate from.
- We as locals, know and understand how people act around our level crossings, especially at Hamilton where you have pubs on either side of the crossing. Also, we connect trains at Hamilton station, so commuters can travel from Sydney to the Hunter Valley and from the Hunter Valley to Sydney. I can't see this happening at Homebush.

- Level crossings with hotels close by for road traffic and pedestrians, under ATRICS high risk to safety to people and assets. Local knowledge a great asset.
- Over 160yrs, the Newcastle area has always had a Train Control Presence in some format. The Hunter Valley Services will suffer without local knowledge and care, i.e. connections with Inter-City services will not be maintained.
- Further to the above, it is worth noting that ARTC runs the Hunter Area from Newcastle with a disaster recovery centre.
- Three Level crossings which have a very high volume of motor car and pedestrian traffic. Both Crossings in the epicentre of various social economic problems, i.e. alcohol and drugs consumption.
- Being in the position of responding to emergencies faster by knowing the areas efficiently is vital. The business will lose a lot of experienced operators that live in the area; safety will be reduced too, as the business will lose experience, knowledge and efficiency when Area Controllers leave their positions.
- At Wyong there is 1 x level crossing, major line; furthermore, it serves no purpose. Three years ago the plan was to build/refurbish a building in Wyong for the Northern Region signallers and now they want to remove our regional jobs.
- Level crossings (2) lots of schools; further, Newcastle university campus will be developed soon and lots of regional entertainment close by which equates to additional public accessing the level crossings which increases the risk to safety.
- Moving the regional signalling control into Sydney will lose the many years of area specific knowledge in the area. This will cause a decrease in customer service and safety. Also, we have an intimate knowledge of know what time the local schools finish and having the trains come at a reduced speed due to overcrowding. Knowledge of connecting services and times.
- The risks associated to the local area would not be managed as effectively if this proposal was to go ahead. These risks include:
  - Three hotels close to Beaumont Street level crossing Hamilton.
  - A school near St James Road level crossing.
  - A hotel near St James Road level crossing.
  - Regional connections performed at Hamilton station.
  - Multiple alterations to train running in & out of Newcastle negating any IRS system currently in operation elsewhere.
- On the combined Wyong/Gosford panel there will be; 3 level crossings (4 because we warn for Wondabyne on the up), 2 BBT's Wyee and WoyWoy. In Gosford we have WB Radio communication with the carsiding regarding blocking facilities for every single

stabling move. In a combined panel rail traffic will be under the AC's control for approx an hour, this is much longer than most panels. Currently Kangy Angy routes are booked out and therefor signallers must Block Work Rail Traffic in and out of Kangy Angy maintenance facility. Gosford station is situated near 3 schools (Henry Kendall, Gosford High School, ETC Learning Centre) and get a large number of students going to and from school daily. Gosford is also situated near 2 venues that serve alcohol (Gosford Hotel and Railway Hotel).

- It is vital to maintain the regionally based complex for safety reasons such as the multiple level crossings, two of which are located in high traffic areas requiring intervention multiple times a shift to ensure the safety of the public.

### **Specifically West Boxes/Complexes:**

- There is Geordie Street Level crossing, at least three hotels within a 10km radius and multiple schools which represents a risk to the public if this isn't managed locally.
- The building at Blacktown is modern steel frame construction and was built to accommodate multi signalling panels. Any panel that goes in at Homebush will need to have a backup at Blacktown, so why can't they leave us at Blacktown if it is just going to be a duplication of Homebush. Additionally, there are 6 active level crossings which are better serviced from Blacktown.
- There are a number of road and pedestrian crossing along the Katoomba to Newnes Junction. 19 stations across these two panels.
- There is between 5 and 10 level crossings in the Lithgow area that affect the everyday traffic with more that only affect certain areas. There are approximately five hotels that serve the Lithgow area. There are approximately 6 schools in the main Lithgow area which all would involve travelling near or over the main lines here at Lithgow depending on where you live.
- There are significant safety concerns that require local knowledge which would be lost if this proposal was to go ahead. Examples of these safety concerns are; 2 Pedestrian level crossings and 1 road crossing between Springwood and Faulconbridge, where the wayside detector is located to monitor rail traffic, especially freight trains when they set off the detector, I need to manage the situation as it could end up blocking road and pedestrian access. Running times between stations different to the metro, very high volume of work on track with varying degrees of complexity that needs local panel management knowledge.
- The area of Lithgow will be very difficult to control from a remote centre. A loss of 12 signallers position will have huge implications. There are 3 level crossing 3 schools located in proximity of running line 5 hotels located in proximity of running line. It is vital to have locally based signallers as they have an intimate knowledge of their local area.



## Specifically South (Wollongong):

- The South Coastline area of control is one of the most unpredictable line's in NSW. We face major interruptions every year due to weather and the multiple level crossings wildlife in the danger zone and it being a vast area of control.
- Regional areas need regionally based jobs which will be lost if this goes a head; including mine.
- There are a significant amount of risks to the public which is currently managed by the Wollongong Signal Complex which would be a serious safety concern if the proposal to move to Homebush were to go ahead.
- Numerous complexities exist in Wollongong, which includes numerous Level crossings and large areas of control. One panel controls up to 40kms of track, with one area controller in charge. Bi-directional, single line tracks, tunnels, rainfall monitors, slip sites/detectors, direction indicators, high rainfall monitoring areas, stabling, starting services, tanking, numerous TOAs, lookout working, SPA working , crossing freight moves, dedicated freight lines, class one freight services, steep gradients. Also, there is the concern of removal of regional jobs for regional employees comprising of subject matter experts who have worked in these areas for 10, 20 or 30 years and know the intricate work. In that case, they also have a fantastic relationship with maintainers, station staff and train crewing.
- Waterfall and Wollongong's areas of control numerous level crossings, and many hotels and schools scattered throughout these areas.
- The coast panel in Wollongong Control Centre has a book 1 inch thick with special working/procedures. There are tunnels and it is a single line track. When trains are running late the Crossing have to be adjusted to reduce the impact on the network. Being single line it is important to stay fluid and adjust the train running to fit the situation. The Wollongong panel has a lot of shunting on the Port Kembla section. There are a number of level crossings and around this area Also a large amount of shunting on the Wollongong section. There are also unmarked level crossings in and around the inner Harbour. The North panel can be difficult at times. It has around 80 km of track. Managing work on track, infrastructure failures, trespassers and graffiti vandalising be challenging. Often multiple at the same time. It also has level crossings, tunnels, curved platforms, large wildlife, often struck by train and require managing until police arrive to put the beast down.
- It isn't really regional if it is located in Sydney; in addition, the proposal doesn't consider other issues where local knowledge is vital which is, Bi-directional working, level crossings, many schools and beaches, lots of single lines, heavy freight and yards.
- There are lots of level crossing with over 10. Extensive bidirectional working with lots of home/starting signals which requires knowledge when SPAs are to be used in failures. Rainfall monitors and slip sites which require local working knowledge when activated.

BBT monitor. Shunting knowledge for inner and outer harbour. Lots of workings of TOAs for maintenance.

- Almost all of the area of control is bi-directional running, and one panel is single line running, Right hand working in a number of locations, working with private operators for freight shunting and the starting and terminating of freight services i.e.; Inner harbour, Outer harbour and interfaced with ARTC. A large number of level crossings, feral deer and a farmer/livestock crossing between Kiama and Berry where the farmer has to ring in to get train running.

### **Member's Stories:**

- **Member:**  
I have a disabled child and I currently have the flexibility to be able to manage his care if my position was moved to Homebush, I would be travelling four hours a day and would not be able to share the care of my son also the fatigue that four hours travel each day would affect every aspect of not only my life but my entire families life.
- **Member:**  
My career in Signal Box Operations would be over, so my and my family's standard of living would be greatly affected.
- **Member:**  
Impact on staff and their families having to resettle closer to the city, higher mortgage, find new schools, partners finding new jobs. The thought of commuting or finding new accommodation closer to the city in my fifties is stressful. Having to learn new panels without local knowledge. The other issue is with the travel there will be Less home time, stress on relationships. Partner having to decide to change jobs.
- **Member:**  
Either I move to Sydney, or it will be 16-hour days to work from my house to Homebush. No work/life balance. I am 56yrs of age and have an 8-year-old son. I would be unable to maintain a proper family environment. At age 60, I would risk losing my family.
- **Member:**  
I want to retain my employment with Sydney Trains; however, I could not make the daily commute to work at Homebush. I am the main breadwinner for my family, and I would no longer have a role with Sydney Trains.
- **Member:**  
It's taking away regional jobs from people living in regional areas, which puts us out to relocate to an area with a higher cost of living or commute each day, which I don't see as a safe option. I would be displaced in many ways. I would be expected to move to an area with a higher cost of living or commute 96km one way; that's a total of 192km in one day and 3 hours in a car, not to mention tolls, traffic or wear and tear. That would all take a toll on my mental, physical and emotional health. Staying in Lithgow would be

ideal; however, I see Blacktown as a much more realistic option. Going on what I said previously if my mental health is affected due to relocating, that will also take a toll on my family life. My partner is a guard at Lithgow, which he loves doing, so he will be expected to move and commute, or we stay in Lithgow, and then I'm expected to commute, which will affect our life at home as I'll be tired from driving three hours each day. We're getting married in 2025 and then looking at starting a family. If this move to Homebush occurs, that will greatly impact us and our future plans.

- **Member:**  
Less personal time due to distance being travelled; this being more travelling and less family time, bigger risk of being late for work due to the circumstances beyond my control and unlikely to be able to perform double back shifts in the event there is staff shortages for last minute vacancies.
- **Member:**  
There will be less opportunity for Work/life balance adjustment: additional 30 mins by car (tolls @ \$10.96) each way) or 40-45 mins (no tolls) each way - depending on the shift I am working. Travel by public transport would take approx. 90 minutes each way - 3 hours in total, whereas currently, it would take approximately 60 minutes. Being located further from home may impact the ability to either extend shifts or, at short notice, pick up any additional shifts. Also, I've been at the Blacktown Complex for 18 months and being located 15 minutes from work has its benefits. I was previously located at Mount Victoria for 2 and a half years, and travel times were approximately 3 hours by car both ways or 4+ hours by public transport.
- **Member:**  
I will be forced out of my substantive position of over 30 years, and I'm uncertain how I will provide for my family. We wouldn't see each other very often as either I would do 14 hour days ( 8 hour shift plus 6 hours of travel ), or take a significant pay cut.
- **Member:**  
Enforced early retirement resulting in the necessity for my spouse to find a full-time job to maintain the household.
- **Member:**  
It would mean that I would be required to move away from my daughter and family support.
- **Member:**  
It means leaving a regional area I have ties to (where we bought a house when Hornsby box closed) and a special needs family I need to care for. Also, I do not drive, so I would spend considerably longer to travel daily. The result is that I would not be able to be there as much for them and assist with my brother-in-law, who has Special needs whom we assist.

- **Member:**  
 It would require me to leave my current home and move closer to Homebush, as travelling daily is not a viable option. It would take me 2h 15m to get to Homebush from my current home and also 2h 15m to get home as well; that's 4h 30m of travel every day on top of working an 8h shift and to get public transportation would take 3h 30m each way. This sort of travelling is ok on the odd occasion, but to have to make that sort of trip every working day and still be expected to manage my fatigue well enough to perform a safety-critical role is unreasonable. Also, this would impact my family as This would require me to leave my hometown that I have lived in for 20 years where all my close family members live and where my life is set up. As a 20-year-old who does not have a significant other or children, it might not seem like such a big deal to have to move over 2 hours away for work; however, to have to leave the place I have always known as my home to be able to continue to work the job I love is a tremendous ask.
- **Member:**  
 Speaking as a supporter who works in an area that isn't directly impacted, the additional travelling, wear and tear on car and self, imagine if they closed the roc and sent us all to Wollongong. The proposal is outrageous.
- **Member:**  
 The proposal will mean loss of employment for staff members currently based at Gosford and Wyong. Over half the staff will lose their job; only 6 positions are available for Gosford and Wyong. The Option to relocate to Homebush negatively affects work-life balance and will negatively affect personal health, Greater fatigue and greater risk of poor decision-making both at work and at home. Also, the additional 2 hours of travel time per day. Longer days from extra travel will cause more fatigue. Doing shift work PLUS a longer commute will negatively affect personal health. Fatigued at work will increase the risk of poor decision-making and potentially affect the safety of the network. This will impact our families because there will be less time at home to support my wife and family. Additional pressure on family relationships due to fatigue causing emotional stress, ZERO benefits to my life balance and family/work ratio.
- **Member:**  
 I would be made redundant and forced to leave the organisation; resulting in our family loosing half our income and selling the family home.
- **Member:**  
 Waterfall Signal Box's planned closure is sometime in 2024, and I live in northern Illawarra, so my preference would have been to go to Wollongong Signal Complex. Going to Homebush would mean travel time well in excess of an hour when driving and much longer by train. As a shift worker, this would be extremely difficult, if not impossible to manage. Travel times would eat into rest time which would severely impact fatigue management. My family understand the nature of shift work and we can mostly work around things as I do not live too far from work. But I also have an elderly parent to consider. I cannot relocate to be closer to Homebush. I have always been told that when Waterfall Signal Box closes, I will have the option of moving to Wollongong.

- Member:**

Asking workers to swap a 5 to 30 minute commute for a 2 hour + commute. Sydney Trains offer no form of permanent and ongoing remuneration. Additionally, the 8 to 9 hour workday door to door becomes a 12+hour day for no extra money. But cost of living just went up considerably. Buying extra food while away from home for so long. Fuel bill just went up by \$ 100.00 to \$200.00 per week. Will Sydney Trains be issuing these bullied workers a fuel card for their out of pocket fuel costs? Keep regional boxes regional. It would make it impossible for me to remain a Sydney Trains employee. The inconvenience of my wife doing even more of the heavy lifting. Sydney Trains employees partners carry the lions share already with shift work and working weekends. This would result in children missing out on after school activities such as footy training. I have to leave 2 hours early to go to work.
- Member:**

Less work/life balance meaning effects on mental health, longer workdays of approx 12hrs including travel, higher fatigue, trouble scheduling health appointments around the extended hours, unable to do overtime/cover on short notice due to the travel. Also, My family is in Housing and unable to move as the list is years long. Even on the increased pay rate I cannot afford to live closer to Homebush in a house that will accommodate my family. I have to live close to my family as my mother's health is not great. And I am the next legal guardian for my younger sibling. The long days travelling to and from Homebush will mean I will have less time with my family and will also make scheduling health appointments harder.
- Member:**

I believe that relocating regional workers to the city will lead to a poor work/life balance and worker burn out. It won't be feasible to commute by train and still spend time with children/family which will mean driving and therefore adding a significant expense for fuel/wear and tear on the vehicle. Added expense of childcare or potential relocation of entire family, taking kids away from their friends and partner being forced to look for jobs elsewhere. Lack of remuneration for relocating. Taking jobs away from regional communities has a negative impact on everyone. I personally would get to spend less time with both my immediate and extended family. I moved to Wollongong after the death of both my parents and my grandmother in close succession to provide a supportive environment for my family and myself to heal from these events. I want to watch my children grow up instead of missing most of their life due to excessive travel. I worry about fatigue and burn out due to excessive travel times; I also worry about the cost of fuel and wear and tear to my vehicle. Alternatively, Or if we need to move closer to work, my children will leave behind cousins, aunts and uncles and their school friends and teachers. My partner will be forced to quit her job thereby causing her to lose her independence and stall her career progression yet again.
- Member:**

This is Unfair and will result in an extra-long commute time of 3 hrs. Loss of wage due to fuel cost. Loss of local knowledge. Fatigue issues. It's not easily accessible for regional workers. Same grade for no benefit. Complex building is staying so why is a



refurb out of question? There are plans for regional complex to stay so why the change? Where is the duty of care for regional jobs staying? Loss of quality time spent with my young family due to extra 3 hours a day of commute. Fatigue concerns. Extreme strain on wage due to fuel and vehicle cost. Less incentive to work overtime due to travel. No public transport available from Wollongong to Homebush that is convenient with no train connections for early mornings as well. Further, Loss of quality family time due to extra 3hrs a day of commuting from current 10 mins. Having to go to bed much earlier to leave earlier. Be a struggle to help kids with homework and social issues and after school activities. Will be poorer due to cost of commuting with no practical public transport. Massive increase in fuel cost and vehicle maintenance. Still on same grade. Paying for after school care due longer commute! Safety concerns with no practical public transport when fatigued. Wife may have to quit job for childcare where I can easily make school pick up and drop off when required.

- **Member:**

I work at Blacktown control centre, Which gives me the ability to cover shifts at very short notice as I live in the Blacktown local area, I travel by public transport. The case put forward by Sydney trains to move us to Homebush control centre lacks clarity and substance. The only reason given is that it is going to cost lots of money to build a new control centre in Broadmeadow and refurbish Wollongong complex. Blacktown control centre will still be maintained as an DRS (Disaster recovery Centre) for all the regional panels. Why can't Homebush be the DRS and all regional boxes maintained especially with what has transpired since the Covid-19 Pandemic, the last thing we need to happen is to shutdown panels and inconvenience regional customers who have very limited travel options. Also, there will be lot more time spent away from home as I travel by public transport, some shifts I will have to commence travel the previous day to start my shift on time. I would not be able to stay back to cover shifts or come in to work on days off at short notice. This would also mean much less time spent with the family, As my job is 24/7, I will have to spend most of my income on childcare which will leave me with much less disposable income for family activities. Less time to engage with the family due to fatigue. Miss out on quality time with the family and friends.

- **Member:**

It would not a viable option to remain working as a signaller as it would require more than 5 hours of travel to and from home. I would become disconnected from family as no time would be available to socialise until rostered off.

- **Member**

Other than keeping regional jobs regional, the combined local knowledge from the current workers will be lost means a lowering of safety standards and multiple years of on the job learning and training. Also, it would mean leaving the company, My life is in Newcastle, and I am not willing to uproot my life, My experience gained over the years will be lost to Sydney Trains. Also, The loss of the main income for my household, undue stress associated with that.

- **Member**

It would just be another ROC with all of its problems, some manages have already admitted that it is a toxic work environment. Regional centres promote community and a work/life balance. I will have to spend 3 hours travel a day driving, 6 hours using public transport. Financial strain, approx. \$13,000 per year to travel or \$70,000 to relocate, poor work/life balance due to travel. Resignation from a job that I enjoy. We have settled in Koonawarra and our daughter has since been diagnosed with autism Our daughter is settled at her new high school in a transition centre & has a great support network with Psychologist, Psychiatrist, Occupational Therapist & doctor since being diagnosed just after we moved to Wollongong with Autism Level 2 ADHD, OCD generalised anxiety, Medical Anxiety & various other anxiety's. It has taken a bit of time for our daughter to settle into her new environment, but we are finally seeing her build a new life here in the Illawarra starting to make friends & joining a drama group. To uproot her again & move again would have a severe detrimental effect on her mental health & everyday life.

- **Member**

I DON'T THINK THE MOVE WILL BRING BENEFICIAL RESULTS FOR MOST OF THE SIGNALLERS LIVING NEAR THE COMPLEX.

- **Member:**

No true process being explained to staff. No guarantee what management says will be legally binding.

## Evaluation of Options

### Union Option - Development of three regional operation centres

Pros	Cons
Maintains experienced Signallers and Area Controllers that have a <b>detailed knowledge of their local area</b> ; therefore, ensuring a <b>safe and efficient rail network</b>	Nil
<b>No loss of quality regional union jobs</b> contributing to the employment rates in regional areas.	Nil
<b>Fatigue Issues</b> – in the event local Signallers or ACs take up the position in Homebush, there would be significant safety risks associated due to fatigue resulting from travelling an extra 4 hours per shift in addition to working an 8 hour shift.	Nil
Reduced local collaboration with other areas such as Train Crew and Infrastructure.	Nil
Maintaining the economy within the local community – in the event the proposal was	Nil

to be put in place; minimal Signallers that take-up the positions in Homebush would live in their regional area. The result would be less money being circulated in the community due to people who are working not residing in the local area.	
Preservation of resources reducing wastage of taxpayer money. The move to Homebush carries a cost that includes cabling, redundancies, and extra training.	Nil

### Sydney Trains Proposal - Movement to one regional operations centre.

Pros	Cons
Continues the progressive deployment of ATRICS replacing legacy equipment (including local control panels)	ATRICs is already outdated, and this is a policy from a previous government.
Upgrading to ATRICS technology improves safety, reliability and uplifts network capacity.	ATRICs can be installed into Wollongong
For employees who relocate there are opportunities for skill/career development and the ability to manage leave more flexibility by working in a larger team. ATRICS training will be provided as required.	Loss of exceptionally skilled and experienced Signallers and Area Controllers due to not being able to maintain employment while meeting personal and family responsibilities.  Loss of jobs in regional areas which is contrary to government policy.
This consolidation and relocation as part of the Network Control Plan will mean better opportunities for our people and better outcomes for our passengers.	The option to pursue other opportunities already exist so this is a nil benefit.

### Union Options in Detail:

The preferred option is the development of three regional operational centres or hubs located in the Northern, Western and Southern Regions.

- **Northern Region:**
  - Option 1: Construction or refurbishment of existing building for a complex encompassing Broadmeadow, Wyong and Gosford, possibly at Morisset station .
  - Option 2: Construction or refurbishment of existing buildings to develop a Transport Hub in the North would include representatives from heavy rail, including CountryLink, light rail (currently operating through Newcastle), busses,

taxis, ferries and Service NSW (Roads). Collaborating with all these identities is the ultimate resource to provide the best customer experience, especially during delays and degraded situations.

- **Western Region:**

The Western Region to remain at Blacktown Complex.

- **Southern Region:**

The Southern Region to remain at Wollongong Complex; but will require ATRICs to be installed and possible refurbishment.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion the RTBU Signaller Sub-Division submits it is vital to maintain fully manned regional signal boxes and complexes based on:

- The safety of employees and customers;
- Retention of highly specialised and skilled Signallers and Area Controllers in their current positions; this being in Northern, Western and Southern Regions.
- The construction of a Northern Region Complex or relocation to another location **in the Northern Region.**
- The installation of ATRICs and refurbishment of Wollongong Complex.

**Regionally Manned Signal Boxes and Complexes; Too Good to Lose!**