



**An Investigation into Abuse and Assault of Route Bus Drivers:
Statistics, triggers, risk reduction, training, and opportunities.**

Stuart Dawson

Parry Serafim

Chris Lowe

Bus Association Victoria Inc.

June 2017

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction and overview	5
Part 1 – The abuse and assault of Victorian route bus drivers.	7
Part 2 - Official data for the physical and verbal assault of bus drivers	13
Part 3 – Triggers for abuse and assault.....	19
Part 4 - The legislative framework for passenger behaviour and farebox compliance	25
Part 5 – Physical risk reduction (engineering) measures.....	28
Part 6 – Driver training in respect of passenger conflict and farebox compliance.....	33
Part 7 – Fare Evasion - A Quantitative Study	42
Part 8 - Industry comments: strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities	54
Recommendations	58
Appendix 1: Bus Operator Interview Transcripts, February-March 2017.....	59
Appendix 2 – Non-Operator Agencies	96
Appendix 3 - Key Interview topics Analytic Grid.....	102
Appendix 4: Legislation impacting drivers in respect of passenger behaviour and ticketing	103
References	105

Contributors

Stuart Dawson is Accreditation Liaison Manager at Bus Association Victoria Inc., and an Adjunct Research Fellow in the School of Philosophical, Historical and International Studies, Monash University.

Parry Serafim is the Manager, Planning and Industry Development at Bus Association Victoria Inc.

Chris Lowe is Executive Director of the Bus Association Victoria Inc.

Acknowledgements

We thank the members and Board of BusVic for seeing and supporting the need for this work to be undertaken.

We also thank the 16 contracted BusVic member and non-member bus operators and their various staff members who generously availed their time and interest to participate in the group interviews and some follow-up enquiries on which this project was based. We also wish to thank the TWU Vic/Tas organisers, and members of the Authorised Officer Bus Pool, for the same interest and willingness to participate in this project.

We thank Stephen Turner, Director Bus Safety, Transport Safety Victoria, for his willing communications on incident reporting, and for providing the latest official data. We also thank PTV for providing the myki top-up information and charts.

We additionally wish to thank Robyn Lincoln (Associate Professor of Criminology, Bond University), for her interest in, and email correspondence on, some criminological aspects of this research.

BusVic

Bus Association Victoria Inc. (BusVic) is the voluntary professional association for bus and coach operators and suppliers. BusVic is committed to working in partnership with all stakeholders involved in raising the level of safety, integrity and effectiveness of the Victorian route bus system and the level of the professional and ethical behaviour of bus operators.

The triggers, ramifications and solutions to verbal abuse and physical assault of route bus drivers has been of significant and material focus to BusVic, global practitioners and academics of late and this work aims to make a contribution to that narrative.

Executive Summary

This report reviews the extent of verbal abuse and physical assault of Victorian route bus drivers, which increased significantly over the past three years. It explains why the official data dramatically understates the extent of aggression, essentially because it was never set up to capture it, and provides a sound basis to realistically estimate the extent of aggression to drivers. This shows that physical assault is some 20 times, and verbal abuse some 4000 times, higher than TSV data suggest.

It ranks the triggers for abuse and assault, and summarises the legislation under which operators manage drivers, passenger behaviour, and fare collection. It reviews industry responses to the problem of rising incidences of passenger aggression, including physical (engineering) risk reduction methods. It reviews the adequacy of bus driver training in respect of passenger interaction and farebox compliance, which is inconsistent and problematic. It reports the results of a qualitative investigation into these issues specifically for bus, which has not previously been attempted. This report also presents a fare evasion study, the results of which suggests that fare evasion on Melbourne's route bus network is presently being understated.

The introduction provides an overview of the background, objectives, and methodology for this investigation and report, which represents the first qualitative research into the triggers of, and extent of, aggression toward bus drivers that has been conducted anywhere in the bus industry.

Part 1 sets out what is known and not known about aggression towards bus drivers, and establishes a link between fare non-compliance and increasing levels of aggression over the past three years.

Part 2 explains the basis of TSV's official incident data, and why it shows only a fraction of assaults on drivers. It then provides a sound basis to estimate the true extent of aggression toward drivers.

Part 3 sets out and discusses the triggers of aggression identified by the interviewed operators. Apart from the two primary triggers of ticketing and late running, these are not ranked in order of frequency or severity. Levels of aggression may vary both geographically and demographically.

Part 4 critically examines how current legislation, which imposes a range of expectations and duties on bus drivers, impacts upon their role, and makes them into frequent victims of aggression.

Part 5 evaluates physical measures that have been implemented to varying extents, which are intended to reduce the risk of aggression to drivers, or increase their confidence in their own safety.

Part 6 examines operator approaches to bus driver training in respect of passenger interaction, conflict, and farebox issues. It will be seen that training is heavily impacted by the climate of risk of assault in which drivers work.

Part 7 presents a quantitative fare evasion study that challenges the true extent of fare evasion on Melbourne's route bus network. Bus Association Victoria Inc engaged a resource to ride on multiple metropolitan route bus services 5 days a week for 6 weeks over April and May 2017 and count how many passengers touched on with their myki smartcard and how many didn't. The results suggest that fare non compliance on the metropolitan bus network is much higher than is being reported by PTV.

Part 8 offers BAV industry comments on some key issues that emerged from this investigation.

Recommendations have been made in respect of the matters investigated, based on the analysis that follows each section. The most urgent need is dialogue about how to address increasing tension between bus driver safety and farebox compliance, which requires immediate legislative action.

Introduction and overview

Background:

Concerns about rising incidences of verbal abuse and physical assault of bus drivers have been raised by Bus Association Victoria (BAV), bus operators and drivers, the Transport Workers Union (TWU), and in media reports, for several years. In 2013, the reasons for this rise were not clear, its impact little explored, and, bar a small number of incidents classifiable as criminal assault, its extent mostly unknown. In 2014, BAV initiated research by *MentalHealth@Work* that surveyed aggression toward Victorian bus drivers as one element of a broader study, primarily focussed on their mental health and contributing risk factors. It did not distinguish between verbal and physical aggression, correctly seeing their impact as part of a continuum of psychological damage.

However, research conducted for the present report revealed that this and related distinctions vitally inform drivers' attitudes to reporting abuse and assault to operators. The study recommended further research into aggression, including its actual rather than perceived rate; the impact of myki on interactions with drivers, and how incidents of aggression might be reduced, including by driver training. BAV commissioned a second study, *Prevention of Aggression to Bus Drivers*, which reviewed a range of literature to do with workplace aggression, including that first study, and focussed on the psychological motivations of aggressors, to outline possible preventative strategies. It similarly employed a psychological definition that did not distinguish between verbal and physical aggression, which it defined as the desire to inflict some form of harm due to anger or hostility. Aggression was thus considered from the perpetrator's perspective (e.g. whether it is goal-motivated, to obtain free travel, or an outburst stemming from frustration), rather than from an over bracing criminological perspective.

Several recommendations were made, including that prevention tactics be based on a more detailed knowledge of aggressive incidents and how drivers respond, including driver instruction.

Objectives:

The brief for the present report was to examine the tension between driver safety and farebox compliance, and see if the current legislative/regulatory framework, and the extent of differences between operator approaches are contributing to driver safety, fare compliance and customer expectations. How do operators meet the issue of maximising farebox revenue while at the same time ensuring the highest levels of driver safety? The aim was to document how a representative range of operators approach staff training on these issues in the context of current farebox policy.

Methodology:

The majority of this qualitative study was undertaken by holding eighteen semi-structured interviews in February and March 2017, sixteen with different metropolitan and regional route bus operators and their nominated staff, and one each with the TWU and with Bus Pool Authorised Officers (AOs).

All participants were informed at the start of each interview that the summary of their transcript would be de-identified, including the removal of any mentioned suburbs or particular shopping centres, etc., and that we were happy to send the transcripts back for any corrections and confirmation that it was a fair summary of the discussion before anyone else saw it. The resulting transcripts are appended to this report, together with an analytical grid. One aim was to see how

different levels of abuse are perceived by drivers, and affect reporting. Approaches to driver training in respect of passenger interaction and farebox compliance, along with the reporting of abuse and assault, were captured and are presented as sourced directly from the discussion content. The effectiveness of any physical risk reduction (engineering) measures in each operator's fleet was also discussed. No such qualitative study has been previously attempted.

Part 7 presents a quantitative study that tests fare evasion levels across Melbourne's route bus network. The methodology for that case study features in that Part.

Part 1 – The abuse and assault of Victorian route bus drivers.

This part sets out what is known and not known about aggression towards bus drivers, and discusses the link between fare non-compliance and increasing levels of aggression over the past three years.

Background

There was a significant increase in the number of assaults on bus drivers reported to Transport Safety Victoria (TSV) over the period 2008-2013.¹ At that time the reasons for this rise were not clear, its impact little explored, and, bar a small number of incidents classifiable as criminal assault, its extent mostly unknown. Research specifically on violence toward Australian bus drivers was non-existent.² Even now there are few reports and sources of evidence about the abuse and assault of bus drivers, which remains little researched both in Australia and overseas.³ In response to the lack of data, in 2014 BAV initiated research by *MentalHealth@Work*, which surveyed aggression toward Victorian route bus drivers as one element of a broader study, primarily focussed on their mental health and contributing risk factors. (Aggression is only one of the factors impacting drivers' mental health.) It did not distinguish between verbal and physical aggression, correctly seeing their impact as part of a continuum of psychological damage. However, research conducted for the present report revealed that this and related distinctions vitally inform drivers' attitudes to reporting abuse and assault to operators. *MentalHealth@Work's* analysis found no statistically significant association between the age of drivers, the length of time in the job, or the frequency of exposure to verbal abuse, and their reported mental wellbeing.⁴ That is, its findings apply to bus drivers generally.

Key point:

Distinctions between different types and levels of verbal abuse and physical assault vitally inform drivers' attitudes to reporting abuse and assault to operators.

Previous psychologically-based research

The survey asked three questions to do with the frequency, reporting of and reasons behind aggression to drivers. Respondents were asked the double-barrelled question: "How often would you encounter rude or angry customers who are abusive or aggressive towards you?". Aggression was not defined, but the question wording of "rude or angry", rather than violent, suggests it would be interpreted as verbal aggression. The interview summaries appended to this report show that there is a clear distinction to drivers between language that is rude and abusive, and language that is angry and aggressive. Rudeness and low- to mid-level verbal abuse is typically ignored as routine, and not reported. It is likely to be disregarded beyond the level of a lunchroom grumble. It happens a couple of times a day to most drivers, and is held to be "water off a duck's back".⁵ It constitutes some 80% of verbal abuse, and is almost never reported to a supervisor (TWU).⁶ Anger expresses higher level aggression, and is more likely to be reported at depot level. Another question, "Do you report instances of verbal and physical abuse from passengers?", similarly conflated verbal and physical abuse.

¹ Lowe, 2013: 3.

² Lincoln and Huntingdon, 2013: 83.

³ Stanley 2015: 4; Lincoln & Gregory, 2015: 118.

⁴ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 47.

⁵ The phrase and frequency, Appendix 1, Operators K and N; Appendix 2.1, TWU.

⁶ In this report, statements by TWU officials and Authorised Officers (AOs) are from the ratified interview summaries in Appendix 2, some key points of which also appear in the Appendix 3 analytic grid.

On this basis, it found that 66% of instances of verbal and physical abuse are reported;⁷ but the present study has found that physical assault is almost always reported to depots, while typically only high level verbal abuse is reported.⁸ The result of conflating verbal and physical aggression in the question wording was a significant underestimation of the extent of verbal abuse.

Key point:

The present study has found that physical assault is almost always reported to depots, while typically only high level, extreme or directly threatening verbal abuse is reported.

A different interpretive issue occurred in the question: “Why do you think passengers are aggressive or physically violent towards bus drivers?”. Drivers interpreted the question broadly, and answers ranged across personal and operational explanations. Approximately two-thirds of drivers thought the reason lay with the passenger, and about one-third thought it was due to a problem with the bus operation.⁹ While both are relevant to negative health impacts, the subject of that study, they do not explain why some reasons rather than others lead to conflict. Additionally, the driver responses were subjective, and were not objectively evaluated. For example, the largest “cause” of passenger aggression, mentioned by 38% of respondents, was substance abuse (drugs and/or alcohol), way ahead of all other issues.¹⁰ However, incident statistics collected by large fleet operator G¹¹ show that only some 6% of incidents are drug and alcohol related. The results from the driver survey say much about drivers’ fears, but provide no basis to estimate the frequency or nature of incidents.

MentalHealth@Work recommended further research into aggression, including its actual rather than perceived rate; the impact of the myki ticketing system (then relatively new) on interactions with drivers; and how incidences of aggression might be reduced, including by driver training. BAV commissioned a second study, *Prevention of Aggression to Bus Drivers*, that reviewed a range of available literature to do with workplace aggression, including that first study, and focussed on the psychological motivations of aggressors to outline possible preventative strategies. It similarly employed a psychological definition that did not distinguish between verbal and physical aggression, which it defined as “the desire to inflict some form of harm due to anger or hostility”.¹² Aggression was thus considered from the perpetrator’s perspective (e.g. whether it is goal-motivated, to obtain free travel, or an outburst expressing frustration), rather than from an over bracing criminological perspective. Importantly, Stanley noted that, “official data about aggressive incidents is dependent on the information being reported. This requires that the victim (or witness) report the incident to a manager, who in turn needs to report it to the authority collecting the information”.¹³ The report made several recommendations, including that prevention tactics be based on a more detailed knowledge of aggressive incidents and how drivers respond, including driver instruction.

Key point:

Official data about aggressive incidents is dependent on the information being reported. This requires that the victim (or witness) report the incident to a manager in the first place, who in turn needs to report it to [an] authority collecting the information. According to one Operator, “If we did [an incident form] for everything we’d be reporting all day” (Appendix 1).

⁷ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 27.

⁸ See Appendix 3.

⁹ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 32.

¹⁰ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 33.

¹¹ In this report, the interviewed operators have been de-identified. References to operator statements are to the ratified interview summaries in Appendix 1, some key points of which are in the Appendix 3 analytic grid.

¹² Stanley, 2015: 5.

¹³ Stanley, 2015: 5.

Criminological distinctions

The present investigation has produced some quite different results as regards aggression toward drivers than did the *MentalHealth@Work* survey, which conflated causes and triggers. Ticketing, drugs and alcohol, late running, “having a bad day”, etc., are all possible “reasons” for passenger aggression, and responses as to why persons are aggressive were collectively treated psychologically as “causes”.¹⁴ While psychologically valid for exploring mental stressors and dispositions towards aggression, in the context of factors that trigger aggression to drivers, it is not helpful. Psychological issues may “cause” some people to fire up more easily, or in more aggressive ways, just as practising meditation may “cause” a passenger to have a less aggressive mindset than someone on methamphetamine. In human interaction, events trigger reactions of various kinds, and how that is expressed depends largely on their psychological state. Both verbal and physical aggression “come in a range (from low to high), and that is important to recognise from both a ‘stress’ perspective and a ‘reporting’ perspective”. Additionally, aggression toward drivers is an interactive process that may be escalated by either party, and indeed by other passengers.¹⁵ Responses by any party may be controlled, aggressive, assertive, violent, etc. It is important in the context of examining passenger aggression toward drivers, to separate triggers, the events to which persons react, from any psychological “causes” of their consequent behaviour.

The two leading operational “causes” (triggers) for aggression identified by *MentalHealth@Work*, ticketing and late running,¹⁶ are the same given by all operators in the present report (Appendix 3), with ticketing leading in most cases.

Key point:

Aggression toward drivers is an interactive process that may be escalated by either party, and indeed by other passengers. The two leading triggers of verbal abuse are ticketing and the late running of the bus service.

Studies of psychological aspects of aggression toward health and emergency services workers exist in the criminological literature, and have parallels with the bus industry.¹⁷ An Australian study noted that, excluding professional criminals, there are three categories of aggressors.¹⁸ First, persons who use aggression to achieve their ends. This appears to underpin most routine, as well as escalated, fare evasion, and also actions where the end is to bully, intimidate or harass drivers; to ‘show off’, in addition to free riding. The AOs estimated that ticketing is responsible for around 90% of verbal aggression towards drivers (Appendix 2.2).

Key point:

The Authorised Officers interviewed for this study estimated that ticketing is responsible for around 90% of verbal aggression towards drivers.

¹⁴ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 33.

¹⁵ Robyn Lincoln (A/Prof. Criminology, Bond University), email communication, 9 April 2017.

¹⁶ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 33.

¹⁷ For an Australian study that considered public transport workers while discussing flight attendants, teachers, hospital staff, and police, see Swanton, 1989. Stanley, 2015 drew parallels with hospital aggression.

¹⁸ Swanton, 1989.

Between 1% and 5% of verbal aggression toward drivers ends in some form of physical assault.¹⁹ Some 80-90% of physical assaults have escalated from ticketing (Operator H). Second, persons whose irritation reaches a level where they become aggressive. This appears to describe most aggression over late running and poor timetables, the next biggest trigger for aggression. Third, mentally disturbed persons, whether under treatment or not, or perhaps undergoing changes in medication, and persons under the influence of alcohol and drugs, including aggressive stimulants such as amphetamines and methamphetamine (ice). Alcohol and drug issues represent around 6% of incidences of abuse and assault by bus passengers (Operator G). Drivers are victims of all three categories of aggression. Fortunately the fourth category, aggression by criminals, is extremely low; the AOs said there is almost no robbery of bus drivers.

A recent news article underlines the impact that the October 2016 death of Brisbane bus driver Manmeet Alisher, who was set alight behind the wheel, has had across the Australian bus industry. In it, the Queensland TWU State Secretary said that their figures suggest that the rate of assault had increased since that death, and observed that, "verbal assaults are particularly nasty for our drivers, because they don't know what's going to happen. What happened to Manmeet is constantly in the back of the driver's mind, that this could turn violent at any second".²⁰ This incident was mentioned as a source of driver fear by operators D, F, G, K, and N, during the research for this report.

Violence toward drivers can be severe. The TWU (Melbourne) estimated that of physically assaulted drivers who required medical attention, around 20% required immediate attention.²¹ As examples of severity, Operator C said that 10% of their physical assaults involved multiple punches to a driver; E had a driver hospitalised for a period of time after a serious assault, and G had had a recent violent physical assault on a female driver. Operators A, C, E, G, H, and the TWU, in the interview summaries appended here, strongly expressed the view that bus drivers should be classed as protected persons, with tougher punishments, including consideration of mandatory sentences, for those found guilty of assaulting drivers, similar to those handed down to people who attack emergency workers.

Key point:

A number of bus operators and the TWU said that bus drivers should be classed as 'protected persons', with tougher punishments, including consideration of mandatory sentences, for those found guilty of assaulting drivers, similar to those handed down to people who attack emergency workers.

Fare evasion and non-compliance

A key concern of this report is the tension between driver safety and fare compliance. Anecdotally, operators believe the official PTV data for fare non-compliance on bus is wildly inaccurate. Averaging the lowest route bus non-compliance (no touch-on or fare) range estimates provided in Appendix 3 yields 24%; averaging the highest estimates yields 30%. Some areas and services have an estimated 80% non-compliance. School bus non-compliance ranges from 25% to 90%, and is typically over 50%.²² The three sources that did not provide non-compliance estimates (Operators A, D, and the TWU), all said it was high, especially at schools. Operator G drivers were keeping a tick pad count of non-payers ("fare evaders") so the company could compare numbers with the myki touch-on count; although Operator M said they had found manual counting unreliable, as driver counts "are around

¹⁹ Estimates from Operator A and C managers, email communications, 4 April 2017.

²⁰ Motherwell, 2017 (22 March).

²¹ TWU, email communication, 3 April 2017.

²² In addition to the operator estimates given here, for a bus driver discussion of evasion hotspots and school non-compliance, see the Bus Australia blog, 'Fare evasion on Melbourne buses', Oct 2014 - September 2015, <http://www.busaustralia.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=74625&start=75>, accessed 7 February 2017.

plus or minus 5% accurate, but that's a lot of people over a week's service." An operations manager at Operator G said that fare evasion went from being almost unheard of, to 20%+ with the introduction of myki, and much worse over the last two years, with significant aggression resulting from requests to touch on. Operators and AO's believe fare evasion is at least three times the figure published by PTV (<8%), which is dismissed as far too low by all sources. The non-compliance figures are significant, as driver requests for touch on or fare payment are "easily the biggest trigger" for both verbal abuse and physical assault.²³

Part seven of this report tests these anecdotal observations with a formal quantitative study of fare evasion on Melbourne's metropolitan route bus network.

Key point:

Anecdotally, operators suggested fare evasion (non-compliance) on route buses is at least three times the figure published by PTV. For the operators interviewed, it averaged at least 25%+; on school route buses, it is 50%+.

PTV commissioned research into fare evasion by Monash University's Public Transport Research Group, and a report, *Understanding the Psychology of Fare Evasion*, was published on 16 November 2016. It claimed that \$54M (68%) per year of lost revenue comes from a small percentage of people who "deliberately and always" fare evade. By contrast, accidental or unintentional fare evasion represented a revenue loss of \$4M p.a., committed by some 11% of the total number of fare evaders. Policy recommendations included targeting recidivists.²⁴ As PTV refused permission for BAV to access that publicly funded report,²⁵ and the report's lead author did not respond to my request to access a copy, we are unable to comment more fully on its analysis. However, in a related study by the same authors, the percentage of people who "always (almost all of the time)" fare evade was 2%.²⁶ The study labelled them 'career evaders', and on the basis of one survey comment, claimed in its definition of a 'career evader', that these "take great pride in their behaviour".²⁷ Anecdotal remarks by Operator K's drivers suggest by contrast that evasion in some suburbs has nothing to do with "pride" in freeloading; it is simply a matter of course. It would be logical to think that these are the persons most prone to escalate at drivers as needed, to achieve free travel. The study indicated that another 4% of persons habitually evade more than one quarter of the time. These, too, are likely to be persons who ignore or speak to drivers aggressively in order to travel free. The PTRG research, however, was based on a small interview sample, and may be optimistic. Operator G said 20% of passengers would touch on anyway; maybe 40-50% are opportunistic evaders; and 20% are the hard core more likely to arc up if asked to touch on or pay. Nevertheless, the bulk of passengers may be the 73% who PTRG suggest never, or rarely and unintentionally, evade²⁸, and are most likely those that help make 77% of bus drivers feel satisfied with their role as a driver "most of the time".²⁹ Exposure to distressing and distracting aggression and abuse can directly interfere with the ability of drivers to provide a safe bus service, to the point where it may be unsafe for the driver to continue a journey.³⁰ It has also been shown to lead over time to long term mental illness, including lower

²³ Operator B's words, but it applies to all operators except where drivers do not try to enforce fares.

²⁴ Taken from the outline summary of the research project and report published online by PTRG, at <http://publictransportresearchgroup.info/portfolio-item/understanding-the-psychology-of-fare-evasion/>, accessed 27 March 2017.

²⁵ PTV Customer Service, email communication, 24 March 2017.

²⁶ Delbosc and Currie, 2016: 258 (Table 2).

²⁷ Delbosc and Currie, 2016: 262; see their segmentation definitions, 259.

²⁸ Delbosc and Currie, 2016: 258 (Table 2).

²⁹ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 4.

³⁰ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 5.

resilience.³¹ While anyone can have a bad day, it is routine verbal abuse and aggression, mostly over touch-ons and late running, that wears drivers down over the long term (B, E, F, G, J, K, M, O).³² What needs to be ascertained more clearly is the relationship between fare requests and aggression.

Key point:

There is a clear link between fare non-compliance and aggression toward bus drivers.

The present investigation

One purpose of the present study was to gauge the extent to which aggression toward drivers had increased over the three years since the *MentalHealth@Work* survey, and to obtain a clear understanding of the threshold level at which drivers report verbal abuse to a supervisor. The key question was, “At what point would verbal abuse be bad enough that drivers would bother reporting it to the depot?” Discussion around this question sought to understand different levels of abuse as perceived by staff, and to see how these levels impacted reporting. These distinctions have never been systematically explored in any of the literature, but are vital to understanding how reporting and under-reporting, especially of verbal abuse, works in practice.

Conclusion

Part 1 has highlighted the lack of detailed knowledge about the nature and extent of abuse and assault specifically of bus drivers, especially in the Australian context, and it is still little researched. It observed that the threshold at which verbal abuse is typically reported by drivers, and so brought to the attention of management as of concern, had not previously been systematically investigated. This will be revealed and discussed in Part 2, and is a pioneering study in this area. It has reviewed work on fare evasion and non-compliance, and identified a link between fare non-compliance and rising aggression toward route bus drivers, the extent of which will be set out in Part 2.

³¹ Lincoln and Huntingdon, 2013: 82. This was corroborated by *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 1, that “Survey data collected in this study indicated that bus drivers are showing signs of stress and undiagnosed mental illness in higher numbers than might be expected in the general population”.

³² Stanley, 2015: 10, “The literature suggests that experiencing psychological aggression and intimidation may be at least equally as distressing as physical violence.”

Part 2 - Official data for the physical and verbal assault of bus drivers

This part explains the basis of TSV's official incident data, and why it shows only a fraction of assaults on drivers. It then provides a sound basis to estimate the true extent of aggression toward drivers.

Appraising the numbers

The only available official data for aggression toward bus drivers is that published by Transport Safety Victoria (TSV) since 2008. Under the Bus Safety Regulations (2010), Regulation 24 requires a bus operator to notify the Safety Director of any bus incident. This is defined in Regulation 4 as "a circumstance, act or omission [that] resulted in, or had the potential to result in, the death of, or serious injury to, any person, a loss of control of the bus, or significant damage to property; or an accident or incident that results in a person requiring immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital".

Most verbal abuse and physical assault of drivers that occurs is not reported to TSV, as it does not result in loss of control of a bus. In most cases verbal abuse does not have any potential to result in a loss of control even if the driver is threatened or severely distressed. Similarly, in most cases physical assault does not result in hospital admission, regardless that drivers may seek medical attention from a G.P. Operators find the TSV incident reporting process onerous.³³ Incidents are notified to TSV only if they created a "notifiable" safety risk,³⁴ i.e., there has been an extreme verbal altercation, typically involving police attendance, the stopping of the bus service, or a physical injury requiring in-patient treatment at a hospital.

TSV provided the following data, collated from bus operator notifiable incident reports from 2008 through to 14 February 2017.

Year	Physical assault of bus driver	Verbal assault of bus driver	Totals
2008	3	3	6
2009	8	2	10
2010	6	1	7
2011	14	2	16
2012	17	3	20
2013	16	2	18
2014	21	5	26
2015	18	14	32
2016	23	10	33
2017 (to 14 Feb)	4	1	5
Total	130	43	173

Figure 1: Notifiable incidents as reported by TSV.

³³ E.g. Operator H, that TSV reporting is "time-consuming"; Operator I, "tedious"; Operator C, "Operators are so busy dealing with the fallout that reporting to TSV for [non-hospitalisation cases] is last on the list".

³⁴ Stanley, 2015: 5.

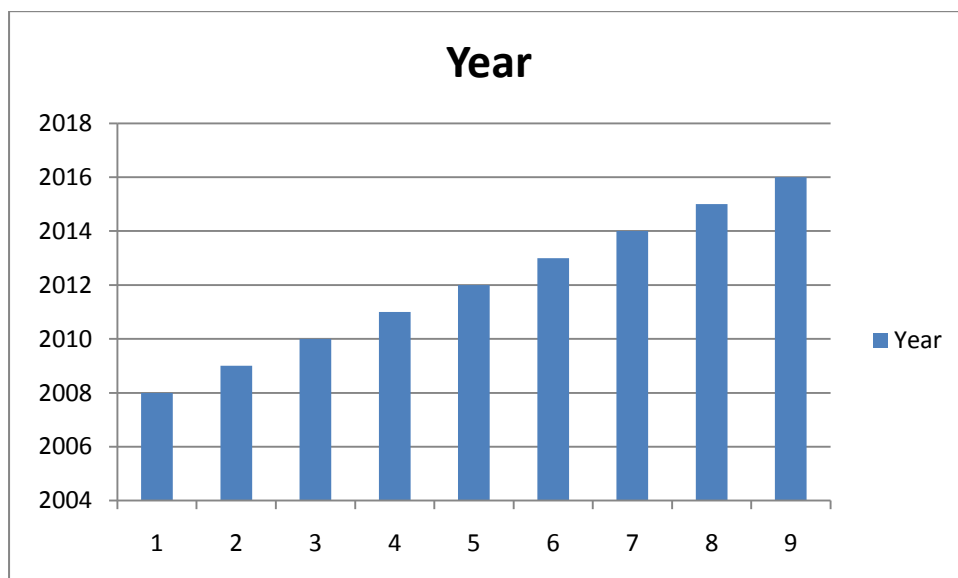


Figure 2: Notifiable incidents as reported by TSV.

The classification as physical or verbal assault is from the incident description provided by operators. The 130 physical assaults are separate from the 43 notified verbal assaults;³⁵ that is, there was no physical contact between the bus driver and the aggressor/s in verbal assaults.

It will be seen that these “totals” vastly understate the extent, particularly of verbal abuse, but also of physical assault across the bus industry. Even given this qualification, an indicative significant and ongoing jump in physical assaults – more than doubling – occurred in 2011, which coincides with the transition to myki on buses.³⁶ Another marked rise in physical assaults occurred from 2014 onwards. Physical assaults including spitting are not only by males; females and multiple persons also offend.³⁷

Key point:

Physical assaults of bus drivers by passengers more than doubled in 2011, which coincides with the transition to myki on buses. Another marked rise in physical assaults occurred from 2014 onwards.

This raises the question as to what level of verbal abuse caused operators to believe that it required notification as assault. TSV confirmed that an incident would meet the Regulation 4 requirements where it included a threat of physical violence, the production of a weapon, or some such escalated or extreme verbal threat. “One indicator, although not completely consistent, is that generally the incident reports include that the police were called, so perhaps [operator classification as] ‘verbal assault’ is something along the lines of when the bus driver calls for police assistance, that indicates the level of ‘abuse’ has gone over the line to something that can be called ‘verbal assault’”.³⁸

³⁵ Clarified with TSV, email communication, 15 February 2017.

³⁶ Myki commenced on metropolitan train services on 29 December 2009, and on buses and trams on 25 July 2010. The option for passengers to use Metcard ceased in December 2012. Source: Wikipedia, ‘metcard’.

³⁷ TSV analysis of 168 notified incidents from 2008 to the end of 2016 showed that 74 assaults were by males, 6 by females, 5 by a combination of male and female assailants, and 83 where the gender of the assailants was not specified. Spitting is classified by TSV as a physical assault (email, 10 February 2017), and was included in 14 (8.3%) of the incident descriptions. It appears to be a rising form of aggression. Large Operator G said it now comprises some 40% of assaults on its drivers, though it is not as common in other operator areas.

³⁸ TSV, email communication, 15 February 2017. “While some operators put such comments as ‘pax threatened to hit driver’ in their report, the majority simply list the incident as ‘pax verbally assaulted driver’ or words along those lines. Our practice is to generally classify the incident in accordance with the operator’s description. We just put each incident into the relevant category in accordance with how the operator has

If correct, this would still massively underestimate the extent of ‘verbal assault’. Operator H alone said that it would call police to its buses at least twice a week for disruptive passenger behaviour.

It is important to realise that the role of the Safety Regulator is strictly delimited. Its reporting is not intended to capture the extent of abuse of bus drivers. It is “at the end of the information chain and, to be honest, not overly interested in the actual words or the force with which they were delivered at the time of the incident. For bus safety, the level of affront is not critical. It is only concerned with anti-social behaviours to the extent that they adversely, or could adversely, impact bus safety”.³⁹ It is the operator that submits the report who determines what constitutes notifiable aggression.

Key point:

TSV reporting was never designed to capture the extent of verbal abuse or physical assault of bus drivers. It is concerned only with extreme incidents that directly impact bus safety.

In 2013, Public Transport Victoria and BAV agreed that TSV figures reflect only the more serious type of incidents,⁴⁰ and underestimate the extent of aggression towards drivers. In consequence, BAV asked its membership, and “operators reported that for every ‘bus incident’ reported to TSV, there are twice as many incidents that are not reported because the nature of the incident doesn’t satisfy the definition in the regulations”.⁴¹ This is also a massive underestimate of the extent of aggression. To Operators G and L, the TSV assault figures would be “the tip of the iceberg.” Even severe verbal abuse and non-injurious physical assault, like pushing and spitting, rarely generate TSV reports. One operator advised that “5% or less” of their physical incidents would meet the TSV ‘notifiable incident’ criteria, of “an incident that results in a person requiring immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital”, consistent with the TWU’s estimate that only around 5% of physical assaults are notified to TSV.⁴² Most operators only report what is required to ensure that they meet their mandatory notification requirements.⁴³ Further, a large proportion of lesser physical assault, such as pushing and spitting on drivers, is not reported to supervisors in the first place.⁴⁴

A Queensland study cited evidence which suggested that “the number of recorded assaults against bus drivers represents only ten percent of assaults and that very few verbal threats to drivers are recorded in any official capacity”.⁴⁵ It cited an American study which estimated that reported bus crime, which included assaults on drivers, may be 25 to 30 times below actual levels.⁴⁶ The main reasons given for under-reporting (time constraints and paperwork, a hyper-masculine culture, incidents being seen as part of the job, a perception that nothing will or can be done, and avoidance of reporting for fear of blame),⁴⁷ are echoed in the Victorian *MentalHealth@Work* report.⁴⁸

called it. Some reports do use terms such as ‘pax abused the driver’ etc., and, given that the operator has gone to the trouble of putting in a report, we will then classify the incident as verbal assault.”

³⁹ TSV, email communication, 15 February 2017.

⁴⁰ Lowe, 2013: 3.

⁴¹ Lowe, 2013: 4.

⁴² Large fleet operator and TWU, email communications, 4 April 2017.

⁴³ See interviews, Appendix 1. Operators were all concerned to meet their compliance requirements, but are most immediately concerned with their WorkCover, counselling, and other business processes.

⁴⁴ For example, TSV classify spitting as physical assault; but where 4 operators (G, K, N, S) and the TWU noted a rise in spitting at drivers, especially in the past two years, it is not always reported to depots by drivers (e.g. Operator K), and likely never by others such as A, C, F, H, and I, whose drivers are unlikely to report anything less than punching or physical injury. Spitting was included in only 14 of the incident reports submitted to TSV over the past 9 years (TSV, email, 10 February 2017), a number dwarfed by the finding from a 2014 survey of some 500 drivers, that 19% of the 100 drivers who stated they had been physically assaulted had been spat on (*MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 31). That alone provides more cases than the entire 9 years of TSV data.

⁴⁵ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 122.

⁴⁶ Levine and Wachs, 1986: 279.

⁴⁷ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 122.

⁴⁸ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 26.

Analysis

TSV data does not include the 95%+ of physical assaults where in-patient treatment in a hospital did not ensue. It would be reasonable to multiply the official figure of 130 physical assaults by at least 20, to obtain a more realistic indication of the level of all forms of physical assault on Victorian bus drivers. Doing so would yield an estimate of 2,600+ physical assaults from 2008 to February 2017.

Key point:

TSV data does not include the 95% of physical assaults where hospitalisation did not occur, and likely no incidents of verbal abuse that did not cross the line into a criminal “verbal assault”. At most only 5% of verbal abuse is reported to depots.

Similarly, TSV incident reports likely record none of the high-level verbal abuse reported to depots by drivers for which police were not called and which, though severe and distressing, did not cross the line into “verbal assault”. At most, 5% of verbal abuse is reported to depots anyway.⁴⁹ As this investigation has shown, it is typically only reported when highly personalised, “in the driver’s face”, or at a level where a driver feels directly threatened, and calls for assistance. Of what is reported to depots, less than 5% ends up on a written report form.⁵⁰ The TWU said that “when a driver is subject to high level personalised abuse but has not felt a need to radio for assistance, they are likely to tell their supervisor after the shift, who will typically ask if they want to take it further. Most drivers decline, as once they have got it ‘off their chest’ they are not interested in form-filling, but want to go home. When a supervisor does a report form it might go to a senior manager, or it might just get filed. If every driver reported everything, a supervisor is not going to push it up the chain.” In many cases drivers do not fill in a written report even for strong verbal abuse, or for lower level physical assault including spitting and pushing.⁵¹ This renders the vast majority of verbal incidences invisible.

Key point:

Verbal abuse is typically only reported to the depot when highly personalised, “in the driver’s face”, or at a level where a driver feels directly threatened, and calls for help; and even then it is often not formally recorded. This renders the vast majority of verbal incidences invisible. Further, most spitting, pushing and drink throwing (minor physical assaults) are not reported to depots and in turn TSV.

Of what is formally recorded at depots, next to none is considered to meet the mandatory reporting requirements of TSV, of an incident “that resulted in, or had the potential to result in, a loss of control of the bus”. One medium-sized operator thought it might be half a percent, but like others, could not recall any time when he himself had notified a verbal assault.⁵² If 0.5% is allowed for verbal abuse of such severity that it led, or might potentially have led, to a loss of control of a bus, it would be reasonable to multiply TSV’s figures of notified verbal assault by 200 to estimate all verbal abuse reported to a supervisor, both the 5% that is recorded on a form and the 95% that is not. As only 5%

⁴⁹ Operator B, “Only maybe 5% report it, when it’s particularly bad”, reflected in most operator comments.

⁵⁰ Operator H, “don’t want to spend more time going over it”; K, “they don’t bother”; M, “few are submitted”.

⁵¹ Appendix 1, stated in most medium and large operator interview comments. While most operators stated that physical assault would always be reported by a driver, it is clear from the interviews that, as far as can be known, physical injury is always reported; but many instances of pushing, throwing, spitting, etc., are not.

⁵² Operator L, in response to a post-interview question. Another 3 depot managers (1 large operation, and 2 medium), when asked, similarly could not recall any instance of notifying a verbal assault to TSV. The chance of verbal-only aggression leading to loss of control of a bus is further lowered in that, even if the bus was moving when it began, the first thing the driver would do is pull over and stop if seemed to be escalating.

of verbal abuse is reported to depots in the first place, multiply by 20 again, to indicate the extent of all verbal abuse of Victorian bus drivers. Each verbal assault reported to TSV thus represents a valid approximation of 4,000 incidences of verbal abuse at all levels of severity. On this basis, there were likely over 172,000 verbal incidences over the nine years from January 2008 to 14 February 2017.

If the TSV table of notified physical and verbal assault of bus drivers is reworked to estimate the total amount of all incidences of physical assault (including pushing and spitting), and all levels of verbal abuse, understood as any aggressive verbal comment, including the finger (as distinct from non-aggressive incidental rudeness), on the basis presented above, then the following estimates apply:

Year	Physical <u>ASSAULT</u> of bus driver	Verbal <u>ABUSE</u> of bus driver	Totals
2008	60	12,000	12,060
2009	160	8,000	8,160
2010	120	4,000	4,120
2011	280	8,000	8,280
2012	340	12,000	12,340
2013	320	8,000	8,320
2014	420	20,000	20,420
2015	360	56,000	56,360
2016	460	40,000	40,460
<i>2017 (to 14 Feb)</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>4,000</i>	<i>4,080</i>
Total	2,600	172,000	174,600

Figure 3: BAV extrapolated minimum estimates of abuse and assault on bus drivers

Key point:

When realistically estimated percentages of verbal abuse, and of lesser physical aggression not reported to depots by drivers, plus occurrences mentioned to depots but where no report form is submitted, are taken into account, physical assaults on route bus drivers is some 20 times higher, and verbal abuse at all levels is some 4000 times higher, than TSV data suggests.

As the number of incidents per year have risen dramatically during the period from 2008-2017, a simple annual average is meaningless. The significant points of increase are: 2011, when notifiable physical assaults more than doubled over the preceding year, and; 2014, when they increased exponentially. As has been observed, “underreporting of violent and antisocial incidents on drivers, combined with the paucity of any other effective data-collection strategy compromises industry capacity to address the problems; an unworkable situation if stakeholders are going to adequately respond to the challenges of bus driver safety in Australia”.⁵³ It is imperative that the true extent of aggression toward bus drivers be acknowledged and addressed.

Key point:

Extrapolation of TSV’s “notifiable incident” data to include statistically-based estimates of non-notifiable physical assaults and non-notifiable verbal abuse suggests there were a minimum of 40,460 cases of verbal abuse and physical assault of Victorian bus drivers in 2016.

⁵³ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 124.

Conclusion

Government and the media, and even the bus industry itself, have for most of the last decade relied on TSV “notified incident” data for an indication of the extent of abuse and assault on bus drivers. The suitability of this data for this purpose has never been subject to critical review. Nor has any previous attempt been made to establish, by means of systematic enquiry, what percentage of verbal abuse and physical assault are typically reported by drivers to depots, how much of this is formally recorded, and what is then reported to TSV under the mandatory incident notification requirements. For the first time, a clear, reasoned basis for such estimates has been put forward. The resulting estimate of the extent of verbal abuse and violence toward bus drivers is shocking and far worse than what is being reported.

Part 3 – Triggers for abuse and assault

This part sets out and discusses the triggers of aggression identified by the interviewed operators. Apart from the first two, they are not ranked in order of frequency, and levels of aggression vary.

Context and complexities

A recent eighteen month Queensland study of incivility and violence towards bus drivers showed that “fare conflict and late running precipitate the majority of aggressive events.” Within that, six-month’s observational data showed that “fare evasion was by far the most common type of incident observed (63%)”, regardless that in only 17% of incidents the passenger/s were drunk or drugged.⁵⁴ In other words, non-compliance incidents cannot be explained away as a result of substance abuse.

The same prime triggers apply in Victoria. Ticketing is far and away the leading trigger for aggression towards bus drivers, including to those who are told that they may not ask for touch ons if they feel a risk to their own safety. Typically there is no advice on how to gauge this; in practice it is based on hunches. It is the request to touch on, no matter how delivered, that provokes aggressive verbal and non-verbal (the finger) responses. This was abundantly clear from at least 10 of the 16 interviewed operators, as well as the Authorised Officers and the TWU. As Operator E commented, “verbal abuse is mostly triggered by ticket conflict; the first conversation with the driver is about ticketing”.

The only two operators for whom late running was a bigger cause of aggression than fare requests were those whose drivers often in practice do not ask passengers to touch on, and was the second major trigger for aggression given by all other operators, the AOs, and the TWU. Any attempt to “push harder” on fares dramatically increases the risk of physical assault: “About 80-90% of physical assaults are over fare evasion, triggered by requests from drivers to touch on or top up” (Operator H).

⁵⁴ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 125.

Operators commented on the following triggers for aggression during interviews for this report:

1. **Ticketing.** Of the 16 operators interviewed, 14 ranked asking for touch ons as the highest trigger for aggression, significantly higher than all other triggers, and in 3 cases, the only trigger mentioned. The one exception was G, who ranked it equal to demands to get on and off between stops, and assaults where the reason is unknown and CCTV showed nothing to trigger it. Between 1% and 5% of verbal abuse escalates into a physical assault of any description,⁵⁵ typically through escalated interaction. However, operators E, H, and J mentioned cases where a knife threat, and 2 cases of punching respectively, occurred immediately as a result of a request to touch on, without any interactive escalation. Three estimates of the percentage of aggression that results from fare requests, by B, C, and H, were 70%, 90%, and 80% respectively (see Appendix 3), an average of 80%; similar to the AOs (90%).⁵⁶ In addition to the request to touch on, aggression is triggered by driver requests to top up, and by any delays as passengers do so. No operator mentioned conflicts over drivers requesting proof of concession entitlement; it would appear that drivers rarely attempt this enforcement role.⁵⁷

Key point:

Of the 16 operators interviewed, 14 ranked asking for touch ons as the highest trigger for aggression, significantly higher than all other triggers, and in 3 cases, the only trigger mentioned. The AOs estimated that 90% of aggression results from touch on/fare requests.

2. **Running late,** or not according to the timetable, was the second biggest trigger of aggression for 13 of the 16 interviewed operators. For two others, it was the biggest trigger. Of these, Operator I said, “Probably the most abuse and aggression comes from late running, which is not the driver’s fault, but passengers vent their frustration at drivers. It is an infrastructure issue with timetabling, service frequency and traffic flow involved.” To Operator L, “This triggers the most intense abuse, where drivers are personally blamed for the lateness and missing train connections. If people have missed a bus by a minute, they have to wait ... and the next driver cops it.”

Operator G alone did not mention late running in its list of main triggers of aggression, in which it gave equal place to ticketing, demands to alight between stops, and “unknown reasons”. Given the other 13 operators to whom late running was the second biggest issue, it is reasonable to think that issues connected with late running would likely figure high in operator G’s list, if they had enquired in more detail about what the “unknown reasons” for aggression might have been.

Key point:

Running late, or not according to the timetable, was the second biggest trigger of aggression for 13 of the 16 interviewed operators. For two other operators, it was the biggest trigger.

⁵⁵ Operators C and A respectively.

⁵⁶ Tabulated in Appendix 3, from Appendix 1 interview summaries.

⁵⁷ In response to a follow-up question, a large fleet manager advised me on 18 April 2017, that when myki was new, perhaps around 20% of drivers would ask for proof of concession entitlement, but the number declined, and continues to do so, as a result of passenger resentment and abuse. He thought it would now be “rare” that drivers would ask for proof of such entitlement, and that these would be mostly older, “old school” drivers.

3. **Myki flaws.**⁵⁸ Ten of the 16 operators interviewed blamed myki as contributing to aggression toward drivers (Appendix 3). Most critically, myki is built on an honesty system with which it was assumed that passengers would comply. Myki places drivers in the role of “touch-on overseers”; but as they are powerless to enforce ticketing, they are routinely ignored or told to get stuffed (A, B, J, K, L, M, N, TWU, AOs). The strongest operator criticism was that the staggered introduction with headless mode on bus in effect trained passengers not to pay. Non-compliance on bus dates from the transition to myki, along with escalating aggression, and the general view was that it is too late to fix; “the horse has bolted” (O). It is clear that a substantial proportion of the public continue to believe that if for example they have a myki pass, or touch on at a station, then they do not have to touch on in bus. Operator K said Vline staff told this to their passengers. There are BDC/FPD faults, lack of retailers, etc.; little better than when it was launched. Small-value top ups, often in small change, delay and frustrate drivers. Regardless that the AOs said that while the old myki readers were slow, but the new ones are fine, there are still times when cards must be held against the reader, rather than tapped, until they are recognised. Incidentally, the term “touch on”, rather than Queensland and New South Wales’ “tap on”, was unfortunate, and has long inspired vulgar sexual jokes. As the first and often only point of contact between passengers and PTV, drivers cop it bad (Operator F).

Key point:

Increasing fare evasion on bus stems from the transition to myki, along with escalating aggression, and the general view was that it is too late to fix; “the horse has bolted”. Myki places drivers in the role of “touch-on overseers”, and they are routinely ignored or told to 'get stuffed.'

4. **System issues.** A number of issues were mentioned that cause passenger frustration, and frequently trigger aggression toward drivers. Drivers have to deal with bus incidents, breakdowns, cancelled services, road delays and traffic issues, poor service times, buses not meeting trains (with timetables not indicating this), and buses not completing a run as expected if it is pulled off early at changeover. Operator I said, “Rail replacement drivers get a lot of verbal abuse, as if the rail replacement is their fault. There are also unplanned delays like rail breakdowns or emergencies, which are not notified in advance as are level crossing replacements. Drivers are first on the scene and cop the grief.”
5. **Instructing passengers.** This might include safety warnings, such as to be seated, or behavioural requests such as to cease disruptive behaviour, including interfering with safety equipment (window hammers, fire extinguishers, bus fittings), disruptively loud talking or music, feet on seats, passenger conflict, graffiti, window scratching, and other anti-social behaviour, along with instructions to leave the vehicle as result of escalated verbal abuse, threats, or actual or attempted physical assault.
6. **Passengers wanting to get on or off at a place other than a bus stop.** This demand regularly leads to strong verbal aggression and, depending on the passenger, may lead to door kicking and punching, or similar highly disruptive behaviour likely to cause the driver to stop the bus and allow the exit for safety reasons, including the safety of other passengers and fear of physical assault. Operator G said this and ticketing were their equal biggest triggers for aggression from known causes.

⁵⁸ Myki system failures and deficiencies have been well publicised and criticised, including by the Victoria Auditor-General’s report of June 2015, and will not be reviewed here.

7. **Unmet passenger expectations of drivers.** Several operators said that drivers have been abused by passengers for letting others board without touching on, and that passengers ring the depot and PTV to complain about it. Honest passengers tend to feel that, as they have touched on, all should do so, and make no allowance for the driver's assessment of the risk of asking any particular person for the fare. Some passengers call the driver out and say, "Why don't you tell them to pay?" (B). Passengers also expect bus drivers to intervene in on-board conflict between other passengers, e.g. squabbles, racial or other abuse, and physical aggression, but, as TSV point out, a driver's priority and duty is safe driving,⁵⁹ and drivers have no ability to intervene in passenger disputes.
8. **Road rage** stood out as an abuse trigger for Operator N. Verbal and finger-sign abuse is well known (E). While it is rare except in road rage that a person boards a bus and directly assaults a driver (B), it can escalate quickly into physical conflict (I). Apart from abuse when a bus pulls out from a stop, or after a collision, vehicles also cut in front of buses, park in bus zones and display aggression when tooted to move (M), and fulminate at the driver if a bus is going slowly to keep on timetable (TWU).

Analysis

Aggression primarily results directly from fare requests, and is independent of other psychological factors that may make certain passengers more likely to arc up. Drivers are forced into passivity for their own safety, as "when physical assaults occur they are most often initiated from verbal abuse that escalates".⁶⁰ Operators acknowledge that the risks and stresses are real, and in practice at least four do not take any steps to enforce the ticketing requirements on drivers. While there is some acknowledgement by PTV that ticketing causes conflict in its reluctant acceptance of "ask once" policies, Operator L said, "If PTV want bus drivers to ask for fares, they have to give operators and drivers the support and tools to do it. If that's not the case, and it isn't, drivers shouldn't be asking for fares, the same as train and tram. The reality is that PTV provides no support at all". To Operator J, "drivers have to make decisions for themselves on the road, and their most important job is to get people from A to B safely, not to cop abuse, aggression and stress over fare evaders".

Operator A said that there is a lot of fare evasion by school children, especially secondary students, and that anecdotally not many have myki passes now, "it is daily touch on". While they would not guess a percentage, non-compliance by school students averaged 60% among those who gave estimates (see Appendix 3). "School kids may or may not have passes, but they are not touching on, and the volume of annual passes has declined. For school kids, non-compliance is probably 50%, and could be 80% with some schools" (Operator K). This warrants investigation as to whether there has been a progressive decline in the purchase of myki school concession passes over the last 8 years. If so, it may indicate increasing fare avoidance by school children, which may correlate with increased disrespect to, and conflict with, bus drivers, particularly over touch-on requests. The link observed by *MentalHealth@Work* between requests to touch on and aggressive responses is noteworthy,⁶¹ and appears to have developed into a broad culture of insolent non-compliance. As Operator L put it, "kids have not paid for five years, and tell drivers to get stuffed if they are asked to touch on."

Key point:

Increasing fare avoidance accompanied by aggressive responses to requests to touch on, appears to have developed into a broad culture of insolent non-compliance amongst school students.

⁵⁹ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 5.

⁶⁰ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 125.

⁶¹ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 24.

Myki is routinely described in the media as “troubled-plagued”, and has been so even before it commenced on bus. It was heavily criticised by 10 of the 16 operators. While industry does not realistically think PTV will give up outsourcing fare collection to operators (D), there was a strong feeling that PTV provides no effective support for drivers at any level above signage. Train and tram drivers are not asked to collect fares, and the majority of interviewed operators thought the same should apply on bus, with compliance left to appropriately trained Authorised Officers.

Key point:

There was a strong feeling amongst operators and staff that PTV provides no effective support for drivers at any level above signage.

Additional top-up issues

Significant driver time is consumed by small-value top-ups. The chart from PTV below shows the distribution of top-ups on bus between January and March 2017. The vast majority of top-ups are \$5.00 or less. Several operators said that a large number of top-ups are paid in coin (Appendix 1). On analysis of PTV figures, there were 120 million metropolitan passengers in 2016, of which 3.4%, or 4 million, topped up on bus. Of these, 62%, or some 2.5 million people, topped up with \$5.00 or less.⁶²

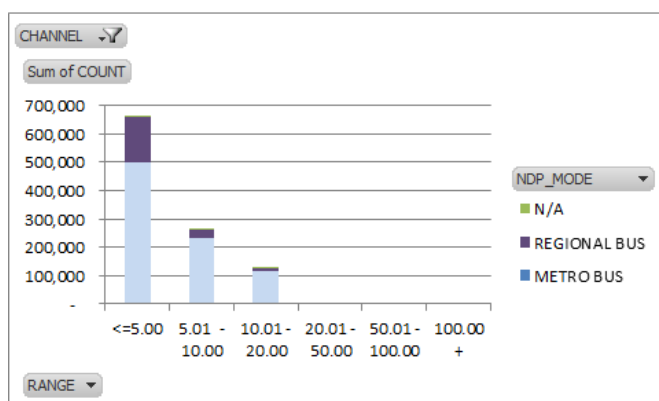


Figure 4: BDC Top Up ranges, January-March 2017. Courtesy PTV

Myki was supposed to be a largely cashless system (B, TWU), but some areas mostly pay by cash (C, L, O, P), which affects on-time running. Several operators said cash on buses should be done away with completely (E, G, P). The TWU does not object to drivers accepting voluntary top-ups from people wishing to do so, but said drivers should never have to ask anyone for a fare (Appendix 2.1).

Key point:

Myki was supposed to be a largely cashless system, but in 2016, 2.5 million bus passengers topped up in small amounts, often in coins, of \$5.00 or less. This impacts on-time running. The strongest operator criticism was that the staggered introduction of myki, with headless mode on bus, and AOs directed not to issue fines, in effect trained passengers not to pay.

⁶² Analysis by Parry Serafim, Manager Planning and Industry Development, BAV, 13 April 2017.

There may be other causes of aggression toward drivers than those raised in these interviews. For example, the random killing of a Brisbane bus driver in 2016 was not by a passenger, and was not provoked by anything the driver did or did not do. An act of hijacking, hostage-taking, or terrorism would also be random in that the driver would be an accidental victim, in the same way as occurred in the attempted hijacking of a Melbourne bus in 2015, and the 2016 Sydney Lindt café siege. In such extreme random events, the cause may not be known, but it is not triggered by bus or driver issues.

Similarly, rock-throwing at buses is a major cause of driver stress in certain suburbs that was not mentioned in either of the two earlier BAV reports which considered aggression towards drivers.⁶³ This may be because those studies focussed on the psychology of bus passengers, and did not consider more broadly the impact of other types of aggressive incidences directed at buses and drivers, that nevertheless contribute to the psychological toll that drivers suffer. Rock throwing was mentioned by Operators D and E in the present study,⁶⁴ and the AOs mentioned kids goading drivers by opening the rear engine cover as a bus is moving off. Rock throwing is no less an act of random violence than other terrorist acts, just with a non-explosive weapon, and its shock effect on drivers is severe. Other acts such as hatch opening, bus surfing, and hitching, all contribute to driver stress.



Passengers are not the only cause of driver stress.
Left, bus surfing photo, *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 April, 2017, <http://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/4575120/bendigo-company-hits-out-at-bus-surfing/>
Right, ride hitching photo, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bh1TzR5fv2M>



Conclusion

Verbal abuse and physical assault of drivers by passengers is overwhelmingly triggered by drivers' requests for passengers to comply with ticketing requirements. Over 80% of physical assaults have escalated from touch on or top up requests, and the chances of abuse and assault are statistically predictable. Late running was the second biggest issue raised by operators, and warrants further industry attention. BAV continues to engage with PTV concerning operator routes and efficiencies. The range of other issues listed here also need attention.

⁶³ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015, and Stanley, 2015.

⁶⁴ In Brisbane, rock throwing similarly worsens during school holidays, Lincoln and Huntingdon, 2013: 83.

Part 4 - The legislative framework for passenger behaviour and farebox compliance

This part critically examines how current legislation, which imposes a range of expectations and duties on bus drivers, impacts upon their role, and makes them into frequent victims of aggression. The relevant sections of the legislation are provided in Appendix 4.

Passenger behaviour and bus safety duties. Under the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2015, Reg. 66 (2), drivers may ask persons to leave a bus if they are behaving in a violent, noisy or offensive manner, or appear to be affected by alcohol or drugs and likely to behave offensively. The Bus Safety Act 2009, Section 15, requires bus operators to ensure the safety of the service so far as is reasonably practicable. Section 17 requires drivers to take reasonable measures to ensure passenger safety. Together, the legislation intends that a bus driver control the bus environment so as to ensure a safe and comfortable journey for paid passengers.

Legislative expectations regarding farebox compliance. Under the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017, Regs. 23 and 24, drivers must, unless there is a “reasonable excuse” not to do so, ask people to scan their myki, top up, or pay the correct fare, as appropriate. The Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2015, Reg. 66(3), allows drivers to ask a person to leave a bus if they reasonably believe the person has failed to comply with the Ticketing Regulations. The Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual, p. 5, ‘Fares’, subparagraph (b), requires that a passenger pay the correct fare or touch on, top up, or purchase a myki, immediately upon boarding the bus. Metropolitan and regional bus service contracts require operators (in practice, drivers) to use “best endeavours” to ensure passengers have the correct paid ticketing, to “direct passengers to purchase a valid ticket if intercepted without one”, and request proof of concession entitlement. Regional service contracts further require operators to “supervise the handling and management of fare revenue and conduct regular reviews of counter measures to prevent fare evasion”.

Analysis

The authority to ask a person to leave a bus is necessarily delimited by that person’s willingness to recognise that authority, and to comply with reasonable directions. In practice, drivers cannot stop someone boarding: “All you’re going to do is put yourself on the line for abuse, spitting and assault” (Operator I). Drivers have no effective control over passenger behaviour. Operators M and O instruct drivers not to approach passengers in the event of minor misbehaviour and on-board vandalism, such as graffiti and window scratching. A driver cannot touch a passenger except in self-defence.⁶⁵ Drivers are liable to be disciplined if they appear to have contributed to escalating conflict (TWU). If passengers are fighting, half the time the driver doesn’t know what it’s about (Operator B). All the driver can do is stop the bus, open the doors, politely ask them to leave, call police, wait, and hope.

Key point:

Drivers have no effective control over passenger behaviour. In case of trouble, all the driver can do is stop the bus, open the doors, ask them to leave, then call police, wait, and hope.

⁶⁵ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 7.

The Ticketing Regulations in practice holds drivers, as the operator's agent, responsible for ensuring fare compliance. A "reasonable excuse" for a driver to not ask for a fare is typically understood to include a driver's "reasonable" fear for their own safety. For example, one large operators Staff Notice (17 October 2016) states, "Where an employee judges that asking a passenger to pay a fare is likely to lead to conflict or a violent response, they may refrain from doing so. No driver will be disciplined for not asking a passenger to touch on where they sincerely believe that they are risking their health or safety by doing so". Thirteen of the 16 interviewed operators hold a policy along these lines, but, the basis for any such belief is in practice based on hunches. It is further complicated by some 23% of longer-term drivers suffering symptoms similar to PTSD from stressors over time that make them liable to enhanced perceptions of potential risk.⁶⁶ No-one knows if any given passenger is likely to arc up. The "ask once for the fare" policy was developed to meet the letter of operators' contract obligations. The possibility that the company may question the sincerity of a driver's belief that any given passenger posed a safety risk, such that they did not feel confident to ask for a fare, imposes a further stress on drivers. This can be further exacerbated by other passengers calling out the driver for not asking all to touch on (Operator B). Some operators direct drivers to "ask once, but only once", as they are well aware that insistence on fares is a trigger for escalated abuse and potential assault.

As this report has now provided a basis to estimate the true and rising level of abuse and assault of drivers, the large majority of which is triggered by ticketing requests, one might question the aptness of this policy. All operators interviewed felt that PTV does little to protect drivers (see Appendix 1). To Operator L, "PTV need to make a decision about asking for fares. If they want bus drivers to ask, they have to give operators and drivers the support and tools to do it. If that's not the case, and it isn't, drivers shouldn't be asking for fares, the same as train and tram."

There is a hard core of fare evaders, in addition to drug and alcohol-affected passengers and hoons, that typically act aggressively to drivers. Drivers suffer long term psychological damage from routine abuse, and are also vulnerable to physical assault. "Drivers have learned to keep their mouth shut, 'don't hear and don't see', as escalation happens quickly" (Operator I). PTV has no answers outside of penalising operators for not meeting contract requirements, and requiring bus drivers to enforce ticketing. All operators stated that drivers are not, and cannot be, AOs. Most physical assaults have come from escalation over fare requests (H, K), and the results of such assaults can be severe. In practice, drivers are on their own, with back up only in the form of a mobile phone, a duress button or a 2 way radio. All operators said that the infrequency of AOs leaves them in the lurch. To C, "We can't see that PTV will give up outsourcing fare compliance to bus operators. The Regulations are what they are. We can work on 'best endeavours'; but drivers' discretion needs to be exercised appropriately." This is a message PTV does not want to hear, if only because it is logistically impossible to put AOs on every bus, regardless that the problem is common to all countries that have implemented similar proof-of-payment ticketing systems.⁶⁷

Key point:

Bus drivers suffer long term psychological damage from routine abuse, and are also vulnerable to physical assault. Drivers are not, and cannot be, AOs. They are on their own. The legislation leaves drivers in the lurch.

⁶⁶ Lincoln and Huntingdon, 2013: 82; Stanley, 2015: 8; AOs.

⁶⁷ Barbarino et al., 2015: 184.

Barbarino et al. showed that persons dissatisfied with a bus service are more than 3 times likely to fare evade than those satisfied with it. Surprisingly, “having already been fined in the past increases the likelihood of evasion, 2.856 times, compared with never having been fined.” In a direction opposite to that of PTV (increasing the cost of infringement fines and denying the validity of appeals from circumstance), they showed that it was likely to be more effective to “curb fare evasion by strengthening inspections rather than working on the value of the fine.”⁶⁸ The Victorian penalty-driven culture seems short sighted and antagonistic. On bus, drivers suffer aggression and abuse for this and other system failures (I, L, O).

Key point:

Persons dissatisfied with a bus service are more than 3 times likely to fare evade than those satisfied with it. Having been fined in the past statistically increases the likelihood of recurrence.

There is a need for a consistent approach by industry (Operator H, BAV). The question that needs to be addressed is whether an “ask once, if ‘safe’ to do so” farebox policy, poses in practice a direct threat to driver safety. If so, there is a need to discuss what both policy and practice should become. The concern is real: 9 of the 16 operators, and the TWU, said drivers should not have to ask for fares.

Key point:

There is a need for a consistent approach of fare enforcement by the entire bus industry, not just by some.

As a tangent to this, if it was decided that bus drivers should no longer be responsible for fare collection, in this case the sale and top up of mykis, this would necessarily benefit on-time running, the second biggest trigger of aggression to drivers. The “purchase or top up” requirements of the Fares and Ticketing Manual, ‘Fares’, subparagraph (b), apply only on bus and could immediately be dispensed with, as they were on tram when the previously installed myki machines were removed.

Key point:

As farebox policy poses a direct threat to driver safety, there is an urgent need to discuss what policy and practice revisions should occur. Nine of the sixteen interviewed bus operators, as well as the TWU, said that drivers should not have to ask for fares. Immediate removal of this bus-only requirement would benefit on-time running and reduce abuse and assaults.

Conclusion

The legislation is intended to regulate passenger behaviour and ticketing compliance. On trams and trains, drivers are completely separated from passengers, and compliance is enforced by Authorised Officers, typically working in teams of at least three. On bus, as a legacy from the pre-myki proof-of-payment system, drivers working alone and unprotected are expected to enforce ticketing validity and proof of concession entitlement. The result is widespread verbal abuse at various levels, and the constant threat of physical assault. This results in long-term psychological damage to bus drivers, as well as hundreds of cases of actual physical assault on drivers per year, some 20% of which are so severe as to require immediate medical attention.

There is a need for a consistent approach on bus that puts driver safety first. The “purchase or top up” requirements for bus could immediately be dispensed with, as they were on tram when previously installed myki machines were removed. In addition, it is clear that the role of “ticketing overseers”, which the legislation imposes on bus drivers, has not been workable for several years, and a new dialogue between all parties is urgently needed.

⁶⁸ Barbarino et al., 2015: 194.

Part 5 – Physical risk reduction (engineering) measures

This part evaluates physical measures that have been implemented to varying extents, which are intended to reduce the risk of aggression to drivers, or increase their confidence in their own safety. The following measures have been considered and/or implemented by operators to various degrees, but they have not been universally adopted, or held effective as stand-alone solutions.

Engineering for driver safety

Given a marked rise in aggression, including physical assault, over the past three years, and that bus drivers are necessarily in close proximity to passengers, engineering buses to afford greater physical protection to drivers, whether by design, modification, or retrofitting, is an essential consideration. The measures discussed here contribute to driver safety, but do not ensure it. An additional benefit is psychological; for example, the driver feels better for having a duress button to call for assistance, even though it affords no physical protection in itself. There may be other physical risk reduction measures available that are not included in this list.

Driver safety (security) screens and loops provide a physical barrier between the driver and aggressive passengers. There has been considerable discussion about the fitting of safety screens. In the 2014 *MentalHealth@Work* survey, some drivers commented that a screen or barricade makes it harder to interact with passengers and ask for fares.⁶⁹ Stanley cited a 2014 Canadian study which similarly suggested that drivers prefer to be able to interact with passengers and so chose not to use the barrier, and that screens increase tension by making interaction harder.⁷⁰ While this view was echoed by a minority of operator staff in interviews for this report, the majority now feel that screens are needed, with some stating that neither passengers nor drivers want to interact. Most drivers say to AOs that they want the screens. As the primary cause of interaction is fare requests, and these interactions are frequently negative, this is unsurprising. As the TSV assault data indicates, the landscape has changed considerably since 2014. An AO observed that while some drivers think screens separate them from their passengers, “they can still be personable with a screen in place”.

Key point:

Most drivers tell Authorised Officers that they want screens. While some drivers think screens separate them from their passengers, they can still be personable with a screen in place.

Negotiation between BAV and PTV resulted in agreement that all new low floor route buses will be supplied fitted with driver security screens and loops to an agreed ceiling price. A retrofit initiative will subsidise the installation of security screens in all low floor and some midi contract route buses built in 2004 or later, intended to be completed (except for one operator) by 1 July 2019. There are some differences in the type of screens operators have chosen to install; for example, there are different gauges of mesh screen; different designs of door, screen and loop combinations; and different bus body designs that affect how the installation is to be done. One operator is considering a full glass screen, rather than mesh screens, due to the rise in spitting and liquid throwing.

CCTV has been held to have “a modest deterrence value”,⁷¹ and this is true with the proviso that when someone is displaying aggression, they are typically not thinking about the penalties (Operator C). On the other hand, Operator B said that some drivers have told aggressive passengers that they are on CCTV, and the passenger has settled down. Operator O said they think passengers tend to behave a bit better when they know they’re being watched. It likely has a deterrence value for milder potential aggressors; but neither drivers nor operators give it much weight as a deterrent when there is any escalation. It can nevertheless play a key role in the identification of aggressors, as

⁶⁹ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 24.

⁷⁰ Stanley, 2015: 30.

⁷¹ Stanley, 2015: 32.

seen in the footage of an assault on a driver by two women in Dandenong.⁷² A suggestion that as CCTV can be expensive, “it is possible that advertising the presence of a camera, even if it is not a working one, may offer some deterrent”,⁷³ shows little understanding of the realities drivers face, or the reasonable expectation that everything possible should be done to bring aggressors to justice.

CCTV seems to be an installation option for new bus purchases, rather than a standard item. It has been retrofitted by some operators, but not necessarily across their whole fleet. Of the 16 operators interviewed for this report, 7 do not have CCTV fitted in all buses. In 3 of these fleets it was fitted in less than 50% of buses. This is unacceptably low for 2017, and BAV considers that all contracted route buses should be fitted with effective CCTV by June 2019.

Even when fitted, CCTV can be unreliable. The AOs reported that when one large operator has been asked to supply footage, it has never been available. A recent Brisbane study of incidents on more than 300 buses noted limitations of CCTV footage, “most notably poor visual and audio quality”.⁷⁴ On the other hand, Operator E commented that their CCTV quality was quite good. Clearly there are differences between CCTV systems, and in the effectiveness of camera placement in vehicles. Several operators commented that CCTV is prone to hard disc crashes. It is potentially useful for incident analysis, but that depends on having good footage. Operators also commented that it acts as a control on drivers, who are conscious of not acting in a way likely to cause them to be blamed for conflict escalation. Potentially this may contribute to a lower sense of self-worth, if they feel they cannot answer back to uncalled-for rudeness and verbal abuse for fear of disciplinary action. An insistence on a reasonable level of respect is part of normal human behaviour. The view that drivers should always “serve with a smile” is drawn from the retail environment, and “has a tendency to sanction unruly behaviour”.⁷⁵ In this situation, “If a driver is abused, of course he’s likely to fire back” (Operator N). CCTV should be a foundation specification for all contracted buses and part of the ceiling price. Those operators who do not have universal CCTV should negotiate a fleet wide retrofitting program with PTV. While operators encourage drivers not to escalate aggression, it is understandable that in some circumstances they may react to provocation, and de-escalation training is also needed.

Key point:

CCTV should form part of the specification for all contracted buses and operators without universal CCTV should negotiate a fleet wide retrofitting program with PTV. To be effective, CCTV must be properly fitted, working, take clear images, regularly tested for reliability, and backed up following any incidents, so it can be availed to police or AOs.

Go-Pros (fitted or wearable video cameras) are a relatively undiscussed tool, but many Australian ambulance drivers wear personal Go-Pros on their jackets to record all interaction with clients, and supplying body cameras to paramedics is under discussion in Queensland.⁷⁶ The AOs suggested that dash-mounted Go-Pros might capture facial images of hooded aggressors that are not captured by roof-mounted CCTV.

⁷² CCTV footage, linked in Carey, 2016.

⁷³ Stanley, 2015: 32.

⁷⁴ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 123.

⁷⁵ Lincoln and Gregory, 2015: 120.

⁷⁶ Personal discussion with a paramedic, March 2017; cf. ‘LNP pushes on GoPros trials for Qld ambos’, news.com.au, 22 December 2015, <http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/lnp-pushes-on-gopro-trials-for-qld-ambos/news-story/c58f75669d4a5544e5341e406af8b1df>

Dash cams are fitted on some buses, and may have value in reviewing incidents such as crashes and resulting road rage. The authors watched footage showing a utility drive out in front of, and lightly collide with, a bus, then drive off. The operator was trying to read the license plate from the footage, but the image was not clear enough. Had it become a road rage incident, the offender was clearly at fault.

GPS tracking enables the precise location of a vehicle to be advised to emergency services. Smartrak GPS tracking has been fitted to all metropolitan route buses, and on regional myki buses in Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo, La Trobe Valley, and Seymour. Some operators also have their own separate GPS tracking installed for internal fleet management.

Duress buttons are fitted in many but not all bus fleets. Pressing the button alerts the depot that a serious incident is in progress, but depots are not all manned through extended operating hours.

Two-way radio is fitted in some fleets so that drivers can communicate both with the operator and each other in the event of emergency, and also so the operator can advise of operational changes such as re-routing to avoid a situation, or to swap drivers around in unexpected circumstances. Its efficacy varies with terrain and operator monitoring. The AOs noted that there are places with signal dropout where a driver cannot radio or call for assistance. Operator E only monitors two-way radio during office hours. While it is perceived as an additional support mechanism by drivers, the TWU said that three fleets cut support to drivers by shutting down two-way radios at various times such that drivers could not readily call for assistance or warn other drivers of trouble, but it was restored after union involvement. Operator H said that passengers can hear the two-way radio, for example with operations telling the driver to call police. On the one hand this might induce the aggressor to leave the vehicle; on the other it might further agitate an aggressor. A similar point could be made as regards a suggestion by Operator G, that it might be possible for the supervisor to directly address passengers from the depot via two-way. This might require supervisors to have a high level of training in negotiation techniques, to ensure it did not backfire into further escalation. The majority view was that two-way radio provides drivers an additional level of comfort regarding their safety.

Key point:

The majority of operators' believe that two-way radio provides drivers with an additional level of comfort regarding their safety.

Mobile phones are carried by most but not all drivers, both for personal convenience and in case of emergency. They cannot be used while a bus is in motion. As with two-way radios, they are subject to signal drop-outs in some areas,⁷⁷ and are typically a personal expense. Smart phones are typically able to make both audio and video recordings, but the authors did not encounter any comment to the effect that a driver might use these features to attempt to record incidents.

Signage about respectful travel and appropriate behaviour has been suggested by a number of sources, including operators, drivers, and TSV.⁷⁸ We have not investigated whether any forms of signage have been shown to be more effective than others.

⁷⁷ Telstra Black Spot program, <https://www.telstra.com.au/coverage-networks/mobile-black-spot-program>

⁷⁸ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 59; TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 8.

Analysis

Drivers are exposed to passenger interaction regardless of physical risk reduction measures. One operator (F) commented that the only way to really prevent assault was to have a separate driver door. Nevertheless, a combination of engineering measures is likely to reduce the risk of serious injury from aggression, and will at the same time increase driver confidence in their own safety. Apart from security screens to provide a physical risk reduction barrier, video is probably the most important deterrent tool available. The other measures apply after an incident has commenced. To be effective, CCTV must be properly fitted, working, take clear images, regularly tested for reliability, and backed up following any incidents, so it can be availed to police or AOs.

The prevalence of hoodies, hooded jackets that cover the head, often worn by youths prone to aggression who seem inspired by American hip-hop and gangster pop culture, should encourage consideration of dash-mounted or wearable video cameras that may capture images of aggressor's faces otherwise screened by the hoodie from roof-mounted CCTV. Operators might also consider permitting drivers to wear personal Go-Pros if they wished to do so.

The AOs mentioned that a recommendation for an incident reporting app was made some years ago in Victoria, by the now disbanded Safe Travel Task Force, so that incidents could be immediately notified to operators and the police. The Stanley report also discussed this idea as implemented in Canada; a texting number so that on-board incidents could be discretely reported to the police;⁷⁹ but no action appears to have been taken in the two years since that report was provided to PTV.

Music has been shown to be effective in moderating moods,⁸⁰ and many drivers have a radio playing quietly, typically but not always on 'mellow' radio stations, which often makes for a pleasanter trip. Aspects of bus design and décor have also been considered in addressing anti-social behaviour.⁸¹

Also important, but not raised during discussion by operators and staff interviewed for this report, is consideration of driver safety external to the bus. One of the items raised in a Brisbane study was the location of venues for drivers' meal and comfort breaks. One designated meal location had a small public toilet block deep within a park, where drivers stated that they felt at risk of assault.⁸²

Regarding equipment, TSV drew attention to a recent (2017) bus crash where a driver had taken his eyes off the road while adjusting a radio. TSV advised all operators to ensure their drivers pre-set all electronic devices such as radios, CDs, DVDs, and GPS units prior to departure, so as to avoid the need to adjust them whilst driving, and thereby eliminate the risk of a similar incident occurring.⁸³

⁷⁹ Stanley, 2015: 33.

⁸⁰ See e.g. *Toolkit for Trainers* (NSDC, 1995), Module 2, 'Music'.

⁸¹ Lincoln and Huntingdon, 2013: 83.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ TSV, *Omnibus* newsletter, April 2017.

Conclusion

Security screens are intended to provide a physical risk reduction barrier, but, depending on their construction, do not necessarily prevent spitting or drink throwing, and do nothing to prevent or reduce verbal abuse. Walling drivers off in a manner similar to trams, and possibly having a separate driver's door, seem the only measures likely to render drivers physically secure. Industry has proposed to PTV that a trial of a new, Volgren 'next gen' bus design that sees the driver undertake their duties in a cabin completely separate to passengers (just like a tram or train), commence in early 2018. Industry has offered to co-fund the trial and assist PTV develop a management plan to address the issue of drivers being unable to ask the passenger to touch on. CCTV is probably the most important deterrent available to discourage aggression, but all too often its images are unclear, unavailable, or fail to capture aggressor's faces if screened by hoodies. Dash-mounted or wearable Go-Pros may assist here.

The various measures reviewed in this section have not been adopted by all interviewed operators, and then often only partially. As well as the risk reduction measures raised by operators in this research, it is important to realise that it is not a complete list, and other measures may be available, including those given in the analysis above, which come from other sources. It is also important to consider other, on-road factors impacting driver safety, such as the safety of rest break and comfort venues.

Part 6 – Driver training in respect of passenger conflict and farebox compliance

This part examines operator approaches to bus driver training in respect of passenger interaction, conflict, and farebox issues.

Complexities in evaluating driver training

There is turnover of bus drivers, although it is lower than in many other industries, and operators provide a range of driver training regimes. All new drivers receive induction training, which by law includes training in safety duties, and additional ongoing training in accordance with operator requirements. The nature of bus operations differs between operators in consequence of their business demands; for example, whether they provide route services, government or private contract school services, rail replacement, V-Line, local or inter-city tour or charter services, or any combination of these. Operations vary in size from one bus only, to fleets of more than 1,000 vehicles. This report discusses the results of interviews conducted with a sample of 16 operators from over 50 metropolitan and regional route bus fleets. For research and interview purposes, these comprised 9 large operators, with 61 or more buses, and 6 medium operators, with 10 to 60 buses. Only one small operator (P), with fewer than 10 buses, was interviewed, to provide a point of contrast with the larger entities.

Methodology

Two training topics were explored, in semi-structured group interviews: passenger interaction and driver safety, and instruction regarding farebox requests. Operators and staff were told at the start of each interview that the motivation was concern about reported rises in verbal abuse and assaults on drivers, and that the purpose was to discuss whether or not this was true of their area over the past two years or so; what triggers aggression from passengers; what sort of training they do about interacting with passengers; how is reporting of verbal and physical abuse done; what level of verbal abuse would it have to be before you'd bother to report it to the depot; and related issues.

While a similar general content is covered in all driver training, the way it is presented and delivered varies widely. In part, this reflects operator size and resources, including financial resources; in part it reflects that training is tailored in different ways to different business requirements and passenger behavioural characteristics. Three large fleet operators have well-developed and well-resourced in-house training programs, to suit their own expectations of driver interaction and conduct. One large and one medium operator put drivers through a Certificate II or III in Bus Operations. Two operators use external specialists to deliver the customer interaction component of driver training. Others use an internal operations or HR manager, or supervisor. At least one provides instructions that have not been developed into a consistent, structured format. Three managers from different Operator E depots each deliver similar but different training, regardless that they are all concerned with the same issues and part of the same operation. One operator with a well-established OH&S committee system does not have a systematic training program, and training appears to be based around the content of a company handbook. As a generalisation, the larger the operator, and the more drivers it employs, the more personnel, time and money it has to put into training. The TWU observed that training is inconsistent across the industry, but it did not comment on any particular approach.

Training content – four key topics

Turning to the training content, instructions and training are given in respect of:

1. interacting with passengers (customer service, passenger behavioural risk assessment, fare requests);
2. working with difficult passengers (avoiding escalation, de-escalation);
3. instructing passengers (behavioural instructions, requests to leave vehicle), and ;
4. self-protective emergency procedures (duress alarm; calling 000 or depot).

As a basis for interview, these four areas of interaction were described as ‘coat-hangers’, to discuss how operators approach training as regards passenger interaction. Operator D said that this framework reasonably describes the approach they use in their training. They would not disclose further information about their approach, as they said it had cost them a substantial sum to develop and pilot, and has a real commercial value. Operator K also uses a 4 step approach, delivered by a consultant. No interviewed operator includes a physical defence component (as yet).⁸⁴ Generally the emphasis has moved strongly away from any expectation of drivers to learn physical defence strategies, to avoiding escalation, and de-escalation. As each operator approaches training in its own way, we will outline the content and approaches used, highlighting commonalities.

1. Interacting with passengers

As has been observed, bus drivers have “three primary tasks: to drive safely, to maintain the schedule, and to serve the public in a professional and courteous manner. Two if not all three of these primary tasks are inherently contradictory and further interfered with by traffic congestion”.⁸⁵ This is further complicated by the first interaction with passengers being the farebox request, in a climate of an average 25%+ fare evasion and refusal. Training typically begins with general customer service expectations, and then turns to company expectations as regards asking for touch ons or fares. Safety comes first, for drivers and passengers (L, O). Some tell drivers to do a behavioural risk assessment, but it was not clear in any instance how this should be done. All discuss managing your own behaviour and de-escalation at some level; “what you do and how you react”; and give generic advice such as being consistent, using discretion, being friendly, and being aware of personal biases such as racial discrimination (A, D, L). Training typically involves good customer service (including e.g. disabilities, guide dogs), road rage scenarios, your own attitude and managing anger, how to recognize and talk to difficult passengers (B, E, G, L), conflict resolution and de-escalation (I, M). It may include video (A), role-play (I), company handbooks (most), input from experienced personnel (A, E), CCTV footage (K), and other resources. Training focuses on avoiding physical conflict; things to say and not say to avoid escalation, and discusses how what you say affects others’ responses (K).

The majority of operators have an “ask once for the fare” policy, but many drivers are told to use their judgement and “pick your passengers”; put personal safety first, and don’t ask anyone who looks suspect (B, C, D, E, K, M, O). Typically, abuse and assault escalate from a simple request to touch on (K, AOs). Drivers need to make their own risk assessment for each passenger before asking for the fare or touch on. If they fear confrontation, just tell the person to grab a seat and travel (D, E). Operators try to train drivers to be alert to issues like ice (P). Drivers are told not to make eye contact with obviously drug and alcohol-affected persons, as eye contact can trigger conflict such as, “What are you looking at?”, or other provocative responses (E). In practice, if people are not paying, but not causing trouble, ignore them (J). Some operators push harder on fares. Some drivers are instructed to tell passengers they need to touch on or pay, or they risk a fine. (A, B, E, F, H, N, P), but not all enforce this, in recognition that it has been known to trigger extreme abuse and assaults. In

⁸⁴ One operator used to screen a DVD showing a three-step physical defence process (Can I help you; Calm down; Back off), but it no longer uses this video in its training. Stanley 2015: 35 cited one psychological source that classed a request to ‘calm down’, as liable to be perceived as aggressive and unhelpful.

⁸⁵ Evans, 1994: 184.

practice, one operator that instructs drivers to push for the fare says that, if the passenger refuses, don't get into a situation or escalate it; use your discretion and make your own judgement (H).

Key point:

The majority of operators have an "ask once for the fare" policy, but many drivers are told to use their judgement and "pick your passengers"; put personal safety first, and don't ask anyone who looks suspect. It was not clear in any instance how this judgement might be made.

Farebox training is in all cases about meeting the company's contractual obligation to use its "best endeavours" to ask passengers to touch on, top up, or buy a myki as appropriate. As the fare request is the predominant trigger for verbal abuse, and has escalated into physical assault, 13 of the 16 interviewed operators instruct drivers to ask for the fare "provided that they feel safe to do so", and to ask no more than once so as to avoid escalation. Two other operators instruct drivers to ask for the fare, and then play it by ear; they may ask more than once if the driver feels confident to do so.

No scripting of requests was encountered. One operator does not instruct drivers to ask for the fare, in consequence of a driver being severely assaulted as an immediate consequence of asking a boarding passenger to touch on. Of the 15 operators who ask, only the small town regional operator expects drivers to ask and enforce fare compliance. The other 14 instruct drivers not to confront passengers over fares, and if they refuse to pay, carry them anyway. Half (7) of these instruct drivers to warn non-compliant passengers that they travel at risk of a fine. The others do not, as that has led to significant verbal abuse and assault. A non-bus pool AO also suggested it was unwise, as if AOs board that bus, the passenger is likely to think that the driver called the AOs to attend, and may seek revenge on that driver by abuse or assault once the AOs have left. Operator K used to instruct drivers to issue such a warning, but abandoned it, as it resulted in verbal abuse 95% of the time.

Key point:

Farebox training is in all cases about meeting the company's contractual obligation to use its "best endeavours" to ask passengers to touch on, top up, or buy a myki as appropriate. In practice, operators know this requirement leads directly to verbal abuse and assault.

About 80-90% of physical assaults are over fare evasion, triggered by requests from drivers to touch on or top up. A driver was punched when he asked once for a touch on. At least 80% of verbal abuse is over fares (H). Drivers have to make decisions for (and by) themselves on the road, and their most important job is to get people from A to B safely, not to cop abuse, aggression and stress over fare evaders (J). It all gets back to how drivers behave and interact (M). Passengers can hear the driver on the two-way, and this can escalate a situation, especially if the driver is calling the police (K). Training now doesn't encourage conversation with passengers; just acknowledge them, and disengage from conversation in polite way. Say 'hi' and 'bye', but don't engage in conversation. 'Old school' drivers are more conversational, but passengers are rejecting it. It's not worth trying to talk, as it can easily go wrong, e.g., "What'd you say?" (I). Drivers have to run to schedule, so it is very important how they react to passenger's conversation. They need to get them seated and move on (E). Training has to focus on the range of things that are within the driver's control (D). While it aims to standardise driver responses to typical interactions (G), passengers largely determine what happens on the road. An instruction that drivers ask for a fare provided they feel safe to do so, requires that drivers make an instant mental risk assessment of each boarding passenger. One very large operator that has this expectation had yet to provide any training on how such a judgement may be made. Typically the instruction is don't confront, don't enforce, don't ask anyone who looks aggressive or under the influence of any substance, don't talk back, put your own safety first, and accept fare evasion in preference to escalation. It is typically 'first impressions' or 'follow your instincts' training; as one operator put it, "pick your passengers" to ask for the fare. Operator E said they tell drivers to "read" the passengers, but in practice this is inconsistent guesswork. Several operators and the TWU said

that this approach has resulted in some passengers abusing drivers for letting others on without touching on. Passengers also complain about this, both directly to operators, to PTV, and to the PT Ombudsman.⁸⁶ Where drivers have asked for the fare, presumably after making their own risk assessment, verbal abuse has still resulted from a wide range of passengers, including regulars (K). Claims that meaningful risk assessments can be made instantly by drivers are dubious. This is recognised by default, as four operators make no attempt to follow up drivers as to whether they ask for fares, again as a result of extensive verbal abuse and some physical assaults of drivers. Words to the effect of, “it’s not worth getting thumped over a \$3 fare”, were common to most interviews.

Key point:

An instruction that drivers ask for a fare provided they feel safe to do so, requires that drivers make an instant mental risk assessment of each boarding passenger, which is extremely difficult to do.

2. Working with difficult passengers

Typically a verbal interaction triggers something in the passenger, and it escalates from there (E). Training is about not provoking aggression, and de-escalation (K). It increasingly focuses on de-escalation through the driver controlling their own behaviour, and what not to do to minimise the chances of escalation (G). The rule of thumb is, don’t argue. Provocation always starts from a passenger, but a driver can escalate it depending on they speak to the passenger or react, including for their own self-defence (D, E). CCTV footage shows that different drivers respond differently to passenger interactions, and that drivers can also escalate confrontation, for example, by getting out of their seat. Training aims to normalise driver responses to typical interactions (G). Nine of the interviewed operators had a ‘stay in your seat’ policy. Drivers are told not to get out of their seat to remonstrate or intervene in passenger issues, although four said it is policy, not a rule. All operators aligned with D, that there is to be no physical contact with passengers, except in self-defence. Some drivers have contributed to, or caused, escalation when people ‘push their buttons’ (H). The training is to ignore or disregard aggression, and get yourself out of it; to say nothing back. If you get a rude passenger, just tell them to take a seat and the problems end (I, J, M, N). In practice, drivers make decisions based on how they read people (J), but a situation can escalate quickly if they get it wrong.

Key point:

Training increasingly focuses on de-escalation through the driver controlling their own behaviour, and what not to do to minimise the chances of escalation.

The TSV guide, *Managing Difficult Passengers* (2103), addresses disruptive passengers from the legal perspective of a bus operators’ obligation to ensure safety ‘so far as is reasonably practicable’. This includes providing drivers with appropriate instruction and training, such as the actions to take if a passenger’s behaviour presents a potential risk to the safe operation of a bus service. TSV note that these duties do not extend to providing for the personal protection of passengers in these situations. “It is not envisaged that bus drivers would be required to, for example, intervene physically if a fight or brawl was taking place on board the bus they were driving. They may however be required to contact Victoria Police or call the depot/head office and seek advice on how to proceed”.⁸⁷ It optimistically suggests that “drivers who know how to deal with difficult passengers will be more likely to be able to prevent situations from escalating into more serious ones”;⁸⁸ that is, “difficult passengers” are a class of persons with a potential for violent escalation, a situation common for

⁸⁶ Both PTV and the PT Ombudsman said they get such complaints, but neither could provide any statistics.

⁸⁷ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 3.

⁸⁸ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 7.

hospital and emergency service workers,⁸⁹ but not typical of the sort of “difficult customers” familiar from most customer service training, seeking refunds for products bought elsewhere, and so on. All but one interviewed operator were aware of the TSV booklet, but responses to it varied greatly. Operator A saw it as a useful guide: “it gives clear guidelines to work and adapt training to, offering solutions and ‘where to go’ for information”. Operators A and G do not use it as a resource, but said it is consistent with their training. B, C and D said it was for operators, not drivers, and fairly basic; that drivers don’t read it; and it needs to be brought to life. Six operators use parts of it in their training (E, H, I, K, L, P), and three do not use it at all (J, M, O), with M saying the escalation material won’t save anyone. It does not recommend any particular training or instruction, but states that operators “need to undertake a risk assessment of the services they provide to determine the level of risk their services are exposed to from such events and implement procedures as necessary”.⁹⁰

The general view is that it provides a guide to the issues, but needs to be adapted if it is to become training. Given the marked jump in both verbal abuse and physical assault of drivers in the time since that booklet was produced, one might wonder if the phrasing, “managing difficult passengers”, is still appropriate. All the driver can manage is their own reactions, but the long-term verbal and other aggression, primarily over ticketing, wears them down (B, E, F, G, J, K, M, O).⁹¹ Several operators said that driving a heavy passenger vehicle is demanding enough without coping abuse over ticketing.

Instructing passengers, including requests to leave vehicle

There was a sense that there is no effective training for aggression available, and that training is inadequate for direct confrontation; i.e., that there needs to be more physical protection and surveillance, and more information on how drivers can protect themselves. (E, G). If a passenger is causing trouble, or for any direct physical threat or assault, the universal instruction is to stop the vehicle in a safe place (if not already in a bus stop), open all the doors, and call police and the depot manager. Do not interact with or confront them (H, J, K, L, M, O). This was overlaid with comments that drivers are isolated, police do not attend promptly, and there is no AO presence. Typically, operators hope that the security screens in combination with their other training will be effective in avoiding conflict (E). Having said that, screens won’t help if drivers respond rudely back to rude passengers (D). Generally, the feeling was that drivers are on their own, in a climate of disrespect for their job by many passengers (E, F, I, K, L, M), and that there is little they can do about it.

Key point:

There was a sense that there is no effective training for aggression available, and that training is inadequate for direct confrontation. There needs to be more physical protection of drivers and surveillance, and more information on how drivers can protect themselves.

Self-protective emergency procedures

The reality is that nothing can be done apart from stopping the bus, opening the doors, hitting the duress button, and calling police or the depot, assuming the bus is at a place with no signal drop-out. Several operators mentioned that there are signal black spots at certain points on their routes. Operator M instructs drivers to exit the bus if they can, and walk away; let insurance worry about any damage. Physical controls such as security screens and loops may exist, but even where fitted they are only a deterrent; Operator F commented that they won’t stop a sword or baseball bat. As at March 2017, over 1000 route buses were yet to be fitted with security screens. Drivers can get flustered under duress. Some radio their depot when under threat, regardless that they have been trained to first call 000 directly in an emergency (B). If a situation has escalated, and a disruptive person does not leave the vehicle when requested, all a driver can do is call the police.

⁸⁹ Swanton, 1989: 3.

⁹⁰ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 4.

⁹¹ Swanton, 1989: 3, workers can “lose commitment in the face of continuing public rudeness or apathy”.

Key point:

The reality is that nothing can be done apart from stopping the bus, opening the doors, hitting the duress button, and calling police or the depot, assuming the bus is not in a black spot.

Analysis

The effectiveness or not of training can be illustrated by a range of interview comments. Training generally goes through a 4-step process beginning with customer service, but many passengers are more concerned with not paying than interacting with drivers. The stage of conversation is simply not reached in the first place with many of them (K). Incident footage suggests that drivers deal better with conflict after “difficult passenger” training (I), but it is no guarantee, as it is hard to make a rule that covers all situations (H). A noticeable escalation in the number of assaults on G’s drivers occurred from mid-2016, despite the previous success of their driver training. When training is better in showing how to “read” passengers, there are generally less issues, but this may also reflect some operators’ recruiting models changing from looking for technical skills, to people who are customer-focussed and safety risk aware (I). “You can’t teach tact; drivers have it or they don’t” (E). In practice, drivers have learned to keep their mouth shut, “don’t hear and don’t see”, as escalation happens quickly (I). In this situation, where around a third of interviewed operators do not enforce the farebox request, as they know it frequently leads to aggression, it is unrealistic to reprimand drivers over ticketing. Many drivers unintentionally escalate aggression in following their ticketing policy instructions, and the effectiveness of any of TSV’s suggested tactics to prevent aggression is not known.⁹² In fact, almost no research has gone into evaluating the most effective methods of preventing aggression and assault.⁹³

Key point:

The effectiveness of any of TSV’s suggested tactics to prevent aggression is not known. Almost no research has gone into evaluating the most effective methods of preventing aggression.

Some operators have highly developed training programs, or bring in a specialist consultant. Others do not have a course as such, but work from a job description and company policies, typically with a driver training handbook and internal resources (L, O). Several use extracts from the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book in their training. While large fleet operators can achieve business efficiencies despite the cost of training program development, it is not obvious that drivers’ interactions with passengers are measurably nicer or not, or that drivers are measurably happier and less stressed or not, as a result of any particular methods of, or approaches, to training. A new driver generally has a run through with an established driver; “they are put on with another driver for a bit” (P). This likely has as much impact on driver behaviour as anything that takes place in training. While training shapes drivers, they interpret it in different ways. They have a range of responses to passenger interactions, and may snap from being worn down over time.⁹⁴ Drivers who get into disputes may be more autocratic in approach (C). Often drivers don’t understand how they’ve acted; they may have escalated a situation, including by trying to discuss or reason with passengers (E, I). It’s like they’re expected to be social workers and police as well as drivers (Operator E).

⁹² Stanley, 2015: 21-22.

⁹³ Stanley, 2015: 39.

⁹⁴ Stanley, 2015: 21.

Key point:

While training shapes drivers, they interpret direction in different ways. Often drivers don't understand how they've acted; they may have escalated a situation, including by trying to discuss or reason with passengers. It's like they're expected to be social workers and police as well as drivers (E).

Given the shortage of studies of aggression on buses, researchers have looked to other highly interactive service industries for information that may be useful for bus drivers seeking to avoid or de-escalate a situation. Stanley noted that in hospitals, the best training deals with refraining from agitating patients from the start, and recommended driver training to reduce emotional arousal.⁹⁵ This would focus on communication: courteous behaviour; non-provoking language; remaining calm; listening; giving the benefit of the doubt; staying objective; avoiding patronising, talking down, or trivialising, telling people how they feel, or morally criticising behaviour. There is nothing there about behavioural assessment, the prime basis on which operators expect drivers to proceed.

Practical experience typically informs training, but its effective communication is dependent upon having a trainer (or consultant) who has both extensive hands-on knowledge of (and preferably experience in) a commercial bus environment, and the ability to accurately reflect on and package that experience in a way to which the instructed drivers can relate.

A comment by Operator E that perhaps BusVic could make an industry driver safety video suggests a feeling that there is not enough information out there to support drivers and operators. Having said that, quality training videos are rarely generic. One would be unlikely to have a high quality, half hour, corporate video made for less than \$80,000, and it could rise to double that depending on location filming.⁹⁶ Whether such productions are worth their cost depends on the content and how it is utilised.⁹⁷ The temptation to show a video and call it training is strong, especially where there is a feeling that a high level of advice or expertise can be readily accessed on screen. Having delivered workplace training to well over 3,000 people from a range of industries, the authors increasingly regard training videos as padding unless they are mostly made up of short examples of events or situations, such as CCTV clips, which can be closely discussed, and practical learnings and advice extracted, with the help of experienced trainers and staff. One company recently invested in making some video training resources which the authors saw as clips before the finished DVD was created, and the filming was of a high standard. One of the TWU organisers the authors interviewed had seen the finished DVD, and described it as "probably OK for new drivers, but it's a bit warm and cosy. We have all experienced much worse passenger behaviour than it shows." Without knowing how any given training video is presented, it is hard to assess how effective the training might be. The comment does, however, illustrate that drivers bring their own life experiences into training, and reinforces that any training material is very dependent on how it is used for its effectiveness. Operator K discusses incidents from its own CCTV as part of its training. This could potentially be supplemented with examples from elsewhere in the industry, and could be as effective in training as any elaborate corporate production.

Essentially the industry has been left by government to go its own way with training to assist and protect bus drivers performing a vital community service. The result is that training is certainly inconsistent, and at times significantly different, between operators. The four areas of training reviewed here – routine interaction with passengers, managing difficult passengers, instructing passengers if necessary, and self-protective emergency procedures – along with clear post-incident

⁹⁵ Stanley, 2015: 35.

⁹⁶ Corporate video costing, <http://www.xcelus.com/articles/corporate-video-production-cost/>

⁹⁷ I worked for a year for a leading Australian training video production company (Vocam), and can confidently say that the best training video in the world is almost useless in the hands of an incompetent trainer or presenter. A video is not a substitute for training. It is only one of many possible training tools.

support procedures, and a convenient method of reporting abuse and assault of drivers, are key elements that need to be included in any effective driver training. There may be more, and it may help to consider these at a Victorian industry, not the individual operator, level.

Key point:

Essentially the industry has been left by government to go its own way with training to assist and protect bus drivers performing a vital community service. It is not surprising that training is inconsistent, and at times significantly different, between operators.

It may be useful to think about some standardised training, specifically about passenger interaction. As ticketing is the prime trigger of aggression to drivers, farebox policy needs to be decided first, before any effective training to reduce abuse and assaults can be developed. Further, there seems little point in trying to develop an interstate or national protective driver training until an effective program, training day or workshop has been trialled and shown effective in the Victorian system.

Key point:

It may be useful to think about some standardised, network-wide training, specifically about passenger interaction. But as ticketing is the prime trigger of aggression to drivers, farebox policy needs to be decided first, before any effective training to reduce abuse and assaults can be developed.

There seems no reason not to actively collaborate on such a program, but given that different operators will need to adapt such training to fit in with other operational processes, it makes sense to develop one for trial and eventually, state-wide or potentially national adoption.

There still needs to be some discussion about how standardisation might work. Where Operator H saw a potential benefit in “an industry standard of training that can be used by everyone, so when you employ drivers from elsewhere, it’s similar,” two operators (I and L) prefer to recruit from scratch so they do not have to retrain drivers into their own expectations of driver behaviour. Operator B said that when they employed a couple of drivers who had come from another large fleet, their office rang with complaints for about 3 months, until the new drivers learned the customer expectations of their new area. While a set of core topics such as those outlined above could probably be agreed around passenger interaction, it should allow sufficient flexibility for operators to easily tailor it to their own business needs, and may not be directly portable.

It must also be recognised that some fleets have invested significant sums of money into driver training, and would understandably be unimpressed if their work was to be disregarded in favour of some new approach that was incapable of allowing them to incorporate any amount of material of their own choosing. A competency-based approach makes sense, but not at the expense of flexibility and operator input. Further, training around passenger interaction will necessarily be based around company policies and expectations that may or may not match those of other operators, so there are a number of things to consider outside of core content.

Key point:

There still needs to be some discussion about how standardisation of training materials and methods might work. While a set of core topics could probably be agreed around passenger interaction, any such training will need to allow sufficient flexibility for operators to tailor it to their own business requirements.

In 2013, TSV mentioned self-defence tools and training as one possible protection measure,⁹⁸ but, as noted, no interviewed operator includes such a component in their driver training, and one large fleet operator that once had a self-defence video for drivers no longer includes it in its training. The discussion has moved away from personal physical self-defence, to engineering solutions such as the safety screen and barriers, and strategies aimed at de-escalation. Bus drivers should not be placed in a position of having to learn physical self-defence tactics to go to work. Nevertheless, one NSW training company claims to have trained over 9,000 bus drivers in assault prevention.⁹⁹ Some such training, if undertaken voluntarily, might give some drivers enhanced confidence in dealing with the public, regardless that it should never be expected to be used in the job. One non-bus pool AO said, “the moment a driver leaves the front seat, anything can happen, and there is no backup. If a driver was stabbed up the back of the bus, he wouldn’t make it back to the front to call for help”.¹⁰⁰ We need to commence a narrative on the issue of driver self-defence.

Conclusion

This section has reviewed those aspects of training relevant to passenger interaction and farebox issues. It has been shown that training is heavily impacted by the climate of high fare evasion/non-compliance and the constant risk of assault in which bus drivers work. Farebox policy needs to be reviewed and decided before any effective training to reduce abuse and assaults can be developed.

⁹⁸ TSV, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, 2013: 8.

⁹⁹ Karen Armstrong’s Safety Strategies, <https://www.karenarmstrong.com.au/info-pack-transport-industry/>

¹⁰⁰ Personal discussion, March 2017.

Part 7 – Fare Evasion - A Quantitative Study

This report has suggested that asking a passenger to touch on with their myki smartcard (or asking passengers to pay a fare) is the largest trigger for passenger abuse and assault of bus drivers. In Part 3 of this Report, operators anecdotally observed that fare non compliance rates on Melbourne's route bus network was materially higher than what PTV report.

The last fare evasion report from PTV estimated fare evasion on the bus network was 7.3%¹⁰¹. This section presents a quantitative and independent test of both the operators' anecdotal observations and PTV's estimation methodology.

Methodology

BusVic employed a resource to travel on metropolitan bus routes in Melbourne for from 3rd April 2017 up to and including 12th May 2017, 40 hours a week. Using counting software on a device, the resource merely counted how many passengers touched on with their myki smartcard at each bus stop and how many did not. Several other variables were also recorded only for those passengers who did not touch on:

- if the driver did not ask the passenger to touch on;
- if the driver informed the passengers that they could top up on the bus;
- if the driver told the passenger not to worry about touching on (mostly because the FPD was not working but in some cases the driver didn't want to top up or sell a myki);
- if the passenger's myki would not swipe;
- the age group of the passenger (younger than 18; 19-34; 35-65; 66 and over), and;
- the passenger's gender.

The routes selected:

- were geographically divided between Melbourne's south east, east, north east, north, north west and west;
- comprised both week day and weekend services
- comprised both AM and PM peak services and off peak services

A total of 4,496 passenger's behaviour was recorded. In 90% of the routes surveyed, the surveyor travelled the entire length of the route i.e. from published timetable origin and destination. In the remaining 10% of the routes, the surveyor travelled between activity centres or major interchanges to connect with another service, therefore only undertaking part journeys on these routes.

The results were exported from excel into SPSS for analysis, mainly by way of cross tabulation. The results were independently analysed and verified by Research Statistics Pty Ltd.

¹⁰¹ PTV, May 2016 Fare Evasion Survey, p.4/9. July 2016.

Results

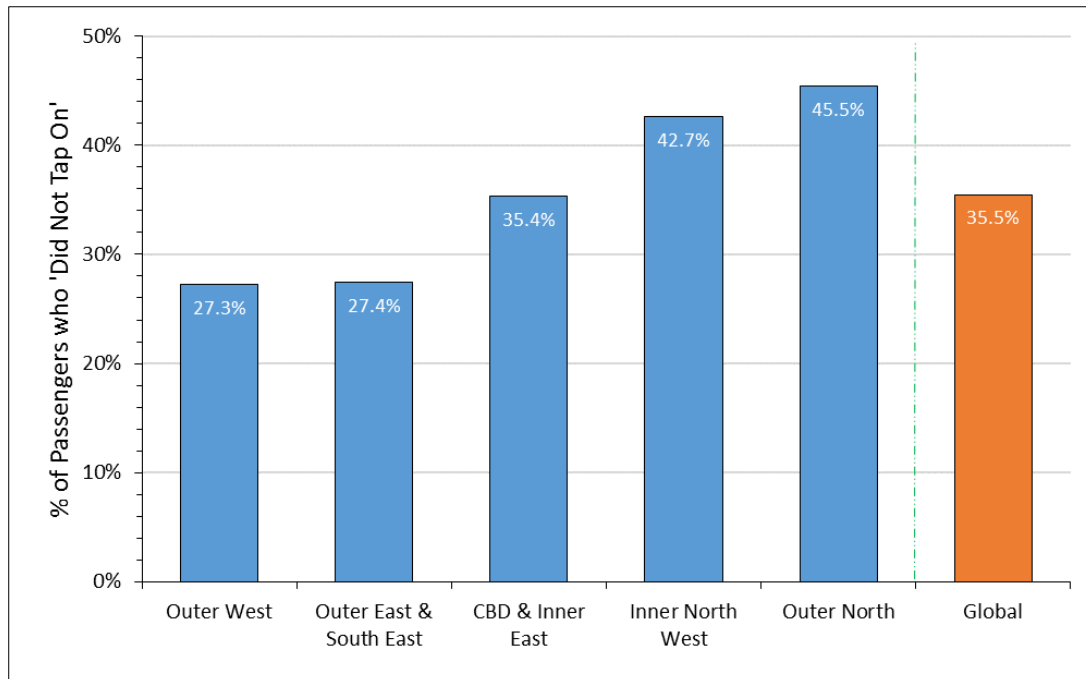


Figure 1a. Relative frequency (% of all passengers) of fare evasion, globally and resolved according Geographic Area.

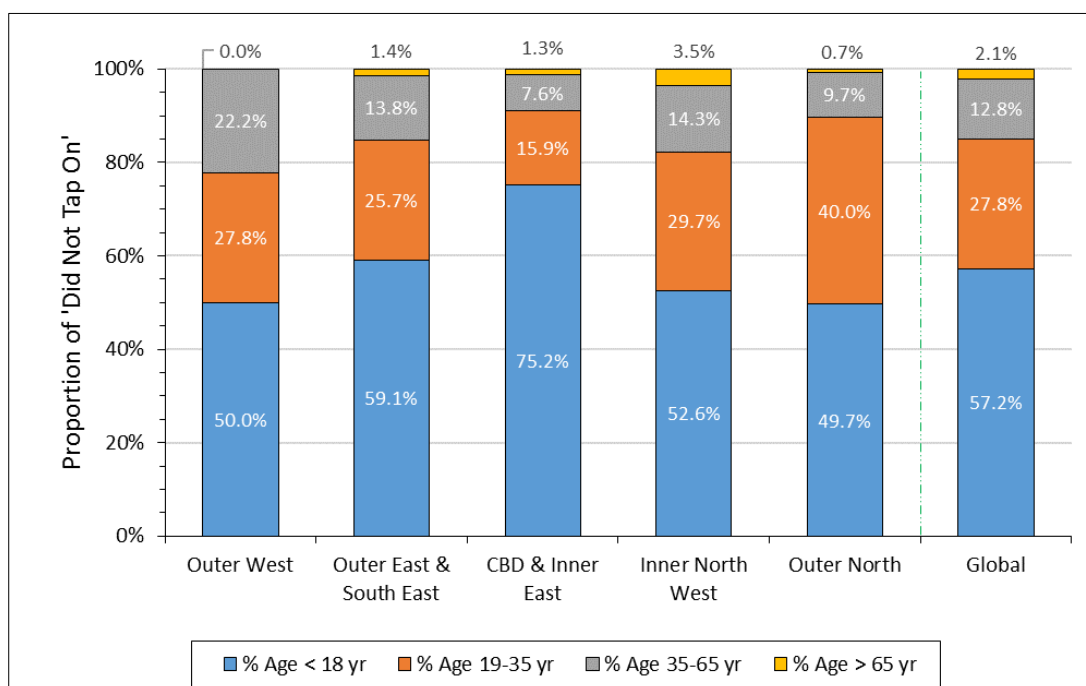


Figure 1b. Distribution of fare evaders (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') according to Age Group, globally and resolved according to Geographic Area.

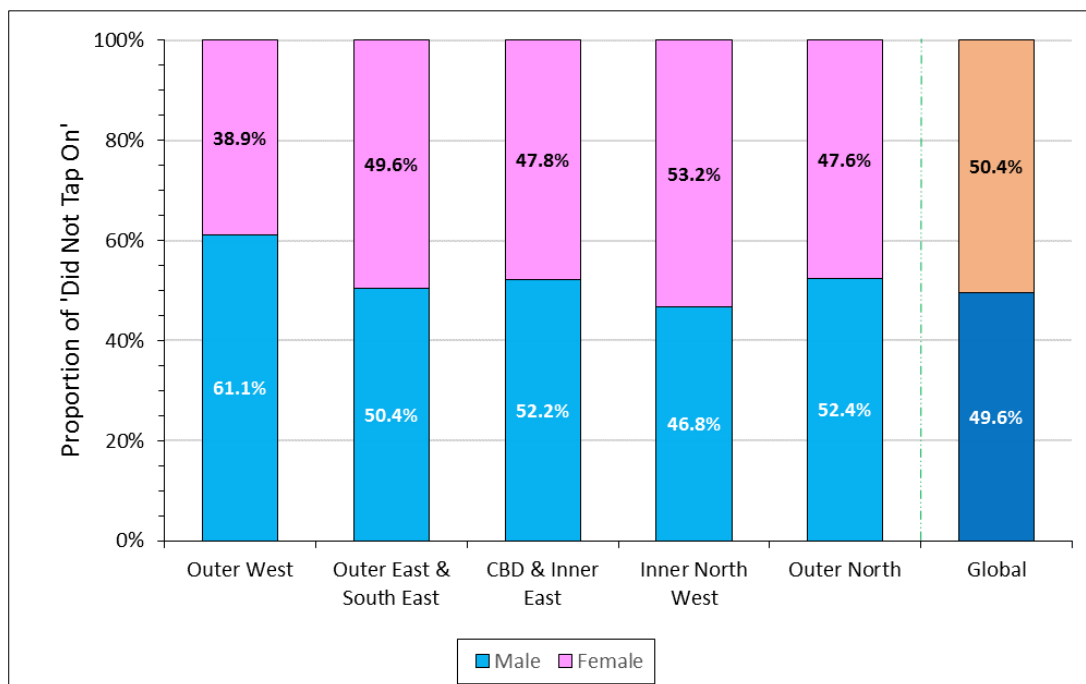


Figure 1c. Distribution of fare evaders (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') according to Gender, globally and resolved according to Geographic Area.

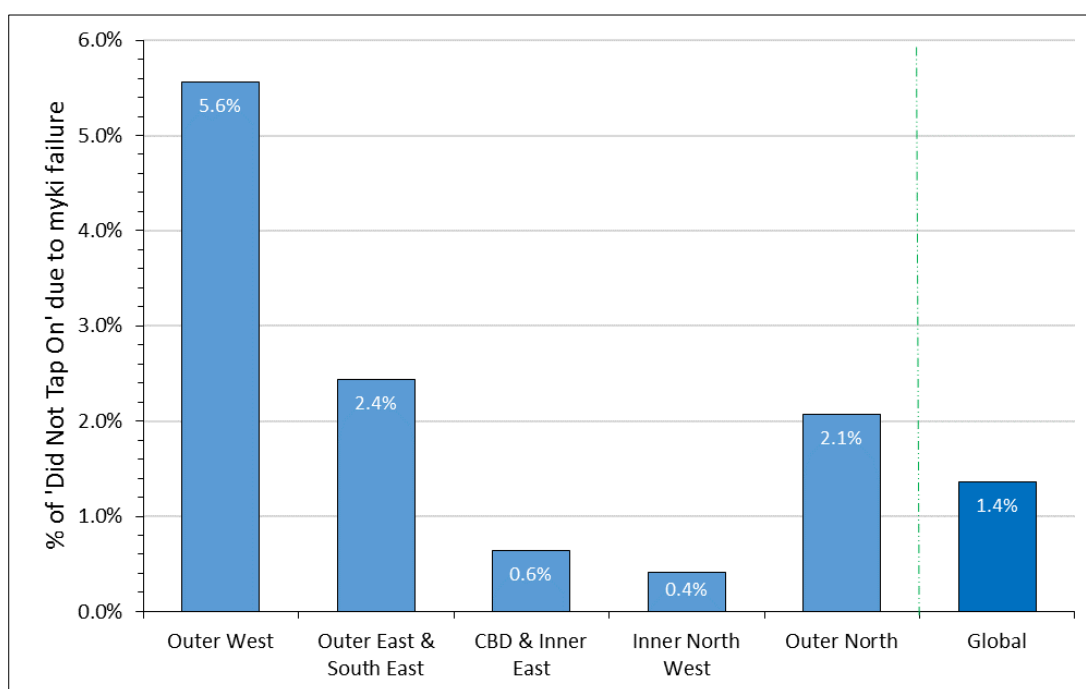


Figure 1d. Relative frequency (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') of myki card/machine failure, globally and resolved by Geographic Area.

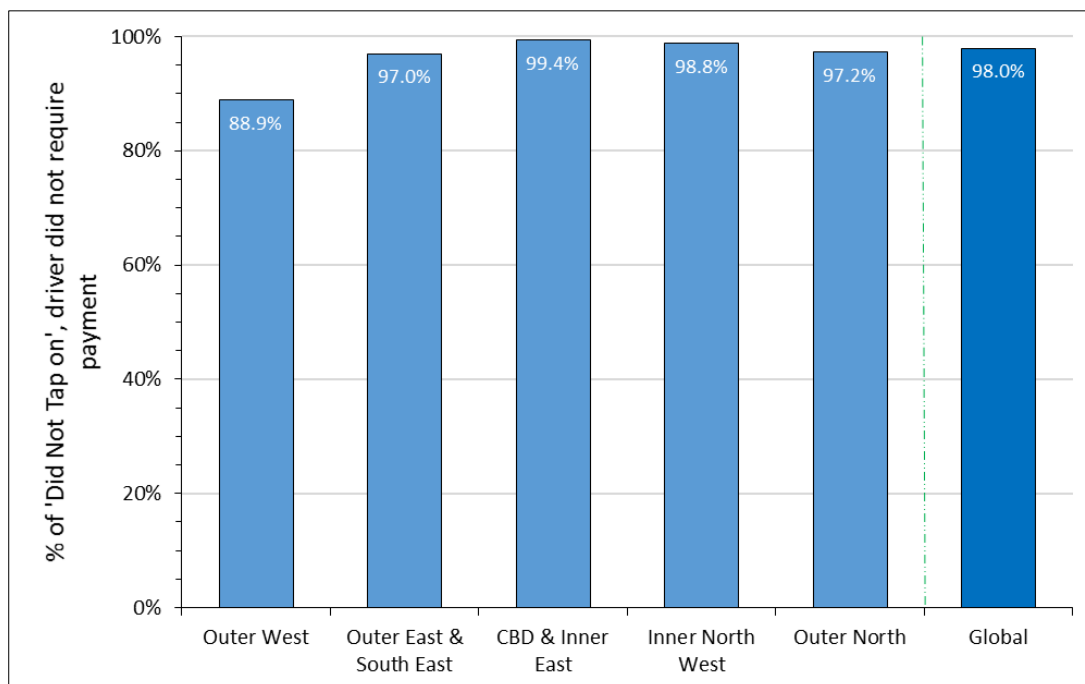


Figure 1e. Relative frequency (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') of driver not requiring payment, globally and resolved by Geographic Area.

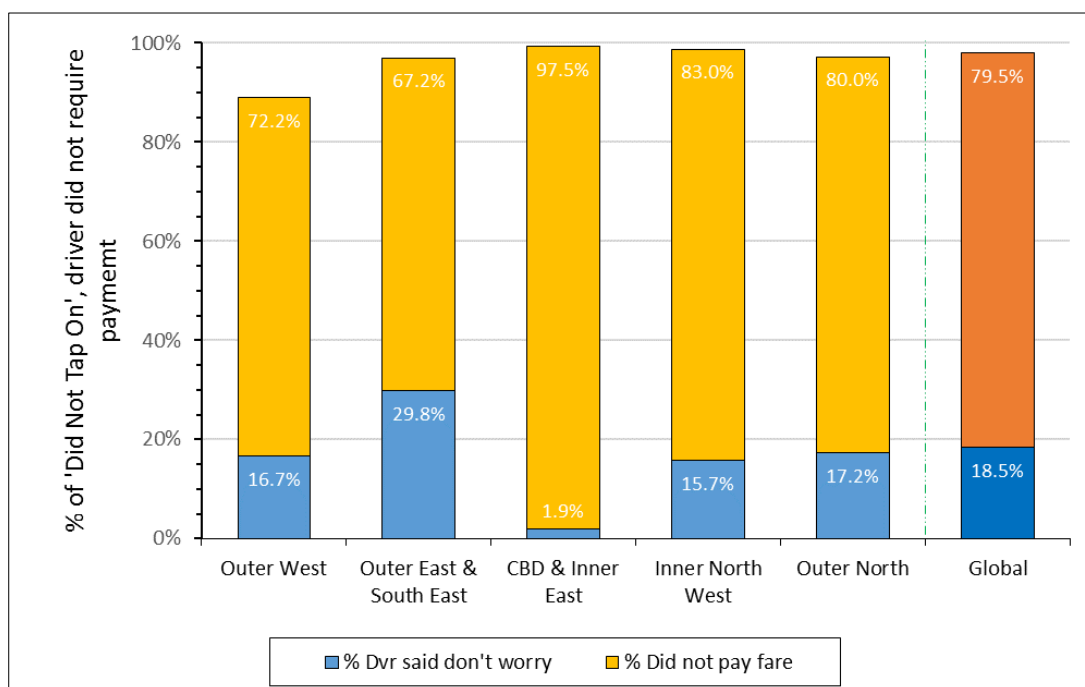


Figure 1f. Similar to Figure 5. Relative frequency (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') of driver not requiring payment, globally and resolved by Geographic Area. Further resolved according to whether 'driver said don't worry' and 'did not pay fare'.

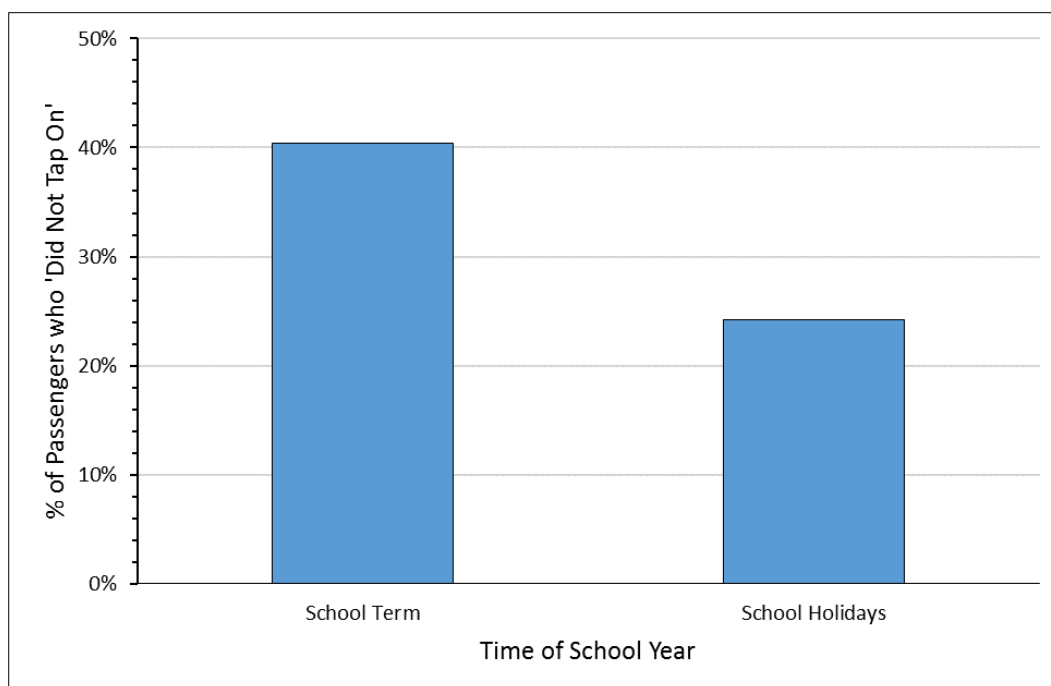


Figure 2a. Relative frequency (% of all passengers) of fare evasion, resolved according to time of school year.

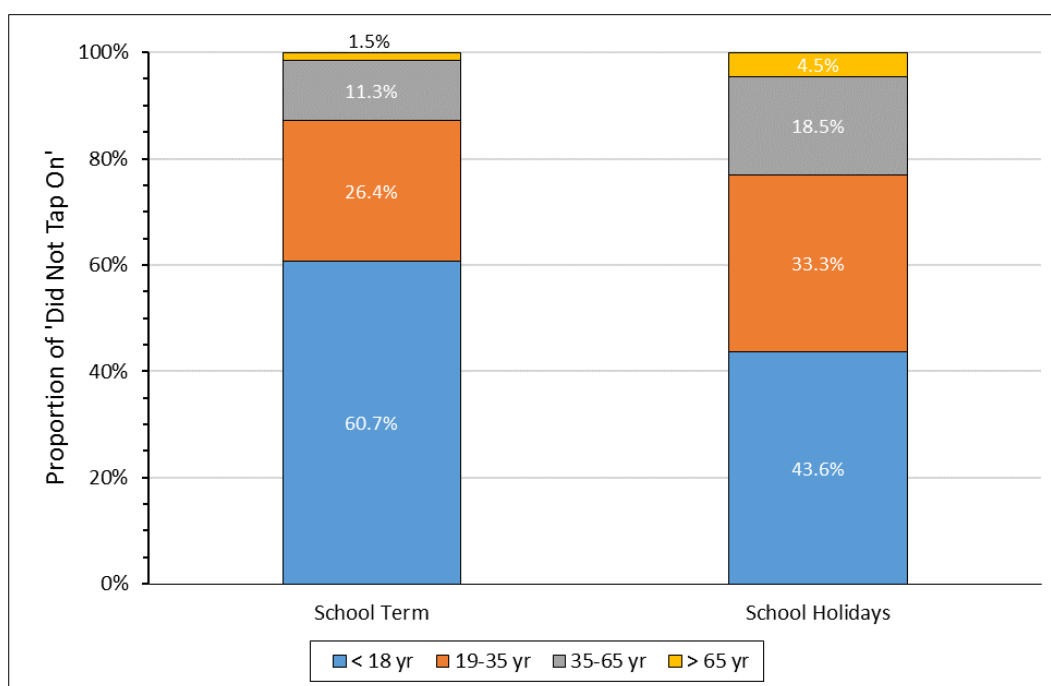


Figure 2b. Distribution of fare evaders (% of those who 'Did Not Tap On') according to Age Group, resolved according to time of school year.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
273 - THE PINES/NUNAWADING	273	0.0
284 - BALWYN/BOX HILL	284	0.0
295 - DONCASTER/THE PINES	295	0.0
811 - MIDDLE BRIGHT/MENTONE	811	0.0
623 - GLEN WAVERLEY/RIPPONLEA	623	3.3
612 - BALWYN/CHADSTONE	612	5.6
734 - GLEN IRIS/GLEN WAVERLEY	734	7.4
742 - GLEN WAVERLEY/BLACKBURN RD	742	9.1
270 - BOX HILL/MITCHAM	270	11.1
280 - DONCASTER LOOP	280	14.3
703 - BLACKBURN RD/MIDDLE BRIGHT	703	14.8
293 - DONCASTER BOX HILL LOOP	293	40.0
903 - HEILDELBERG/BOX HILL	903	54.9
624 - CAULFIELD/KEW	624	61.5
282 - DONCASTER LOOP	282	75.0

Table 3. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the CBD & Inner East Area. Plotted in Figure 3 below.

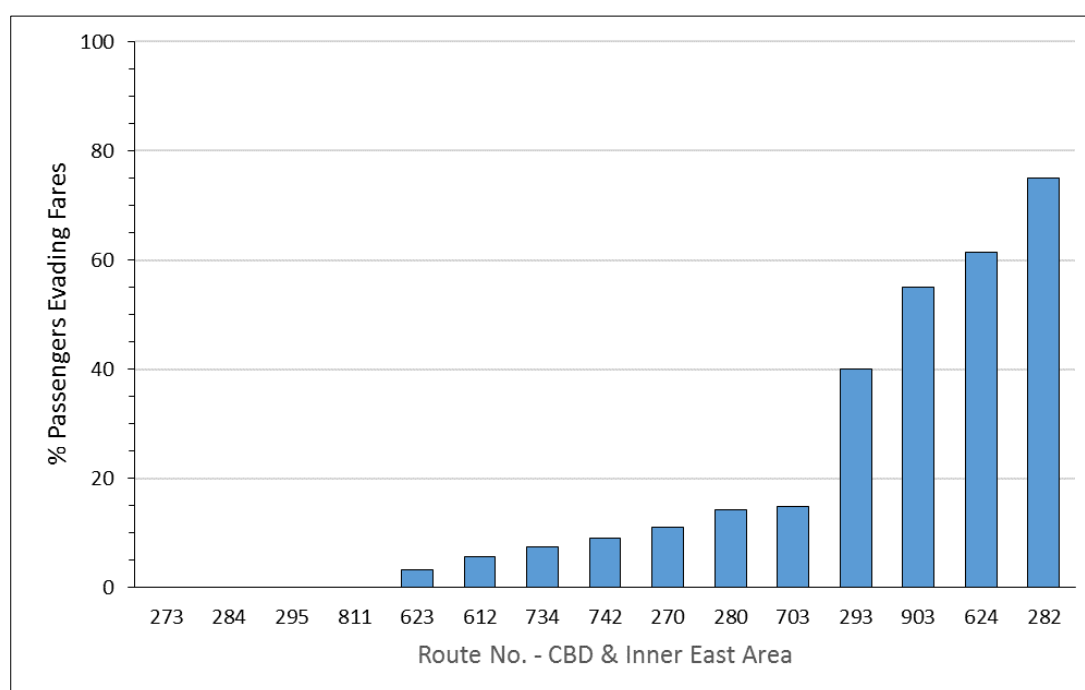


Figure 3. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the CBD & Inner East area.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
408 - SUNSHINE/ST ALBANS	408	6.7
219 - FOOTSCRAY/SUNSHINE	219	15.4
418 - CAROLINE SP/KEILOR PL	418	20.0
251 - NORTHCOTE/NORTHLAND	251	22.2
419 - WATERGARDENS/ST ALBANS	419	22.2
549 - NORTHLAND/IVANHOE	549	22.2
561 - LATROBE UNIV/COBURG	561	22.2
477 - ESSENDON/AIRPORT WEST	477	22.9
223 - HIGHPOINT/FOOTSCRAY	223	25.0
421 - ST ALBANS/WATERGARDENS	421	26.9
409 - FOOTSCRAY/HIGHPOINT	409	27.3
465 - ESSENDON/KEILOR PK	465	27.8
468 - HIGHPOINT/ESSENDON	468	28.6
412 - LAVERTON/FOOTSCRAY	412	30.8
530 - COBURG/CAMPBELLFIELD	530	30.8
425 - ST ALBANS/WATERGARDENS	425	33.3
506 - MOONEE PONDS/NORTHCOTE	506	33.3
215 - CAROLINE SP/HIGHPOINT	215	34.4
220 - FOOTSCRAY/SUNSHINE	220	36.4
551 - HEIDELBERG/LATROBE UNIV	551	36.8
400 - SUNSHINE/LAVERTON	400	42.3
420 - SUNSHINE/WATERGARDENS	420	43.5
510 - ESSENDON/IVANHOE	510	43.8
503 - ESSENDON/EAST BRUNSWICK	503	46.4
501 - AIRPORT WST/ESSENDON	501	47.1
527 - NORTHLAND/COBURG	527	48.5
513 - GLENROY/HEIDELBERG	513	49.2
414 - LAVERTON/FOOTSCRAY	414	50.0
534 - COBURG/GLENROY	534	51.4
475 - ESSENDON/NIDDRE LOOP	475	62.3
460 - WATERGARDENS/CAROLINE SP	460	62.8
472 - FOOTSCRAY/WILLIAMSTOWN	472	69.1
471 - WILLIAMSTOWN/SUNSHINE	471	80.4

Table 4. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Inner North West area. Plotted in Figure 4 below.

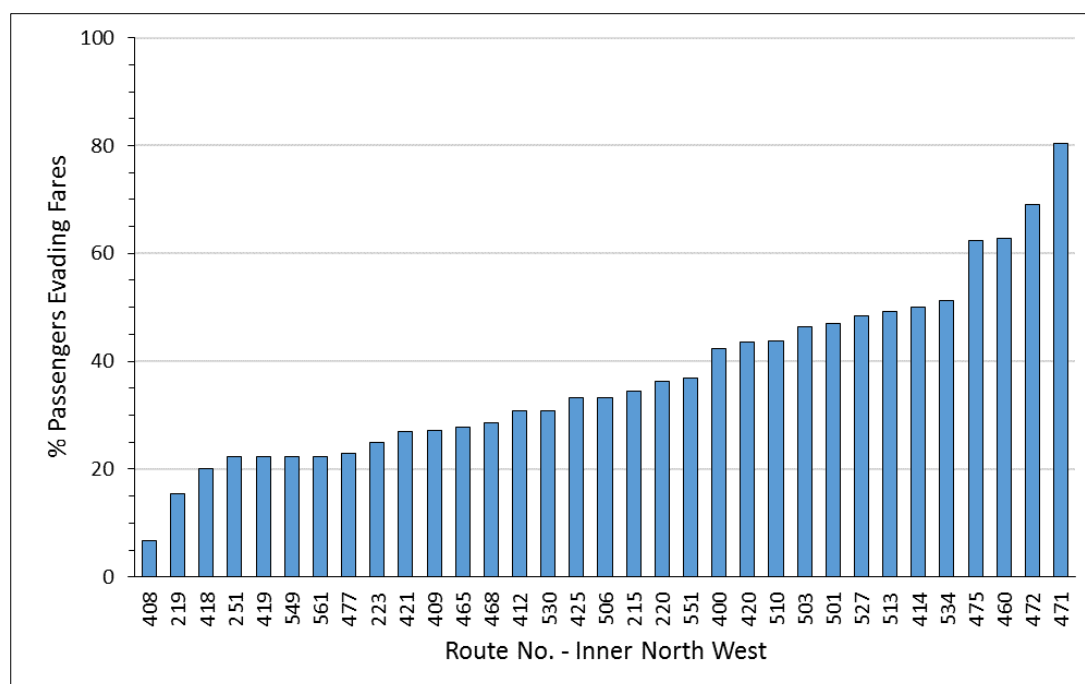


Figure 4. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Inner North West area.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
271 - BLACKBURN/BOX HILL	271	0.0
380 - CROYDON/RINGWOOD	380	0.0
841 - CRANBOURNE/FOUNT GATE	841	0.0
892 - HAMPTON PK/DANDENONG	892	0.0
893 - HAMPTON PK/DANDENONG	893	0.0
791 - FRANKS TO CRANBOURNE	791	5.0
802 - CNR SVALE / WELL TO CHADSTONE SC	802	6.2
891 - FOUNT GATE/HAMPTON PK	891	7.4
901 - DANDENONG/FRANKSTON	901	8.5
664 - KNOX/CROYDON	664	10.8
822 - CHADSTONE/STHLAND	822	11.8
850 - WAV DAR/DANDENONG	850	18.9
742 - RINGWOOD RS TO WAV GARDENS SC	742	19.4
812 - MENTONE/DANDENONG	812	19.5
828 - DANDENONG/CHELTHENHAM	828	21.3
672 - CHIRNSIDE/CROYDON	672	25.0
902 - CHELSEA/SPRINGVALE ROAD	902	27.6
670 - CROYDON/RINGWOOD	670	30.8
708 - CARRUM RS TO SOUTHLAND SC	708	38.6
631 - SOUTHLAND/WAVERLEY GDNS	631	48.7
370 - MITCHAM/EASTLAND	370	100.0
737 - MON UNIV TO GLEN WAVERLEY	737	100.0
903 - CHADSTONE/MORDIALLOC	903	100.0

Table 5. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer East & South East area. Plotted in Figure 5 below.

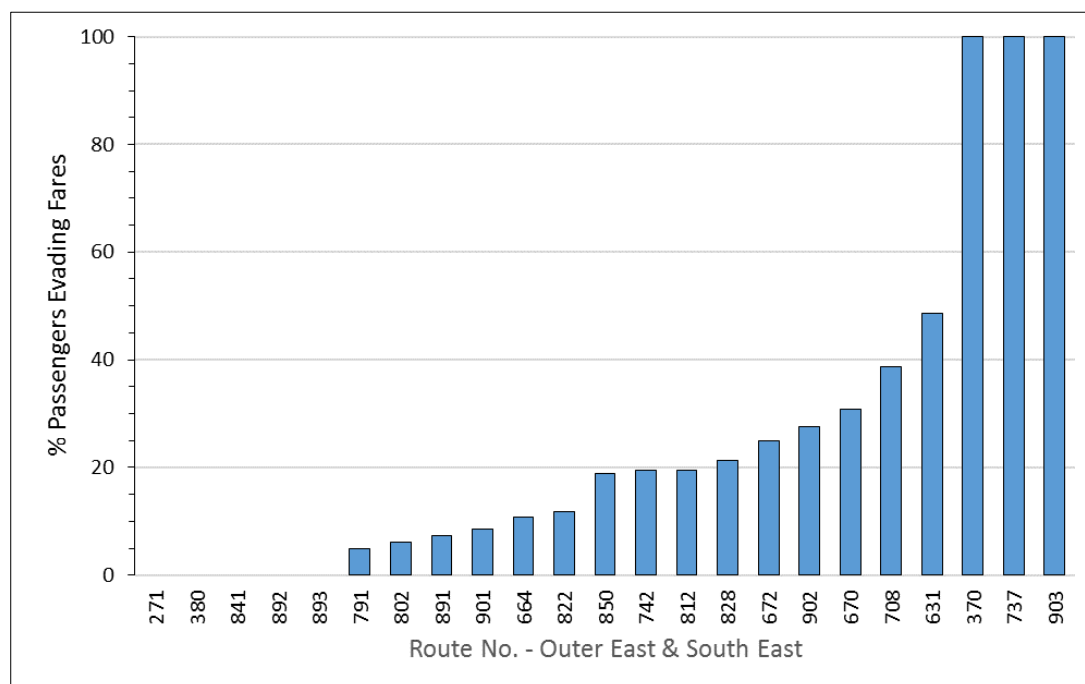


Figure 5. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer East & South East area.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
518 - GREENSBOROUGH/ST HELENA 2	518	0.0
357 - EPPING PLAZA/THOMASTOWN	357	12.5
386 - MERNDA/SOUTH MORANG	386	15.4
556 - NTHLAND/EPPING PLAZA	556	22.2
517 - GREENSBOROUGH/ST HELENA LOOP	517	29.2
566 - GREENSBOROUGH/NTHLAND	566	31.6
293 - GREENSBOROUGH/DONCASTER	293	40.0
555 - KEON PARK/NORTHLAND	555	44.8
385 - GREENSBOROUGH/MERNDA	385	50.0
902 - AIRPORT WEST/BROADMEADOWS	902	52.1
570 - THOMASTOWN/BUNDOORA CAMP LOOP	570	63.6
381 - DIAMOND CK/STH MORANG	381	67.3
580 - DIAMOND CK/ELTHAM	580	71.4

Table 6. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer North area. Plotted in Figure 6 below.

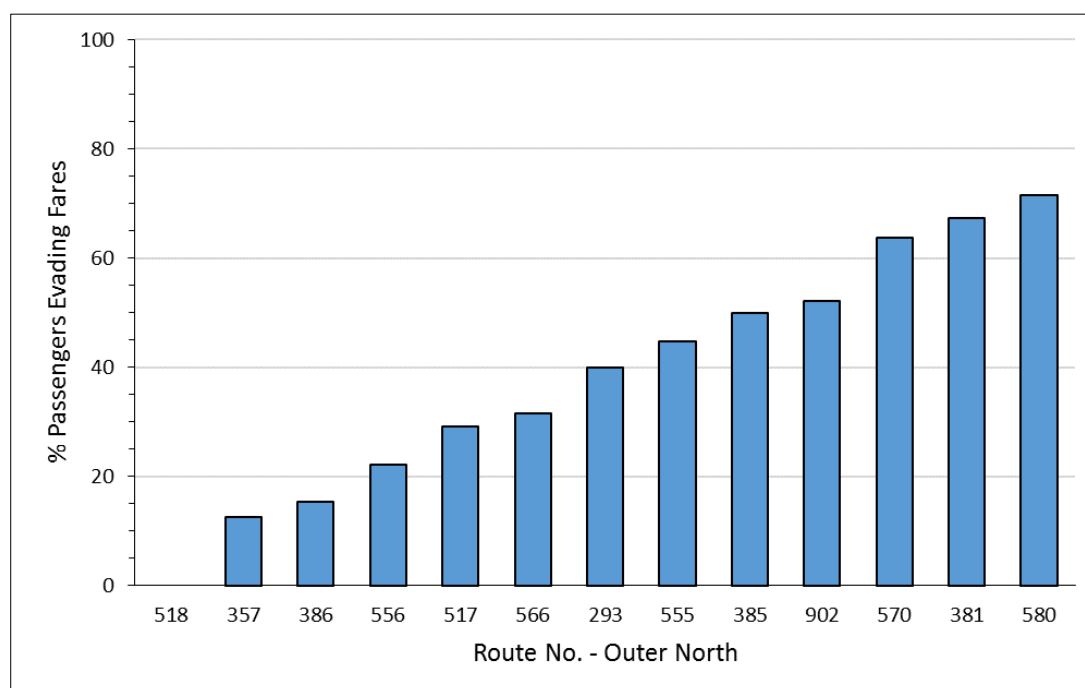


Figure 6. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer North area.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
151 - TARNEIT/WILLIAMS LAND	151	15.4
498 - HOPPERS CR/LAVERTON	498	23.1
192 - WERRIBEE/LAV/WYND VALE STN	192	25.0
153 - WILLIAMS LAND/HOPPERS CR	153	33.3
166 - WYN VAL/WERR VILL	166	33.3
167 - WERR VILL/TARNEIT	167	33.3

Table 7. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer West area. Plotted in Figure 7 below.

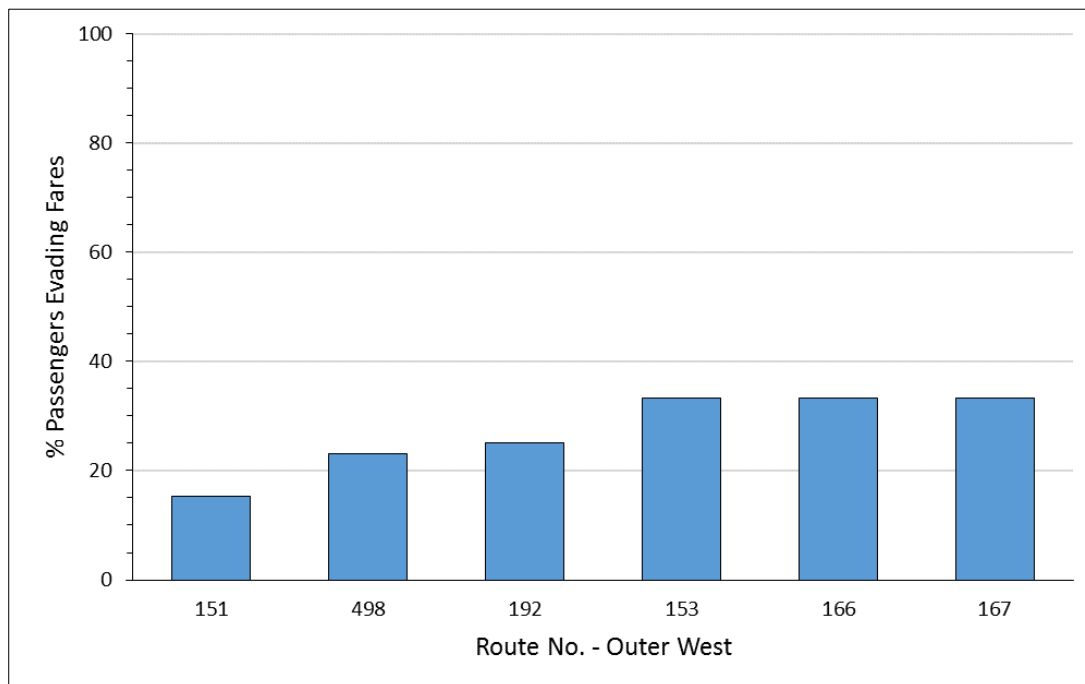


Figure 7. Relative rates of fare evasion for routes in the Outer West area.

Route No - Destination	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
273 - THE PINES/NUNAWADING	273	0.0
284 - BALWYN/BOX HILL	284	0.0
295 - DONCASTER/THE PINES	295	0.0
811 - MIDDLE BRIGHT/MENTONE	811	0.0
271 - BLACKBURN/BOX HILL	271	0.0
380 - CROYDON/RINGWOOD	380	0.0
841 - CRANBOURNE/FOUNT GATE	841	0.0
892 - HAMPTON PK/DANDENONG	892	0.0
893 - HAMPTON PK/DANDENONG	893	0.0
518 - GREENSBOROUGH/ST HELENA 2	518	0.0
623 - GLEN WAVERLEY/RIPPONLEA	623	3.3
791 - FRANKS TO CRANBOURNE	791	5.0
612 - BALWYN/CHADSTONE	612	5.6
802 - CNR SVALE / WELL TO CHADSTONE SC	802	6.2
408 - SUNSHINE/ST ALBANS	408	6.7
734 - GLEN IRIS/GLEN WAVERLEY	734	7.4
891 - FOUNT GATE/HAMPTON PK	891	7.4
901 - DANDENONG/FRANKSTON	901	8.5
742 - GLEN WAVERLEY/BLACKBURN RD	742	9.1
664 - KNOX/CROYDON	664	10.8
270 - BOX HILL/MITCHAM	270	11.1
822 - CHADSTONE/STHLAND	822	11.8
357 - EPPING PLAZA/THOMASTOWN	357	12.5
280 - DONCASTER LOOP	280	14.3
703 - BLACKBURN RD/MIDDLE BRIGHT	703	14.8
219 - FOOTSCRAY/SUNSHINE	219	15.4
386 - MERNDA/SOUTH MORANG	386	15.4
151 - TARNEIT/WILLIAMS LAND	151	15.4
850 - WAV DAR/DANDENONG	850	18.9
742 - RINGWOOD RS TO WAV GARDENS SC	742	19.4
812 - MENTONE/DANDENONG	812	19.5
418 - CAROLINE SP/KEILOR PL	418	20.0
828 - DANDENONG/CHELTHAM	828	21.3
251 - NORTHCOTE/NORTHLAND	251	22.2
419 - WATERGARDENS/ST ALBANS	419	22.2
549 - NORTHLAND/IVANHOE	549	22.2
561 - LATROBE UNIV/COBURG	561	22.2
556 - NTHLAND/EPPING PLAZA	556	22.2
477 - ESSENDON/AIRPORT WEST	477	22.9
498 - HOPPERS CR/LAVERTON	498	23.1
223 - HIGHPOINT/FOOTSCRAY	223	25.0
672 - CHIRNSIDE/CROYDON	672	25.0
192 - WERRIBEE/LAV/WYND VALE STN	192	25.0
421 - ST ALBANS/WATERGARDENS	421	26.9
409 - FOOTSCRAY/HIGHPOINT	409	27.3
902 - CHELSEA/SPRINGVALE ROAD	902	27.6
465 - ESSENDON/KEILOR PK	465	27.8
468 - HIGHPOINT/ESSENDON	468	28.6
517 - GREENSBOROUGH/ST HELENA LOOP	517	29.2
412 - LAVERTON/FOOTSCRAY	412	30.8
530 - COBURG/CAMPBELLFIELD	530	30.8
670 - CROYDON/RINGWOOD	670	30.8
566 - GREENSBOROUGH/NTHLAND	566	31.6
425 - ST ALBANS/WATERGARDENS	425	33.3
506 - MOONEE PONDS/NORTHCOTE	506	33.3
153 - WILLIAMS LAND/HOPPERS CR	153	33.3
166 - WYN VAL/WERR VILL	166	33.3
167 - WERR VILL/TARNEIT	167	33.3
215 - CAROLINE SP/HIGHPOINT	215	34.4
220 - FOOTSCRAY/SUNSHINE	220	36.4
551 - HEIDELBERG/LATROBE UNIV	551	36.8
708 - CARRUM RS TO SOUTHLAND SC	708	38.6
293 - DONCASTER BOX HILL LOOP	293	40.0
293 - GREENSBOROUGH/DONCASTER	293	40.0
400 - SUNSHINE/LAVERTON	400	42.3
420 - SUNSHINE/WATERGARDENS	420	43.5
510 - ESSENDON/IVANHOE	510	43.8
555 - KEON PARK/NORTHLAND	555	44.8
503 - ESSENDON/EAST BRUNSWICK	503	46.4
501 - AIRPORT WST/ESSENDON	501	47.1

Route No – Destination (continued)	Route No.	% Fare Evasion
527 - NORTHLAND/COBURG	527	48.5
631 - SOUTHLAND/WAVERLEY GDNS	631	48.7
513 - GLENROY/HEIDELBERG	513	49.2
414 - LAVERTON/FOOTSCRAY	414	50.0
385 - GREENSBOROUGH/MERENDA	385	50.0
534 - COBURG/GLENROY	534	51.4
902 - AIRPORT WEST/BROADMEADOWS	902	52.1
903 - HEIDELBERG/BOX HILL	903	54.9
624 - CAULFIELD/KEW	624	61.5
475 - ESSENDON/NIDDRE LOOP	475	62.3
460 - WATERGARDENS/CAROLINE SP	460	62.8
570 - THOMASTOWN/BUNDOORA CAMP LOOP	570	63.6
381 - DIAMOND CK/STH MORANG	381	67.3
472 - FOOTSCRAY/WILLIAMSTOWN	472	69.1
580 - DIAMOND CK/ELTHAM	580	71.4
282 - DONCASTER LOOP	282	75.0
471 - WILLIAMSTOWN/SUNSHINE	471	80.4
370 - MITCHAM/EASTLAND	370	100.0
737 - MON UNIV TO GLEN WAVERLEY	737	100.0
903 - CHADSTONE/MORDIALLOC	903	100.0

Conclusion

This qualitative study suggests:

1. that 35.5% of people who board a metropolitan route bus do not touch on. This is materially different to the 7.6% overall fare evasion that PTV estimate;
2. fare evasion is highest in the outer north, followed by the inner north western suburbs;
3. students are the largest cohort of fare evaders;
4. bus routes in the outer west have the largest amount of FPD machines that don't work;
5. the vast majority of drivers do not ask passengers who do not touch on, to do so;
6. fare evasion is greater during the school term.

As this study also shows the relative rates of fare evasion for routes in each geographic area, PTV should undertake targeted deployment of AO's on these routes as soon as possible.

Part 8 - Industry comments: strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities

This part offers BAV industry comments on some key issues that emerged from this investigation.

Aggression, system deficiencies, training, driver support, and duty of care

BAV has spearheaded response to concerns about increasing incidents of verbal abuse and physical assault of Victorian bus drivers. While long thought to be under-reported, this investigation has provided for the first time a systematic basis for gauging the true extent of aggression to drivers. If the basis is correct, there may be some debate about the precise figures that should be applied in the calculations; but its structure means that estimates can no longer be based on guesswork, and massive under-reporting can no longer be ignored. Valid estimates are derivable from partial data.

Bus drivers bear the brunt of aggression from public transport users over all aspects of ticketing – touch-on, top-up, myki purchase, cash handling, and equipment faults and deficiencies. In November 2016, a reporter noted, “the Myki ticketing system is being blamed for the increase in assaults and threatening behaviour, as drivers are legally responsible for asking passengers to touch on, triggering abuse”.¹⁰² Meanwhile operators struggle, as they have since myki implementation, with back office reporting malfunctions, missing data (Kamco’s “buckets”), and PTV arguments for service cuts based on erroneous passenger numbers, given some 25%+ non-compliance on bus.

Key point:

Drivers bear the brunt of aggression from public transport users over all aspects of ticketing. Operators struggle, as they have since myki began, with back office reporting malfunctions, missing data, and PTV arguments for service cuts based on erroneous passenger numbers.

If there are no Authorised Officers, PSOs, or police around to act as guardians,¹⁰³ drivers remain isolated potential victims. All operators emphasised that drivers cannot be AOs; their job is the safe conveyance of the public. Protective screens, duress buttons, etc., do not provide guardianship over fare compliance and behaviour, and still leave drivers at the mercy of misbehaving passengers. It is not viable to put AOs on every bus. Random blitzes are not the answer, as fare evaders notify others when AOs are around by phone, Facebook, SMS, Twitter, etc., and such persons get off the bus at the stop prior. As Operator K said, social media has changed the game. There needs to be a new stakeholder dialogue about public transport safety, fare compliance, and passenger management.

Key point:

Drivers work alone. Protective screens, etc., do not provide guardianship over fare compliance and behaviour. Social media has changed the game on fare evasion. There needs to be a new stakeholder dialogue about driver safety, fare compliance, and passenger management.

¹⁰² Brennan, 2016 (online article).

¹⁰³ “Formal guardians include the police, security guards, and others whose job is to protect people and property from crime. ... A target with an effective guardian is less likely to be attacked by a potential offender than a target without a guardian. If the guardian is absent, weak, or corrupt little protection is provided the target. ... Problems occur when offenders are at the same places as targets, without any effective controller. If one or more of the controllers is present, however, the chances of crime are greatly reduced”. Centre for Problem-Oriented Policing, ‘A Theory of Crime Problems’, (online, n.d.), <http://www.popcenter.org/learning/PAM/help/theory.cfm>, accessed 10 April 2017.

Training in “managing difficult passengers” will not make system deficiencies go away. Unlike train and tram, bus drivers interact with nearly every person who boards. The first interaction, if one takes place, is most likely about fare compliance (unless the passenger is complaining about late running), and is often negative. Ticketing is the trigger for the bulk of negative interaction, most escalated verbal abuse, and nearly all physical assaults of bus drivers. PTV can no longer claim it is a minor issue based on the number of incidents notified under TSV’s mandatory reporting criteria.

Nevertheless, driver training in passenger interaction is necessary both for protection, confidence, and long term mental health. Hard core evaders will fire up at drivers; but opportunistic, “try it on”, evaders also wear them down.¹⁰⁴ As Stanley emphasised, low grade aggression over time is wearing, and “experiencing psychological aggression and intimidation may be at least as equally distressing as physical violence”.¹⁰⁵ During the interviews for this report, Operator K said they would introduce a tick sheet for verbal abuse, to gain some data about what and how much drivers are experiencing but not telling them. A couple of drivers present said that was all very well, but why bother as you can’t change it. This sentiment was common to many drivers; but some kind of simple, minimalistic internal reporting, even a wall chart or tick poster, perhaps aligned with a buddy system, might assist operators to gain a better understanding of what drivers are facing. It probably should not be done for more than a week, to gain information for industry attention without building a negative focus about the job. A twin board or chart to count, and optionally list, good things that happened each day may help achieve this. If done, it would need to be structured as a short, positive exercise that drivers know is being referred for external attention, or they are unlikely to participate.

Key point:

Driver training in passenger interaction is necessary both for protection, confidence, and long term mental health. Experiencing psychological aggression and intimidation may be at least as equally distressing as physical violence and we need to change some drivers' attitude that little can or will be done to stop it.

The *MentalHealth@Work* report suggested some immediate steps that could be taken to reduce exposure to aggression and abuse, including increased patrols by AOs (and PSOs if availed); a ‘zero tolerance’ public relations campaign; posters/signs in buses about inappropriate behaviour not being tolerated; counselling services offered to those who are traumatised or distressed, and the establishment of internal peer support services.¹⁰⁶ This last was similarly suggested as long ago as 1994 by an American researcher, who wrote that, “The collective driver culture could become the first line of social support and of social control. Experienced, successful drivers could be trained in peer counselling techniques and/or more formal support groups could be developed”.¹⁰⁷

The authors raised the idea of a peer support or buddy system during one large operator interview, so that drivers could get things “off their chest”, using simple reporting without turning it into a federal case, as investigation by *MentalHealth@Work* showed that drivers who have been abused and reported it, experienced better mental health outcomes than those who did not report it.¹⁰⁸ The idea seemed well received.

¹⁰⁴ The terms “hard core” and “opportunistic” are from Operator G’s interview.

¹⁰⁵ Stanley, 2015: 9-10.

¹⁰⁶ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 59.

¹⁰⁷ Evans 1994: 191-2.

¹⁰⁸ *MentalHealth@Work*, 2015: 47.

Late running is the second highest trigger of aggression toward drivers, and is impacted by passenger numbers. The operators interviewed for this report said that, contrary to PTV figures, their buses are carrying more passengers, not less. Observations from operators suggest that PTV passenger numbers are way out, because of both non-compliance with ticketing (not touching on), and from questionable PTV passenger counting procedures. It appears for example that passengers are counted at major points such as stations and bus interchanges, and that PTV fails to count many passengers who travel between, but not to, interchanges and stations. Several operators are now purchasing passenger counting devices, at considerable cost, so as to be able to provide reliable passenger counts to PTV, due to threats of service cuts based on low PTV passenger figures. PTV will not disclose the formula or processes it uses to determine passenger numbers.

Key point:

Late running is the second highest trigger of aggression toward drivers. Contrary to PTV patronage reports, buses are carrying more passengers, not less. The PTV methodology for determining its fare evasion figures will not be revealed.

Lowe and Evans noted that, “Today it is the law for all Australian employers and workplaces to provide a healthy and safe work environment, free from physical and psychological harm. The terms health, well-being and safety are specifically used in state and federal legislation, policy and practice”.¹⁰⁹ In other words, employers have a duty of care. Logically, this should extend to the conditions set by PTV in its service contracts. These currently require that operators ensure that drivers enforce ticketing and proof of concession entitlements, but such requests of passengers lead to multiple levels of verbal abuse, and in practice a predictable frequency of physical assault. The true extent of verbal abuse and physical assault has now been estimated. No longer able to rest on relatively small official assault statistics, as it has since the implementation of the proof-of-payment myki system, it is time PTV acknowledged it has a shared responsibility to ensure bus driver safety.

¹⁰⁹ Lowe and Evans, 2016: 684.

Conclusion

Drivers work alone. Protective screens, etc., do not provide guardianship over fare compliance and behaviour. Social media has changed the game on fare evasion. There needs to be a new stakeholder dialogue about driver safety, fare compliance, and passenger management.

Training in “managing difficult passengers” will not make system deficiencies go away. Fares are the trigger for the bulk of negative interaction. PTV can no longer claim driver assault is a minor issue, based on the number of incidents notified under TSV’s mandatory reporting criteria.

Driver training in passenger interaction is necessary both for protection, confidence, and long term mental health. Experiencing psychological aggression and intimidation may be at least as equally distressing as physical violence, but drivers think little can or will be done to stop it. Industry and government need together to show them that it will.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have emerged from the research and analysis in this report. This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and further thoughts from operators and agencies is needed (and these can be found in the appendices).

This list is arranged roughly in the topic order of this report, not in any priority order. It is further limited by having only interviewed 16 operators in the course of this investigation, and as such is only intended as a starting point for discussion on the matters addressed.

1. That the PTRG report prepared for PTV, *Understanding the Psychology of Fare Evasion* (16 November 2016), be made available to the public.
2. Government and Industry should review the present requirements of recording and reporting incidents, notifiable or otherwise. The aim of the review is to gather as much information rich data but not necessarily increase the regulatory burden on operators.
3. CCTV should be a mandatory inclusion on contracted route bus specifications for all new buses and a retrofitting program of CCTV cameras on the legacy fleet should be implemented. Having a screen on a bus showing an image of people on the bus would be a deterrent to passengers contemplating abusing or assaulting bus drivers at it would remind them they are being watched.
4. As requests by bus drivers for fare payment or touch-on are the leading trigger for both verbal abuse and physical assault drivers, the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017 should be amended to remove the obligation for drivers to request payment/touch on and proof of concession entitlement and that the obligation be moved to the service contracts. The regulations requiring bus drivers to enforce ticketing obligations or proof of concession entitlement should be removed so as to improve on-time running.
5. The regulations should be amended so that operators are considered to have taken reasonable steps to collect fare by means of signage and pre-recorded audible announcements of the obligation for passengers to touch on, and that pre-recorded audible announcements and signage be deployed network wide.
6. Change the regulations to eliminate all top-ups and cash handling on buses (the same as trams) and move to a pay pass/credit card system with proximity deductions, so drivers wouldn't have to sell fares, so as to reduce passenger aggression towards bus drivers, improve on time running and improve customer satisfaction.
7. Have the myki software enhanced so all bus driver consoles have a fare evader count button added. This would give the operator and PTV accurate fare evasion counts without confrontation, mitigate the need for manual counting and realise efficiencies in the usage of consultants in the fare evasion estimation methodology. Adding a fare evader count button would not present to a bus driver as an onerous obligation.
8. Introduce legislation so bus drivers are classed as protected persons providing an essential and/or emergency service and where assaulting a driver incurs the perpetrator a higher class of offence.
9. That an industry-wide driver training module in de-escalating aggression be developed and implemented.
10. PTV review its fare evasion estimation methodology to more accurately reflect actual levels.

Appendix 1: Bus Operator Interview Transcripts, February-March 2017

The sixteen interviewed operators, labelled A to P, provide metropolitan and/or regional route bus services, and have been de-identified. The roles of the interviewed personnel are stated at the start of each summary, which has been checked and confirmed by the operator as a fair representation of what was said. Each was a semi-structured group interview with operator-nominated participants.

Those classed as large operators have 60 or more buses; medium operators have between 10 and 59 buses. The only small operator (P) is in a regional town, and has less than 10 buses.

Operator A (Large operator)

We interviewed the operator together with the operations manager, training manager, and two lead drivers. Drivers definitely feel more vulnerable than in previous times. Operations said they typically only hear of incidents when there is an adverse outcome. They would like to hear more about defused situations, but drivers often don't mention incidents that they consider they have resolved. A lot of abuse and some aggression is therefore never reported back to supervisors.

Asking people to touch on is far and away the biggest source of conflict. This is the main thing drivers worry about. The requirement to ask people to touch on or pay puts drivers in the position of trying to be an AO. The way that drivers ask for touch-on was discussed. Passengers are unpredictable and can flare up if they take offence at the driver's tone. Passengers have endless excuses for not having a myki card or for having no money. Passengers can buy and top up myki on the bus (max top up of \$20). Money handling is another source of dispute and there can be minor delays if passengers do not have their money ready.

On-time running is the other major source of complaints. Some passengers get angry and abusive when their bus is late. An experienced driver said that in late running, it is best to get in first and acknowledge you're running late when they board – "Sorry we're running late, problem X happened". The company is developing an app that passengers can check to see where their bus is, which shows its expected time to arrive at the passenger's stop. This is done by GPS on the bus and the passenger's phone, so the app notifies of any late running. This has been developed principally because of concerns by schoolkids, so they know where their bus is.

Fare evaders can often be cheerful, say hello to drivers, but just walk on straight past the validator. Some are fare avoiders, some genuinely can't pay. A lot of people are stretched financially. If the driver says nothing, there isn't a conflict. One person suggested saying to fare refusers, "I don't mind, but I can't save you if the inspectors get on". This raised a discussion that if inspectors did get on, the fare avoider may think the driver called the inspectors, and may come back and abuse or assault the driver on a later trip. One driver knew of an instance where this had happened. There is a lot of fare evasion by school kids. Anecdotally, not many have myki passes now, it is daily touch on.

The company is developing video resources on key types of passenger interactions, that will be screened on electronic whiteboards in driver rooms. Also to be used as a training resource, these will have questions for response on the scenario content. We do a CCTV review of all incidents including analysing the driver's responses. Customer interaction is discussed, and covers topics such as being consistent, using discretion, giving friendly service, and being aware of personal biases such as racial or other discrimination. This goes into training, but actors are used in training videos. There is concern about showing real footage as training material as it singles out particular drivers.

Risk analysis on passenger-to-passenger conflict/racial slander/bullying is also important. Their policy now is to get the aggressor off the bus; to ask them to leave. Drivers are instructed not to physically intervene in passenger disputes or to leave the bus. Drivers have been assaulted when they got out of their seat to intervene in a passenger dispute, or got off the bus to intervene at a bus stop or try to prevent vandalism. We now have a policy about drivers staying in their seats, which has led to a reduction in assaults (verbal and physical). The situation escalates 99% when the driver gets out of their seat; and where the driver reacts rather than staying passive. This is hard to train sometimes as it goes against the alpha male culture. It is not a blanket rule; drivers are to use their judgement, but they are instructed that their own safety comes first.

We train that when a passenger boards our vehicle a 'Duty of Care' exists, requiring that we get them to their destination. Drivers are not permitted to 'throw' someone off the bus. You can only ask them to leave, but this can also lead to escalation and makes the driver a target. We advise that they contact operations and if necessary, stop the vehicle, open both doors, so as not to obstruct an aggressor's exit, and if required press the duress button. Police are then notified immediately.

Drivers want to drive, and largely passengers are OK. Drivers should not have to ask passengers to touch on. It could be done by a recorded message played each time the bus leaves a pick-up stop. E.g. "Welcome to [X] buses on behalf of PTV. Please be aware that it is your responsibility to have a valid ticket. Please remember to touch on for every trip". Fare evasion would probably be similar, but attacks on bus drivers would be reduced. That way the onus is on the passengers, and the driver would not be accused of authorising unauthorised travel by waving them on etc. Our overall training has been met generally with a positive outlook, but as discussed, the option of removing the need for the driver to talk to passengers regarding ticketing offences would eradicate the main problem.

As well as greeting passengers, (good morning/hello etc), one tip from an experienced driver is to acknowledge passengers when they exit; simply a wave generally towards the back of the bus. Some drivers call 'thank you' as well. This makes all feel recognised and people often respond by saying 'thank you' (or similar) when exiting. The company recognises and rewards good behaviour from drivers when it gets customer compliments. They said they get mostly complaints (bus late, etc.) but usually 3 or 4 compliments a day too. They encourage phone/email customer feedback with signage that gives the fleet number.

Why is there rising abuse/assaults on bus drivers? Soft penalties by the courts if it ever gets to court. Drug and alcohol-affected passengers increase the chance of conflict with drivers. Ice is different to other drugs; users are often prone to aggression; in an agitated state and unpredictable.

Drivers do a lot more than what the contract says. All the daily customer service and interaction that goes with the job. There are three parts of running the business and they are all interlinked. There is the contract between the company and PTV, then the drivers, then the passengers. Education needs to occur around all three areas.

Moving the myki reader from the right of the doorway to the console near the driver will probably not help. It might make a five percent difference as passengers have to face the driver when they touch on. But it puts the driver in the position of having to face people who don't want to pay and might escalate conflict. It could be a two-edged sword.

Operator B (Large operator)

We interviewed the general manager together with a depot manager and the HR manager. The biggest frustration by miles is fare evasion, not late running or traffic. About 70% of tension is over fare evasion; more verbal abuse than physical, but physical is increasing. This occurs mostly when drivers ask people to touch on. You can have 15 people walk on and some give the driver the finger. If the driver takes it personally and says anything it can escalate quickly. Evaders tend to walk past or stick a finger up at the driver. A driver recently asked someone to please touch on; the passenger came back and punched the driver in the head.

One driver counted 57 fare evaders in a day and a half. Drivers get frustrated by freeloaders. It's a health and wellbeing issue for drivers, and it affects their morale. More of our drivers ask for touch on/payment than turn a blind eye. Some passengers call the driver out and say, "Why don't you tell them to pay?". The office gets a lot of calls complaining about non-payers; and passengers ring PTV as well. Some paying passengers say to non payers, "I've paid, why don't you?", which can lead to on-board confrontation. Some payers directly confront non-fare payers so it is instant escalation.

80% of their fare evasion is on route buses, not school route buses. Operations say that fare evasion would be close to 40% on the route buses. The myki system doesn't count anyone who doesn't touch on. The operator has extra fuel and wear and tear costs from uncounted non-payers. It would be good if the driver's console had a fare evader count button. It would just be a software upgrade. It would help driver's morale to know data is being collected, and it would give the operator and PTV accurate numbers without confrontation.

This suggestion for a 'fare evader count' button was re-emphasised by an operations manager at the end of the group interview, who said it would give drivers an outlet for their frustration ("They'd probably push the button through the machine within a week") as drivers don't believe the company knows how bad fare evasion is. They see it as something their employer should be able to fix. Their frustration is compounded as they don't think the company is acting on it. Unlike manual counting, it would be no additional work for the driver or hassle for the operator, just a software upgrade.

There is increasing tension and on board violence, with verbal and sometimes physical conflict between passengers, and also physical conflict around bus stops. The drivers don't know what's caused it half the time. There are issues with ice and drug-affected people. Drivers are not qualified to guess what drugs people are on. They can spot alcohol-affected people easier; but they can see that people are drug-affected. If a passenger looks affected, or if they are a repeat fare evader, drivers are asked not to ask for a fare or to escalate it, and told not to engage with anyone if they feel at risk.

There is verbal abuse on a daily basis, at least once a day on route bus services for probably all, and certainly most, drivers. Only maybe 5% report it, when it's particularly bad. It wears drivers down over time. Drivers interact in the tea-room, and senior staff, OHS reps and TWU delegates are encouraged to interact with them there and generally around the workplace. For debriefing physical assault, the supervisor makes an assessment. The driver is usually pulled off the road, and an incident form is done. The company uses an external confidential trauma counsellor if needed, and keeps in touch with the affected driver out of work hours (e.g. on the weekend) as well.

Drivers are told to drive the bus; in practice it's an 'ask once' policy. It's a user-pays system. The driver has to tell passengers they need to touch on or pay cash, or they risk a fine. Passengers complain to drivers and the office about getting fined, especially if fined for having paid a concession fare without entitlement. A recorded message reminder to touch on or risk a fine might work, and would take the confrontation element away from drivers. The operator would be happy to trial it.

The myki system is the biggest issue in violent escalation (touch ons and payments/top ups). Except for road rage, no-one just gets on and belts the driver. It is verbal first, then escalation. Regional accessibility for buying myki is limited, there are not enough outlets. Regional practice is to buy/top up on the bus, which negates the whole cashless idea, and assumes the driver has enough extra mykis to sell. The myki concept is PAYG, but myki needs advance planning both to obtain and top up. Regional daily myki tickets were scrapped as uneconomic. It cost PTV about \$0.60 to produce each daily disposable myki, which then had to be stored, distributed, accounted for, tracked, and mostly sold for \$1.00 concession, a massive loss to PTV and administrative cost to operators. A lot of people still don't understand myki, e.g. new residents and interstate visitors.

The towns serviced here are spread out, but fare evasion is in all regions; more in lower socio-economic areas. Evaders are especially noticeable on a route that runs between major shopping centres where they go to socialise. Fare evaders exit before terminus. The operator has asked for plain clothes AOs, but PTV seem to think a visible presence is better. Passengers use social media to tell each other things like when AOs are around, which drivers will confront passengers about paying, and which are soft targets. Most passengers have iPhones and are on Facebook about AOs.

There is increasing fare evasion in school holidays. During term, the company work with schools to encourage compliance. Drivers are trained that they must pick all kids up on the way to school in the morning, but there are some days announced in advance by the schools, that non-payers will not be transported back in the afternoon, but left at the school under the school's duty of care if they don't touch on/pay. It is never done at random by surprise. The operator puts the onus back on the school for its kids' compliance, but it also has to avoid alienating the schools. It is a difficult thing.

The company does in-house customer service, attitude, and other targeted training, and there is an annual review of all policies and driver training. It is bringing in trauma training for the first time in 2017, as some drivers don't cope with trauma; some ignore on-board incidents or go into denial. In a recent death on a bus, the driver managed the situation with emergency services but didn't advise operations of the severity of the situation and kept driving the run, then broke down afterwards. Another passenger fell heavily and badly damaged their face; the driver radioed through but he couldn't communicate with the passenger; he mentally shut down and stared out the front window. Many drivers are not good at coping with extreme circumstances.

CCTV has helped. Some drivers have said to aggressive passengers that they are on CCTV, and the passenger has settled down. Probably about 50% of drivers don't want security screens as they say they will feel boxed in and it will prevent them chatting to passengers; the other 50% want screens for protection. Regional drivers generally enjoy being able to communicate with passengers, and passengers describe drivers as rude if they are not engaging. When we hired three ex-metro drivers who at first did not engage with passengers, complaints to the office doubled in their first 3 months until they acclimatised. We are not keen on screens being fitted in line with many drivers, but will go with the Association on it.

The company requests and gets AOs regularly, but it's a blitz approach. Fare evasion continues to increase. There is huge agitation in the community generally with the closure of a major employer, a lot of trauma in the community even for those not directly affected. Domestic violence, low income groups, employment stress, all escalate tension.

Moving the myki reader to the front dashboard won't make any difference. It is more likely to escalate hostility over fares. It is an extra cost to the operator for no advantage ("a complete waste of money") and buses will be off the road for longer while the rewiring takes place. Operations are upfront that they don't want the myki readers moved, as fare evaders will be more in the driver's face. Drivers are not AOs.

Operator C (Large operator)

We interviewed an operations manager who has managed for over 10 years. They haven't had a big rise in physical assaults on drivers; it averages about 1 per year. Verbal abuse is a common, weekly occurrence for drivers. There is a tension between driver safety and fare compliance. The causes of aggression are probably 90% ticketing and requests to touch on, and the rest anti-social behaviour with drugs or alcohol involved, and mental illness where the passenger is abusive to the driver and maybe other passengers. Mental illness issues arise maybe monthly or bi-monthly, and are likely to be from a change in their circumstances or changes in medication. It is rare to have aggression in school route buses, it is mostly on route buses.

Drivers tend not to bother reporting verbal abuse unless it's full blooded, like lengthy swearing at them, but this is fairly rare. Minor verbal abuse and swearing isn't reported back. Drivers report incidents back to Operations. Sometimes this happens live, on the road, and sometimes after the fact. Reporting tends to happen when a driver wants the operator to look at the CCTV video, or for a repeat offender. This sometimes happens if the driver thinks a passenger could complain about them, or if a complaint is threatened, to show they did the right thing. Regular passengers tend not to be a problem; it's more mental health patients [who create problems].

Physical assaults are typically reported. A passenger behaviour or incident report is then done after the shift by the supervisor. When an incident is reported during a shift, the supervisor checks if the driver is OK to continue the shift, or they may pull the driver off to debrief. Typically they would talk it through and watch the CCTV video; and notify police if it is a police matter. Drivers often don't report minor issues as they just want to go home, not do reports after their shift.

If a driver has been assaulted, we contact their partner. The partner may come and pick them up, or we take them home. The shock effect can be delayed. They might say they're OK, then an hour later it hits them. We offer external counselling. Generally if there are no physical injuries, we get them home with their partner, as that works. There may be follow up with professional counsellors. We can arrange modified duties if this is needed.

Drivers who are threatened report this back to the depot, but it is not reported to TSV. Assaults are probably only reported to TSV if they are 'serious', which means requiring in-patient treatment in hospital. Most incidents are not reported to TSV; only if they are prescribed notifiable incidents. Operators are so busy dealing with the fallout that reporting to TSV for minor stuff is last on the list. Fare evasion varies demographically. It tends to be in certain pockets and with schoolkids from some schools. It is a bit under 10% in some areas, and more like 50% in others. School groups don't all touch on, but we don't refuse travel to school kids.

Drivers bring a range of their own personal values to their role, from ticketing and passenger behaviour being "not my problem, I'm just here to drive", to drivers who feel strongly that all passengers should pay and behave in a reasonable way. Drivers are trained to remind passengers to touch on, but they vary in how they do it. It is partly their own personal response as in any interaction. They are not given a script, just asked to ask politely in their own words.

Our induction and training is that they are drivers, not AOs, and that their personal safety comes first and overrides ticketing concerns. The 'safety first' message has been emphasised for the last 5-10 years. What happens is that drivers interpret that in different ways. The training shapes drivers, but they have a range of responses to passenger interactions. Drivers who get into disputes tend to be more autocratic in approach. Some long-term drivers with 15-20 years' service never or rarely have issues. But some drivers' responses can make interactions worse.

Drivers are instructed that there is to be no physical contact with passengers except in self-defence. They should not get out of their seat, and are never to step off the bus to argue with a passenger; that is crossing a boundary.

There is not much reported back to the office about passenger to passenger aggression; it is more that the drivers feel it. It is rare for passengers to call drivers out over other non-paying passengers.

There is no magic solution to fare evasion and passenger behaviour, it is multi-faceted. You have to look at all factors – education, reinforcement, safety barriers, CCTV, signage, etc. We would support a push to increase penalties for assaults on drivers, but the reality is when people are abusing drivers, they're not thinking about the penalties. AOs are pivotal for both driver and passenger safety and compliance issues. It's like a police presence, it makes people think twice.

There has to be a reasonably strong AO presence both for fare enforcement and for a feeling of safety for both passengers and drivers. It influences general behaviour too, such as feet on seats and vandalism. Drivers won't tell passengers to comply if they never see an AO. When the AOs come they catch a few offenders but not many; they mix up their visits between standing at interchanges and riding buses. We do have some limited ability to request where AOs go. We can request attention to certain areas and times, but mostly they are positioned by PTV. Drivers feel isolated, especially at night when there are fewer passengers. They would like to see AOs around at interchanges and on buses, like PSOs.

There are mixed messages from PTV about fare compliance. About 3 years ago PTV were putting out the message that operators were to remind drivers to tell passengers of their obligation to pay. When myki was new, they told AOs for months not to issue fines but to "educate" passengers. But driver safety has to come first. Like on trains, an audio message might be good to remind passengers of their obligations without the driver confronting passengers. If PTV was serious they'd be working on it. PTV need to be clearer about their messages. Vline are clearer about what they want drivers to say/not say and do; but they can be over prescriptive too. The operator needs to have a say in it.

Direct debiting fares on myki has been a complete failure. Only about 5% of passengers use auto top-up. The rest use myki as a short term ticket. Most put e.g. \$2.20 on the card on the bus, the cost of the fare. Not many starter packs are sold on the bus. The core demographic is just putting a couple of dollars on. The total amount of cash going through the depot each week hasn't changed much since myki came in. A lot top up on the bus; others just walk past while they're doing it.

Operator D (Large)

We interviewed a senior HR manager together with a Health and Safety manager, both who have extensive interaction with drivers. Reporting of incidents has greatly improved over recent times. Depot management report incidents to TSV as per their requirements. As an operator, we are encouraging a reporting culture for all bus incidents – in particular verbal abuse and assault. For some older drivers and supervisors there has been an attitude that verbal abuse is part of the job and reporting didn't matter except for serious incidents, but we are working to change that. All accidents and incidents are communicated through Operations. As a rough estimate, we think we capture 75% of verbal abuse, and 100% of physical assault. If drivers aren't reporting issues, we can't request more AOs. Under reporting is an issue; drivers don't necessarily report verbal abuse but we think direct personal insults would be reported most times.

When operations are told of an incident by a driver, the Depot Supervisor ensures that a report is filled out. On receiving an incident or accident call, Operations will always ask the driver if he/she is OK and if they can finish their trip. They log all incident and accidents into a database for the local depot management to follow up. All buses have CCTV. We review the CCTV footage when investigating incidents and accidents. Incidents can sometimes be linked with service interruptions. A report form is used by drivers to report hazards, incidents, passenger issues, timetable problems, and other on-road issues. We have an Employee Assistance Program which is a free counselling service that is offered to drivers that have been involved in a distressing situation. It is used for a wide range of issues but would be more likely used for physical assault than verbal assault. We have had WorkCover claims for racial verbal abuse, so it really depends on the individual and how sensitive they are to any type of verbal abuse.

There is a feeling that violence has escalated, with factors including youth gangs, violence and drugs, and community stresses including unemployment. Vandalism of buses continues to be a problem – this extends to the issue of rock throwing. We have had cases of a passenger standing in front of a bus and blocking it from moving. The Brisbane bus driver death has had a big impact and raised awareness of what drivers are exposed to. That was a random act, not a response to a driver interaction, and the killer was not a passenger on that bus. But it could happen anywhere.

Our induction program has been consistent across depots since mid-2016. Drivers are told they are not AOs; their safety and the safety of their passengers is the number one priority. We have strategies around managing driver behaviour that emphasise operating safely and reinforcing the company farebox policy. We have an 'ask once' policy for touch on/fare payment. They are told to ask once as long as they feel safe to do so, but ask only once.

There are many examples where situations can escalate if drivers try to enforce fares. In the worst case scenarios this can lead to physical assault. Drivers recognise habitual evaders and can provoke escalation from the start, in the way they speak to the passenger, e.g. "Are you going to pay today?" There are demographic correlations between behaviour and fare compliance, with certain bad areas. There is not much difference between peak and off-peak fare evasion, but it is more noticeable off-peak. It is difficult to estimate figures on fare evasion but those published by PTV seem far too low.

For some drivers there is a culture of bus ownership. Some of it is a reflection of driver's attitudes, like "You're on my bus, so do as I say". But it is also pride in their bus and job. Older drivers are more resistant to retraining. We have had past cases of passengers applauding when a driver has removed a passenger, but there is a change in company expectations. We tell them it is inappropriate; it is not their role.

CCTV has shown that if drivers get out of their seat during an argument with a passenger, it almost always escalates the situation. There have been such cases that have resulted in WorkCover claims. As a result our driver communication and training is to stay in their seat if there is a confrontation with a passenger. If an aggressive passenger gets off the bus, the driver should close the bus doors

and move out of the area as soon as possible. We have community liaison and engagement which has had a positive influence on some youth segments. We are also looking at particular geographic hotspots, to deal with incidents like rock-throwing.

The TSV book *Managing Difficult Passengers* is a good overview of the issues: the question is how to bring it to life. Drivers can look at something and just see one idea, like putting in safety screens, as a magic answer. Our training has to focus on the range of things that are within the driver's control. For example, we are aiming to have all buses fitted with driver safety screens and security loops, but these won't help if drivers respond rudely back to rude passengers.

We are introducing additional training that looks at the drivers' skills and how they interact with passengers; starting with customer service and behavioural risk assessment, then managing your own behaviour and de-escalation. It's about knowing what to do at each level. If you make the wrong decision, the situation escalates, and then [knowing] how to respond. Drivers have to make their own risk assessment for each passenger. We have had to develop our own training, but operators shouldn't have to develop their own training to deal with a community issue.

The [Ticketing] Regulations are OK; they articulate what the service is providing. Removing the fare request obligation won't solve or eliminate aggression towards drivers. There are other triggers too. Passengers who pay can get angry at the driver for letting others on without touching on, but it would probably make it worse if drivers didn't ask. There are not enough myki machines where bus passengers can access them, so we still need to take money. We can't see that PTV will give up outsourcing fare compliance to bus operators. The Regulations are what they are. We can work on "best endeavours"; but drivers' discretion needs to be exercised appropriately.

Drivers are unsupervised during their shifts, and are on their own. Drivers are not AOs. We think on-bus announcements including reminders to touch on will make a positive difference, but we couldn't guess a percentage improvement. AOs may be present at bus stops and interchanges, but AO's do not ride on buses. AO resources need to be given to enforcement. Passengers were trained not to pay when myki didn't work on buses for about the first 9 months. The rise in fare evasion reflects community attitudes in general, not just bus fares.

TSV incident data is from notifiable incidents only, so it will count much less than what goes on. The TSV data can only be because operators weren't reporting all incidents to TSV. There can't have been only three assaults in 2008. Abuse that is verbal only is not reported to TSV, and only part of physical abuse. Spitting would probably not be reported; serious physical injury would.

Operator E (Large operator)

We interviewed three managers from different depots together, and talked separately with a group of five drivers at the depot before that meeting, who included the TWU and OHS representatives. The rate of abuse and assault is fairly steady; they may see less physical assaults in the outer suburbs than inner suburban operators do. There are not a lot of physical assaults, but a lot of verbal abuse. The drivers said they get daily verbal abuse. Depot 1 had two serious physical assaults in the last 5 years; Depot 2 had none; Depot 3 recently had a driver hospitalised after a very serious assault. Drivers do not typically report verbal abuse; only if it's in their face. There is a feeling that nothing can be done about it, and managers think the drivers report it only randomly, depending on the driver's sensitivity, unless it is exceptional. Generally it is ignored as part of the job. Physical assault, door kicking, etc., does get reported. There have been a small number of road rage incidents, with verbal and finger-sign abuse, and occasional blocking of the bus by tradesman's utes or others who will get out of their vehicle, and vent at the driver for perceived traffic faults.

The main triggers for conflict are ticketing, then anti-social behaviour like swearing, drinking and drugs. The issues vary a bit by area. Depot 1 would be a 50/50 split between ticketing and behaviour; Depot 2, 80/20 ticketing then behaviour, Depot 3, 70/30 ticketing then behaviour. The anti-social ones are the ones travelling free. We tell drivers it's part of the job to accept fare evasion to avoid escalation. Drivers have some acceptance of fare evasion as they feel there is no enforcement. The driver needs to be taken out of the fare equation. There's a change in community attitudes; kids, no respect from youth to adults - thefts, vandalism, graffiti, small crime, rock-throwing at buses. Depot 2 recently spent about \$4,000 to fix vandalism that happened to two new buses within a couple of weeks. A lot of passengers are lower socio-economic from broken families, low education, and don't have jobs and cars. There are more issues on local bus services that are not going in and out of town. A high percentage of on-board verbal abuse is by drug or alcohol-affected people. Regular drivers have local knowledge of drug-affected passengers, and of passengers affected by mental illness who regularly use the buses and have predictable negative behavioural issues. People affected by drugs and alcohol are often "already 'off key' and looking for a blue". Typically drivers will say something like "just take a seat and we'll get you home". They are told to disregard aggressive verbal behaviour from such people, and not to escalate the situation by asking for a fare. Drivers are told not to make eye contact with obviously drug and alcohol-affected people. There are not too many like that, but eye contact causes flare-ups. One comment was to avoid early eye contact with such people while just waving them on, as eye contact can trigger conflict such as "What are you looking at?", or other provocative responses. It is about making an initial risk assessment as people board the bus.

PTV requires drivers to ask for a fare or touch-on. In practice it is an 'ask once' policy, but drivers are told to use their judgement; "pick your passengers to ask for the fare", and put personal safety first. "It's not worth getting punched in the head for a \$3.00 fare". Drivers push harder for school kid compliance, but if you've got 70 kids piling on to a bus, a lot won't bother to touch on, and you can't do anything about it as you've only got about a minute loading time to keep on schedule. PTV give mixed messages about on-time running and fare compliance. With this scenario every day you can't do both. Depot 1 estimated maybe 15-20% fare evaders; Depot 2 maybe 25%; Depot 3 would not guess an estimate, and said it was hard to put a figure on it.

Typically a verbal encounter triggers something in the passenger, and it escalates from there. Verbal abuse is mostly triggered by ticket conflict; the first conversation with the driver is about ticketing. If people just walk past, the driver calls them back, depending on a risk judgement. What drivers hate most is people just walking past them as though they don't exist. If a passenger come up and says they've got no money, the driver says OK, take a seat, but it is a paid service and you risk a fine if the inspectors get on. It is best if this is said loudly so other passengers can hear the warning about travelling at their own risk. It also ends the conversation, with "sit down but at your own risk". If you forced the driver to refuse travel to non-payers, you would automatically start a fight. You are not giving a free ride if you have asked the passenger to pay.

We had a driver ask a passenger to pay the fare and he then threatened the driver with a knife, for no other reason. Drivers need to 'read' passengers before asking for fare or touch on. If they fear confrontation, just tell the person to grab a seat and travel. There are more physical assaults in the Depot 3 area. Some have been passenger to passenger conflict; verbal first, then physical escalation. There are delays in police attending in these outer areas. Drivers are told to call 000 direct. They have had drivers call the depot and ask us to call 000, but 000 need to go through a set of questions before relaying to information the police. They need to speak to the driver about what is happening, so the police know what to expect when they come.

Drivers are told they are not police or AOs. This message is regularly reinforced at toolbox meetings. AOs are infrequent. A PSO presence helps around stations when they are there. The onus to ask for fares falls on bus drivers who are on their own. It's a huge safety issue for drivers. AOs are in threes or more; police and PSOs go in pairs, and they are trained how to deal with aggressive people. Drivers are just stuck in a seat by themselves. It's like they're expected to be social workers and police as well as drivers. In practice the choice is between not letting someone on, or saying "sit down and I'll get you home". If you refuse travel, it will escalate on the next bus. Passengers have no fear of drivers, and it would be better to remove the enforcement role from them.

The company has single-door buses. Drivers can cop abuse on the way out including spitting, but this is fairly rare. The buses have two-way radios but these are only monitored in office hours, not at nights or weekends. CCTV is fitted in new route buses since around 2006-2007, so many but not all have it. They have good image quality, but some reliability problems with disc drive failures.

Drivers are told never to get out of their seats to remonstrate or intervene in passenger issues, but drivers can reach breaking point at constant rudeness and bad behaviour. We tell them the fare's not coming out of your pocket, let it go, but it stresses drivers badly. You can't teach tact; drivers have it or they don't. There's less off-peak fare evasion, mostly school buses during the week, and more on weekends, especially with kids. It could include conveyance kids, who are used to not paying during the week, and kids who don't use buses during the week and freeload on the weekend.

Drivers are encouraged to fill out a [company] incident report, or do a one-to-one debrief/chat. A supervisor might do the form for them while they talk it through, and ask if they want to take it further. For physical assault we generally do incident reports. We look at the CCTV footage. Often drivers don't understand how they've acted; they may have escalated the situation. There is a policy on difficult passengers, and how to recognize and talk to them. One thing we do is get a senior driver into training sessions, to explain to new drivers how they've handled incidents. Depot 3 took some material out of the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* booklet and distributed a 2 pager to staff. Maybe BusVic could do a driver safety video for the industry.

Drivers take pride in their buses, they feel ownership. Generally they like to talk and interact with passengers. The industry should push for bus drivers to be classed as protected persons, where assaulting a driver is a higher class of offence. More AOs are needed, and with a random presence including nights and weekends. The perception needs to be that if you attack bus drivers you're going to get caught, and not let off or treated leniently.

Safety screens are not fitted on all buses yet, and have saved a couple of drivers so far. But they are not a whole answer. One driver was attacked through his side window, right outside a police station where he had pulled up, and was hospitalised with facial cartilage damage. He couldn't get out of the way of the attack because he was trapped in the cabin by the security screen. The majority are not in favour of being screened off, but there needs to be more information on how drivers can protect themselves.

From an operator perspective the government lost control of ticketing when myki free travel began after Metcard. Passengers had a long period of being conditioned that they wouldn't be fined for fare evasion, and it has never recovered from that. There was good compliance with Metcard. If a regular evader gets fined occasionally, on balance they're still ahead on not paying, and they say so. If they do get fined and go to court, they are unlikely to get the fine enforced anyway. Online top up has delays in getting credited to myki. There should be a discount to reward online top ups and eliminate cash handling on the bus. Most people don't fare evade because they can't afford it. They know the enforcement is not out there.

The myki back office doesn't record the count button, which some drivers use to count non payers. The operator gets it on the driver's printout if drivers use it, but it doesn't appear in the back office reports. Maybe the solution is free travel, and get more people on to public transport. Let drivers focus on getting people safely from place to place and take the enforcement out of it. On the other hand it's about tracking and maintaining travel, not just fare compliance.

Operator F (Large operator)

We interviewed the operator together with two operations managers. Most drivers get verbal abuse most days. Passengers think they can swear at and abuse the driver, but the driver can't talk back or he's in the wrong. Most verbal abuse is never reported back to us. Drivers don't want to hang around and fill in forms after a problem. They just want to go home. Even for strong verbal abuse they often won't tell a supervisor, unless they happen to run into them.

We can't say how frequently some form of physical assault happens, but it would be more than monthly. Some don't say anything about it unless it happens again [i.e. more than once]. Drivers tend to say something if they feel really threatened, but not about spitting (physical) or verbal abuse. Typically whatever happened was 4 or 5 hours ago, and the situation is long gone.

Drivers can be shaken up by verbal abuse and physical confrontation, but sometimes they keep driving. Even if the driver thinks he's OK to travel, it can affect them. An assault went to WorkCover a while ago; a driver got punched in the face and was off work. The Brisbane death had a big impact, and has drivers worried. You don't know if someone is going to go off the handle. If drivers tell us about an incident we speak to them, see what sort of threat it is, and decide what to do.

Ticketing is the big issue. Drivers shouldn't need to interact with every passenger, and should have nothing to do with ticketing. Their job is to keep everyone alive and drive the bus. Some passengers create a scene to hide that they're fare evading. Ticketing is the main reason for the interaction, and drivers get daily abuse over it. Passengers don't interact with train and tram drivers. PTV should remove all bus driver responsibility for ticketing, full stop.

Our drivers are trained to ask once for touch on, but not to push. If a passenger doesn't want to touch on, drivers are asked to tell them they travel at their own risk of a fine. Drivers won't enforce ticketing. They are told not to create trouble. We have a handbook, but the rule of thumb is don't argue. Provocation always starts from a passenger, but a driver can escalate it depending on how he reacts, including for his own self-defence.

We don't have any systematic training for aggression. If a driver feels they can defend themselves, they might do that. Drivers are told they can't touch a passenger, and we have a policy that a driver can't get off the bus to chase a passenger. We had that happen once, and the driver was sacked. The driver hasn't got any legal support if they are off the bus. He has support if he stays on the bus.

Non-connecting buses and late running cause complaints and on-board aggression. Passengers normally get on and start abusing the driver. This happens regularly with late services, and in morning peaks. People are unreasonable about traffic issues. There are issues with the frequency of service. If the next bus is an hour later, people want to get on the one that's there now, even if it's their own fault they weren't at the stop a bit earlier.

Passengers believe the driver is there to drive the bus. They want the bus to get moving; they don't want to watch the driver arguing with someone. But PTV rules are that it is part of a driver's job to check ticketing and touch ons. There are conflicting messages regarding fare requirements and keeping to timetables. Whichever way the driver goes, he's wrong and people arc up.

Some drivers won't let people on if they are habitual offenders. They will drive past them if they are the only one at a stop, but if a passenger is not picked up, they will arc up at the next driver. We therefore advise drivers to carry people, not to leave them at a stop, especially children.

All our buses are two-door, and drivers can't control passenger flow through both doors at interchanges and busy stops. They have to be careful about closing doors, because of the risk of injuring people. We get passengers banging on doors when they are closed, trying to enter. People will jump in front of a bus to stop it so they can get on.

Historically, drivers like to interact with passengers, but issues of ice and other drugs have changed the situation. Ice addicts won't feel a thing in a fight. Druggies won't pay, and drug and alcohol-affected people are more likely to assault a driver. Passengers are not supposed to board with alcohol or food and drink, but saying anything creates a risk.

We have at least 10% fare evasion. All sorts fare evade. A lot of people are poor and will avoid fares if possible. Peak time is probably worse for fare evasion; off-peak and late at night it's more behavioural issues. There is a percentage who believe they shouldn't pay because it's an inferior service. Free city trams have encouraged the "don't have to pay" attitude. Kids with a yearly pass think they don't have to touch on. We don't think an audio touch-on message would do anything. It would just be accepted by people who do the right thing anyway.

Society has got worse, and the number of passengers carried at peak has increased. There are different groups of people, youth gangs and people with mental illness. There is some passenger to passenger conflict. The driver is not always aware of things happening or developing up the back of the bus. Passengers complain about drivers not acting to control other passengers, or not telling them off, but drivers are powerless.

You get a large group of e.g. 5 to 8 youths jump on, and the driver can't do anything. It happens with younger ones too, from 14 year olds upwards. If the driver calls 000 it could take half an hour for police to come. Some kids get on the bus to have a go at the driver. The driver has to be able defend himself. Calling 000 takes time. There is not enough protection for drivers, and you can't stop people travelling on a bus.

Myki plays up daily. For example, drivers have problems logging in. Back when Metcard went out and myki came in, in the transition period there were no ticket sales, only starter packs, and no top ups available. The public attitude changed to not wanting to pay. Myki has got to be pushed to be a charge card. People use it as a short term ticket, putting minimum money on it. Cash is on the rise for tickets, and there is no minimum top up. Bus drivers cop the brunt of aggression, as they are often the only point of contact with the system.

On school buses behaviour varies between schools, but is generally pretty good. With route buses it depends on the area. There are different issues in different areas. Some pockets have generally more particular issues; more in poor areas, more drug and alcohol; more racially different areas, e.g. with higher refugee concentration. Some [ethnic] groups have higher fare evasion. Then the driver becomes a racist in their eyes if he asks them to touch on.

Drivers get no one to assist them. There are not enough inspectors; we need AOs riding the buses. We go for weeks without ever seeing one. People aren't worried about getting caught for fares; see the stories about the amount of unpaid fines. There are a lot of complaints from passengers to the PTV call centre about other passengers not paying. Passengers will then say they never see AOs.

AOs need to be more visible, to provide more protection for drivers and passengers. They should not be just for enforcing fares. There are too few AOs; they physically can't meet requests for patrolling. AOs go to interchanges but don't ride buses. Passengers notify their mates that AOs are around, e.g. "AOs at X station", so everyone jumps off at the stop prior. They might catch one or two fare evaders coming off a bus. Booking a passenger is also a time consuming process.

About 40-50% of our buses have CCTV. There are 2-way radios in all our buses, and most drivers have their own mobile phone. They would call 000 from their mobile. We are involved in the retrofit of driver security cages, but the loop bars won't stop a sword or baseball bat. Cages could make things worse, if you're trapped in a cage and can't get out. Having a separate driver door is the only real solution.

Operator G (Large operator)

We interviewed the safety representative together with the training manager and the finance/revenue manager. We classify aggression as either verbal, attempted physical assault including the production of weapons such as knives and syringes, or physical assault where physical contact has been made with the driver. There is a high risk of assault on drivers. Verbal abuse is about three times as frequent as physical assault. Minor verbal abuse would probably not be reported to us. The main type of physical assault that has risen is spitting. The breakdown of physical assaults is about 40% spitting; 10% pushing the driver; 15% punching the driver; 10% multiple punches to the driver; and 25% other various. The peak time for physical assaults is between 3.30pm and 8pm, not on later night services. We don't have high levels of passenger to passenger abuse or conflict.

When a driver reports verbal abuse they may be taken off the road, depending what has happened. This is determined by a supervisor. There is an incident and hazard report form for drivers to report any issues. For any physical assault the driver is always taken off the bus. All drivers have a welfare check after any incident.

The two equal biggest triggers for aggression are ticketing (18% of incidents) and requests to get on and off the bus between stops, e.g. a person chasing the bus to traffic lights if they have hailed it on the street but not at a stop, and then trying to board, kicking the doors etc., or demanding that the bus stops at a place other than a bus stop for them to alight (18%). There is also a similar percentage (18%) of unprovoked assaults where the reason is unknown, and CCTV shows that the driver has done nothing to provoke confrontation. [The rest are other incidents.] We estimate 6% of incidents are drug and alcohol related, and about 4% are unruly passengers where the driver has called 000. There are issues with ice-affected people, who are more predisposed to fly off the handle.

About 20% passengers would touch on anyway. Maybe 40-50% are opportunistic fare evaders, who will touch on if asked or being watched, but not if they think they can get away with it. Then there are maybe 20% who are hard core fare evaders, who are more likely to arc up if asked to touch on or pay. Drivers and the office get a lot of complaints from passengers about other passengers not paying. It's hard to get good data on fare evasion as the data comes from those who comply. Drivers don't really see fare enforcement as part of their job. They are on their own, and response time from police is slow. The best thing would be to eliminate all top-ups and cash handling on buses, the same as trams.

Past CCTV footage showed that different drivers have different ways of responding to passenger interactions and that drivers can often escalate confrontation by certain actions, for example, if a driver gets out of their seat. As a result, training now aims to normalise or standardise driver responses to typical interactions. We introduced a policy and training for dealing with aggressive passengers, and noticed a resultant decline in conflict from around mid-2015, to around 35 physical assaults per year across our fleet. Despite this there has been a slight rise in the number of assaults in 2016, but within this total a noticeable escalation occurred from mid-2016 despite the earlier proven success of our driver training.

We have assigned a person to examine social safety issues, such as behaviour on and around buses and at bus stops, including slips, trips and falls resulting from aggression. The Brisbane death has heightened concern, and we had a very bad assault on a female driver recently. Hardly any physical assaults go on a TSV incident form. They only report "serious injury" when a driver is a hospital in-patient. Rail and tram have to report all incidents every 30 days; bus doesn't. TSV only collect the serious ones. The published TSV statistics would be the tip of the iceberg.

We have installed driver security screens on all buses; the next step is fitting security loops. All buses have CCTV. With current technology there is potential for live feeds if a driver notifies an incident in progress, and we would like a direct live CCTV feed into all buses, and the ability to make direct announcements into the bus from our control room. We do training on good customer service and

managing aggression, a day of face to face instruction with extra online training. We focus on de-escalation by the driver controlling their own behaviour. We have a policy for the driver to stay in their seat. They are not to chase passengers. The training focuses on what not to do to minimise the chances of escalation. The TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book is consistent with our training.

We tracked anti-social behaviour, assaults, graffiti, and vandalism, to produce a heat map that showed a couple of pockets around two major shopping centres as of key concern. Police saturation at one centre caused the number of incidents to die back. We liaise with the shopping centres' security control rooms, and provide a weekly spreadsheet of incidents to the police. The next step is legislative changes similar to S.A., and the government policy side. We would like to see assaulting a bus driver made a high level offence of "aggravated assault", with an automatic gaol sentence.

We would like more enforcement resources deployed onto buses at major hubs. Bus AOs are in the MMAO (Multi-Modal AO) pool, but for an MMAO to get on a bus is less efficient than them being on trains. The ones we get are supposed to spend 70% of their time on buses but they only work at interchanges; they don't travel on buses. Kids tell each other where the AOs are by phone to avoid getting caught. Bus has a higher percentage of incidents but a low AO presence. We would like PSOs to be able to assist buses, and patrol shopping centres too.

Operator H (Medium operator)

We interviewed the operator together with a supervisor who also drives regularly. Over the last 3 years we have had a rise in both verbal abuse and physical assault on drivers. Verbal abuse happens daily to all drivers. We carry thousands of people a day, and some of them aren't quite right. Some drivers take it personally, others don't. It is policy to report verbal and physical aggression to management, but a lot of it isn't. Most verbal, and maybe even some physical aggression isn't reported. The driver's attitude is, "I've moved on, they've wasted a couple of minutes of my life, I don't want to spend more time going over it". There'd be forms filled out every day if drivers reported everything. Drivers talk about it in the lunchroom, but they're not reporting it to operations. We probably hear only a small percentage of it; the violent things.

Physical assault can be from mental issues, drugs and alcohol. These are the ones who challenge the drivers more; it's not the normal passengers. We can't diagnose it. It's a hard call if people are on drugs; behaviour can change with changes of prescribed medication. Physical injuries go on a TSV incident report. A fight on board a bus would only be reported to TSV if an ambulance was called. The threshold is TSV mandatory reporting requirements. The incident reporting form is time-consuming. If we did one for everything we'd be reporting all day.

Whether a response is verbal or physical depends on the passenger, not the driver. If a passenger arcs up, the driver will call operations. Operations asks if the passenger is calm or aggressive; the driver decides whether to let it go, stop the bus, or call the police. It's a judgement call. It's hard to set a policy as there are different outcomes. For any direct physical threat or assault, the training is to shut the bus off, open the doors, tell passengers you're calling the police, and walk away.

Farebox compliance is highest on the list of triggers for verbal abuse and physical assault. About 80-90% of physical assaults are over fare evasion, triggered by requests from drivers to touch on or top up. At least 80% of verbal abuse is about fares. There is an app that makes a myki sound, so the driver thinks they've touched on. We have to comply with "best endeavours" under our contract. Some areas are worse for not touching on; the lower socioeconomic suburbs are worse. We had an 80 year old woman say she wouldn't pay as others aren't paying, as she sat down.

Drivers are told they have to ask for touch ons; it's not a free ride. We say, ask once, then play it by ear. If they are calm, ask for the fare. If they arc up, we say, "It's not a free ride, go and sit down". About half the drivers will tell them they travel at their own risk. Some drivers will let passengers on without challenge. One driver was punched when he asked once for a touch on. If people get violent, we call the police.

In induction, we tell drivers to ask for touch on/top up/sell myki. If the passenger refuses, we say, don't get into a situation; don't escalate it, use your discretion and make your own judgement. If the person is non-abusive, half the time they will get off the bus. If they become abusive, the policy is to shut down the bus and call police. The thing is, if the police come, they just have a word with the person and walk away. Then the person does it again on the next bus.

We tell drivers to ask to the point where the person shows signs of resistance, but to put their own safety first. You can defuse it by telling the passenger to sit down. But that compounds the problem as other passengers see it, and they try it on too. In a perfect world drivers wouldn't ask for fares, but if you don't ask, the problem grows. It would be good to get an industry standard of training that can be used by everyone, so when you employ drivers from elsewhere, it's similar.

The "best endeavours" requirement is to ask, but that's not always enough. Sometimes drivers need to push it further, but it increases your risk. Some drivers take it further than others. You can push it where you think you're safe. It depends on the judgement of drivers. We probably push it more than other operators do with shutting down buses. If someone says, "I'll go at my own risk", we say "no, get off or the bus doesn't go". We would shut buses down several times a week.

Again, it's hard to make a rule that covers all situations. Even "remain in your seat" is not a rule. The TSV "Managing Difficult Passengers" book would be a minimum regarding escalation. We use that in what we do. The issue is, how far do you go before a situation grows or develops into "difficult" passengers? The best thing would be to ask for the fare, and if they refuse, let them travel. But it would increase fare evasion hugely. Across the industry we need to go to a certain level. We ask, but another operator doesn't ask at all. If operators do different things, passengers find it inconsistent. Myki has allowed people to fare evade. There is more evasion on school runs; about 25-30% don't touch on in a full bus. There is more education needed in schools about myki passes and auto top ups. If 30% of kids don't validate, the government won't put in enough buses. With route bus, around 20% of passengers don't touch on unless you ask them to; then about half of those might touch on. The rest have some excuse. A lot have the money on them but don't want to pay. If you don't ask, fare evasion would go from 20% to 60% within a year.

There is variation between drivers. Some can be doing a great job of driving a bus, but don't always have excellent customer service or communication skills. A lot are focussed on the job and their timetable. Bad customer skills can cause really big issues. Some get really stressed out dealing with people. Young men under 18 are more likely to travel in problem groups, provoking trouble, but girls do it too. Even school age kids cause trouble. There are random hot spots; it's not consistent.

If a bus is stopped by the driver due to loud and disruptive passenger behaviour, police are called. Drivers are told they need to call 000, but some call the depot. Passengers can hear the two-way radio, with operations telling the driver to call police. The driver can say, "That's the boss on the radio, you need to leave the bus". Police took 40 minutes to come recently to a man swearing on a bus. Police are called to our buses at least twice a week. We get almost no feedback from them.

Most drivers love the job, love passengers, and then someone comes on and disrupts it, deliberately causes issues, and it makes them very angry. Some drivers have contributed to or caused escalation when people push their buttons. As soon as a driver gets up from his seat, trouble starts. Probably 99% of assaults happen when a driver gets out of his seat. Most reported aggression towards drivers is handled internally, but external counselling is offered for physical conflict and injuries. We have engaged a workplace health and safety consultant who is setting up processes for mental and

physical injuries. Penalties for attacking a bus driver are not hard enough, and should be much tougher.

Security screens have been a good idea. With strong verbal aggression or physical assault, a driver can't carry passengers if the aggressor is on board. Passengers who are aggressive before an assault starts, are told they must either get off, or police will be called. It's better to have the verbal fight about getting off before it has escalated into physical assault. About 70% of our buses have CCTV, and all new buses are fitted with it. It doesn't always work, and there are maintenance issues with it. We will be implementing a CCTV check by a contractor to see the cameras are working each day.

Free travel won't double patronage overnight. Public transport is already attractive cost-wise, but people still drive. They want to go when they want to go time-wise, although you can get to most places by public transport. There needs to be a decent discount for auto top ups. \$38 will get a month's worth of school travel. The PTV website is too cluttered; no-one can find anything easily. It needs to have a school page. All our buses are two-door. We want the FPD moved near the driver, so they can see people touch on. We have a couple of buses now with the reader at the front, and have ordered some more like that. It will still be a problem on school runs where a lot get on together. Moving it will slow loading down a bit but we don't think it will affect the timetable.

We can request AOs, but it's rare to get AOs on board the buses. They go to stations and shopping centres. We send requests by email, but we don't get to choose the time or place they go. AOs say they don't hear a lot from operators. There should be some stations with PSOs at all hours, not just after dark. There are loiterers at some stations all day. Maybe Transit Police are the answer.

Operator I (Large operator)

We interviewed the operator together with a driver trainer, two operations managers, a supervisor who does their incident analysis, a safety manager, and the HR manager. Four of these have worked as route bus drivers. There has been a rise in verbal abuse over the last few years; it happens to most drivers most days but drivers don't often report it; it is seen as part of the job. CCTV footage shows verbal abuse happens daily, but drivers probably report only about 10 instances a month. We keep internal reports of all instances that drivers tell us about, but that is way less than what happens. Serious physical assault is still relatively rare, maybe once a year; but there would be about half a dozen cases of throwing objects at drivers per month, e.g. drinks or rubbish. Not all of this is reported back to supervisors. Spitting is a physical assault and more likely to be reported back due to it being more personally offensive. Some ethnic groups are more likely to spit at drivers, whereas Australian or European abusers are more likely to directly verbally abuse the driver.

Probably the most abuse and aggression comes from late running, which is not the driver's fault, but passengers vent their frustration at drivers. This is an infrastructure issue with timetabling, service frequency and traffic flow involved. People expect everything instantly; they hate waiting and the driver cops it. Ticketing is the other big issue, and if we tried to push passengers harder on fares and touch ons it would easily become the biggest cause of aggression. There are less outlets where people can buy myki so people have to buy and top up on the bus.

Fare evasion or refusal is maybe 30-40%. Perhaps 60-70% just walk on and don't touch on or pay. Or they say they'll touch on at the back and then don't, and you can't tell. It's a Melbourne thing. In Adelaide and Brisbane, most touch on. Because we tell drivers to put their own safety first when asking, and they hear what happens regularly with assaults and aggression, they are not going to put themselves on the line. You can't just pin a passenger down and demand a fare. There is no back up anyway. With Metcard, passengers paid or validated a ticket, and we had better than 90% compliance. With myki the buses ran in headless mode for 18 months, and that's when a lot of previously honest people stopped paying, as they could see others weren't, and nothing happened.

New drivers have a 1 week in-house induction program which covers OHS, personal safety, ticketing, etc. They do a Certificate in Bus Operations within their first 6 months, which covers issues like dealing with difficult customers. Incident footage shows that drivers are dealing better with conflict after the training. 'Old school' drivers can escalate a situation by trying to discuss or reason with passengers. The training now is to ignore or disregard aggression, and get yourself out of it. Drivers have learned to keep their mouth shut, "don't hear and don't see", as escalation happens quickly. People get on in various states of drug or alcohol influence and can be hard to predict. Drivers are saying they choose not to interact with passengers any more out of a concern for their own safety, to avoid conflict. We have a lot of good customer-focussed drivers, and it's a shame that society has changed in a way that undermines that. Some bad areas are more likely to escalate to the physical assault level. It's not just the same drivers copping it, all of them cop it. Drivers often now do different routes, not the same routes; but regular drivers are not respected either.

The training now doesn't encourage conversation with passengers. Just acknowledge them and disengage from conversation in polite way. So say 'hi' and 'bye', but don't engage in conversation. The 'old school' drivers are more conversational, but passengers are rejecting it. The public has changed; there is less respect for drivers. One old time driver said people used to respect drivers, but now it's not worth trying to talk to them as it can easily go wrong, e.g. "What'd you say?" Asking for fares/touch ons is trained as part of the drivers responsibility, but not at the risk of conflict. The myki system is designed for honest people. We explain they have to use their "best endeavours" to request fares, but not by putting themselves in danger. They are told to use their judgment about who to ask, and not to try to refuse entry if the person is already on the bus. Drivers have to make decisions for themselves on the road, and their most important job is to get people from A to B safely, not to cop abuse, aggression and stress over fare evaders.

Training is reviewed every 12 months, and focussed on safety and customers. Drivers are trained to read passengers coming through the door. In practice you can't stop someone getting on without paying; all you're going to do is put yourself on the line for abuse, spitting and assault. If you believe you're safe, and the passenger sits down, just run the service. We train the drivers and give them the tools to do their job. The driving part is not an issue; they can all drive and we assess them for that. When an issue escalates it triggers the driver to react and escalate, whether from fear or challenge or whatever. Then the driver is less safe on the road in charge of 60 people. So you don't want conflict or escalation. Just drive. The training goes down well with new drivers. They do probation for 3 to 6 months. We look for gaps in their performance, with conflict resolution or whatever. We might ask how you deal with a particular difficult situation. I tell them, "When I leave this bus, I leave my problems in the rubbish bin" (gestures throwing away). It's about going home feeling good. It could be worth looking at a standard package of driver training.

The way drivers respond to passengers can cause escalation. With late running, if a passenger asks, "Why are you late", what the driver says can inflame the passenger. We have a diversity of drivers and cultural differences can affect driver responses. Some cultures have higher expectations of respect for drivers than others, some people are easier going than others. Some get worn down easier by constant hassling from passengers for things the driver can't control. A majority of stations are unmanned, and train and tram drivers are walled off. How many train and tram drivers are assaulted? None. A bus driver is the only point of complaint about anything to do with public transport, except for calling PTV. Rail replacement drivers cop rage from passengers being inconvenienced, not thanks for providing a back-up transport service.

Drivers can get into conflict very easily when requesting myki top ups or touch ons. A lot of people just walk on past the driver. If someone is determined not to pay, they won't, so drivers are told to put their personal safety first. All drivers are told the company's contract obligation to use their best endeavours to obtain touch ons or fares, but also not to go out of their way to enforce it (e.g. by refusing to drive on until a person complies), as it is not worth getting punched for a \$5 fare. There should be an audio message after each stop, to remind all passengers to touch on. Maybe 2-3% of passengers top up on our buses, but we have noticed a rise in topping up on board in the last six months or so. Off peak, seniors and older people do small top-ups of the day fare. They treat myki as a pay-per-trip card. The idea of a \$5 minimum top up was removed so drivers have to fiddle with change. Drivers can bring back a bag full of small change. Others are topping up \$40-50 dollars in peak time, but this takes three transactions as there is a \$20 limit per top up, which slows things down. Drivers don't want to be taking large payments and be seen as targets, which is more stress.

There is often negative verbal interaction between passengers, sometimes influenced by alcohol and drugs, and many passengers expect that drivers should intervene in a passenger dispute. Conflicts happen for reasons the driver may know nothing about, including between different ethnic groups and youth gangs. Other passengers have abused drivers for not intervening in a verbal passenger dispute. Islander drivers expect older passengers and women to be respected, and feel they should intervene in blatant breaches. But drivers have to let it go. Most are powerless to confront physically aggressive passengers, and if the driver gets out of their seat the situation immediately escalates towards a physical fight. Our policy is don't leave the driver's seat. If there is a fight on board, open the doors and say you're calling the police. This has also led to a driver being physically assaulted for trying to call the police. Aggression is not just directed at bus drivers. Any customer service based work has issues, even in hospitals where the staff cop abuse when they are all there to help people, and they have trained staff on hand to deal with violent patients. Police and ambulance workers also have a rise in occupational violence. Society has got worse. People abuse police to their face on the news and they don't get arrested. What can a bus driver do?

The amount of abuse and aggression varies between areas. Some socioeconomic areas are much worse, especially for verbal abuse. The worst offenders are the 16 to 20 year old age group, but it goes from 14 to early 20s, and are more likely but not always male. There is more driver abuse on normal service than night rider. The ideal trained scenario is, stay seated in your cabin. A driver may

have to exit for their own safety, but not to engage any further with a passenger. Some regulars can pester the driver, which can be wearing. If the bus drives past someone, perhaps it is full, or it was not an actual bus stop, and the bus then stops at lights, some people try to board it, kick the doors etc., from anger. If a passenger thinks a bus has passed him, or that it didn't turn up, he will be likely to have a go at the next driver, who has done nothing wrong. Verbal abuse or spitting is not reported to TSV; only notifiable incidents as defined under their criteria, and reporting is a tedious task.

Reporting of verbal abuse or aggression varies from person to person. Although drivers are told in training to report everything, they are only likely to report verbal abuse if they felt actively threatened, if there is a cultural overlay about an insult or it is very personalised, or if they think a complaint might be made about them, and they want to get in first. Minor verbal abuse is probably never reported. They don't bother to mention if someone has a crack at them about running late. They are more likely to report verbal abuse if it's in their face, threatened them or their family, or really unloaded on them. Drivers generally report passenger to passenger conflict, especially if a woman or child has been affected. Anything that a driver hasn't felt a need to radio for help is probably not reported. Road rage can escalate quickly into physical conflict. Drivers will report any physical assault or confrontation inside or outside the bus. They generally call the incident through, the supervisor populates the report fields, and the driver spends 2-3 minutes giving the details after their shift. The driver's own resilience is a factor in how they are feeling over time.

We provide training on how to read customers, and have had less driver issues since this began. Our recruiting model has also changed from looking for technical skills, to people who are customer-focussed and safety risk aware. We try to bring in new people as drivers, not ones who have worked for other companies, so they will take on our training more directly. Training is given around customer service, conflict resolution and de-escalation, and includes role-play. We incorporated material from the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book in our training. We don't address personal physical defence. We hope that the security screen in combination with our other training will be effective in avoiding conflict. It is very important how the driver reacts to passenger's conversation. They need to get them seated and move on. We look at the physical environment of the bus as part of driver safety. About 95% of buses have CCTV. Most have security mesh. We are trialling finer screens with a safety loop and solid barrier. The majority of our drivers would like a physical barrier between themselves and passengers. Perhaps 20% don't, the 'old school' drivers. A lot of our older long term drivers don't have conflict issues. While a few have a big list of issues, others have had nothing go wrong in 5 years. It is hard to identify why this is. We think for the ones without issues, for some it's resilience, for some it's better people skills.

We have an Employee Assistance Program and are developing an early intervention strategy where we can refer someone to counselling, physio, etc. We know what gets reported, but people might need assistance or support down the line even if they reject it initially. We know that what happens on the road won't change, so it's about dealing with the aftermath.

We request AOs by email to PTV based on driver's reports; we generally get AOs in a week or so. But the chances of an AO booking anyone are very low. They rarely ride the buses, just go to interchanges. Some AOs give passengers the chance to buy a myki or top up from the driver at the next stop, but this sends a message that no-one gets fined. 10 free rides = 1 fine, so what hope have we got of enforcement when the AOs don't do it. If a driver asks for the fare they are told "f-off, just drive, don't worry about it". Passengers especially kids text when the AOs are around and the fare dodgers jump off at the stop before. We have all 2 door buses. People jump in the back door and with even a half full bus there's nothing the driver can do. If the driver is topping up one card, he can't do anything about what the rest are doing unless they have formed a queue, which doesn't happen.

School runs are always problematic for not touching on. There is a phone app that makes a myki touch on noise so they just pretend to touch on. Schools push the drivers to control the kids, but it can't happen in practice. The teachers might know who the kids are, but drivers don't. A lot of kids treat the bus like it's a school charter bus and say they don't have to pay because it's their school bus. They don't think they have to touch on if they have a 6 or 12 month pass. The driver can't have a fight with a kid, and the schools don't always support the driver. The parents often don't care, and they blame the driver for any problems involving their kid. You can't just leave them at the stop so a lot travel free. The problem for us is that if kids aren't touching on, the service is at risk. The CCTV shows packed school buses that only look half full by touch ons. We have told the schools they can lose buses if their kids don't touch on, but it makes no difference. We may need to do a manual count or video to substantiate it.

PTV say there is a decline in bus patronage, but the myki system is inaccurate. PTV surveys are unrealistic, too small, too diverse, and operators don't know what, when or where they are counting but they're obviously way out. We also do a lot more school traffic than station traffic. Drivers are told to use the count button for non-payers; it comes up on driver shift reports and goes to PTV, but PTV won't use it because they say it's not auditable. PTV do surveys about fare evasion but AO figures are grossly underreported. Out of 100 evaders, only a small percentage get a fine. PTV add this small percentage to touch-ons to estimate passenger numbers but it's way too low. PTV count at hubs, but buses carry a lot of people that aren't travelling to or from hubs. Maybe BusVic should do some counting.

Drivers are not AOs, and need to use their own assessment of passengers about compliance. Tram and train drivers don't ask for a fare, but myki has made the system depend on enforcement. Even the AOs try to avoid getting into conflict with passengers. AOs sometimes just tell passengers to pay the driver the top up the next time the bus stops. Other passengers can see that fines are not being given out. When the AOs aren't around the driver has no back up anyway. They do blitzes, but there is no ongoing presence. If PTV really believed in myki, it would make it work and enforce it. Making bus drivers ask for fares pushes them into negative interactions at every stop. Driving a heavy passenger vehicle is already a demanding job. We need a system that can protect our drivers. Drivers don't feel valued by the community, or by PTV and government, from a financial or safety perspective. Drivers should be treated as part of essential services, and have legislative protection. This would help change the public profile of drivers and tell drivers that they are important.

From the few buses we have with the FPD placed at the front, we have no strong view or evidence at this stage, either documented or anecdotally, for any change in passenger behaviour in respect of either aggression or fare compliance. Our driver group didn't think it was good due to a higher risk of passenger falls, and a perception that it potentially could increase aggression. The jury is still out.

Operator J (Medium operator)

We interviewed the operator together with the office manager and operations manager. Verbal abuse happens constantly, but the office doesn't usually hear of it unless it's high intensity. A lot of it is about fares and late running. A driver might call the office and say [such and such] has happened, but often that's only if they in are fear of assault, otherwise we don't hear about it. The other reason drivers report something is if they fear a complaint may be made about them, and they want to give their side of story first. A physical assault would always be reported to us. If there is no physical escalation, drivers don't think it's worth reporting. We had two physical assaults on board last year; one about an incorrect top-up, the other a physical fight between passengers.

We can't tell drivers not to ask for fares or touch ons, as that is required by our contract; but we don't tell them to enforce it. If a driver has come from another operator, they know about ticketing. Drivers are not asked to ask for fares. They are told not to say anything about tickets. If they ask for touch ons it often escalates into abuse. People just walk past. Passengers can touch on at the rear door, and sometimes do. We tell drivers to mind their own business and not try to enforce fares. Since a driver was punched over ticketing four years ago, drivers don't ask. Not saying anything means we don't have so many problems over it. Just get people where they're going and off the bus. Because we don't push fares, the biggest cause of abuse is late running. Drivers get constant verbal abuse about it, and passengers threaten drivers with complaints. A bus can be held up in traffic, so it arrives late further up the run. Then when the driver says there were traffic delays, the passenger doesn't believe them, and gets rude or abusive to the driver, as the road looks OK where they are.

Route service fare evasion is about 30%. We couldn't say if there is a difference between peak and off-peak fare compliance. A bus might pick up 2 or 3 people at a station, but it's carrying 30 people between other places on the route. That's never counted. There is a lack of AOs, and people don't pay if they think they'll get away with it. If people evade every day they save \$35 a week. It's not a free ride, there are plenty of signs, but no-one polices it. We get complaints from passengers to the office about other passengers not touching on. Drivers aren't AOs. AOs don't travel on the buses, they just wait at the station. The chances of getting caught on the bus are very rare. Social media helps people fare evade, as they alert each other when the AOs are around.

We had a parent put two kids on the bus and just walk past the driver and sit the kids down without touching on. Parents are bringing up kids the wrong way. This sort of thing stresses drivers out over a \$2 fare. If the driver says anything, it escalates, so we tell them to just let it go, don't argue. CCTV footage shows a lot of aggression. The driver's personal reaction to a situation affects how it develops. AOs are trained to deal with violent passengers; bus drivers aren't.

About 30% of school kids don't touch on, and a lot of their parents don't care. At the start they are reminded to touch on by the drivers, but the next day the driver has to tell them again, then the next day, and eventually the drivers give up. Parents give their kids cash to top up, but they spend it on lunch instead. Myki is slow, you have to hold it and wait, so a lot of kids just push on. Some have passes. Maybe 80% do pay somewhere, but not on the bus. If half the kids aren't touching on, they can lose a school bus.

The Minister said recently that bus patronage has dropped, but we aren't carrying any less people. The company has the same level of passengers, including school kids. With most metropolitan services you pick up a few passengers at a time, so it's no problem doing top ups, but the money taken is down to about half what it was on Metcard.

We have 2-door buses and we try to get passengers to load at the front and exit at the back. We try to keep the same drivers on the same routes as far as possible. One route is chatty, but another not so much. Our drivers are not keen on the safety screens, as they like to talk to regular passengers. Other passengers hear the conversation, and it makes a more friendly environment.

Passenger behaviour is fairly much the same, with not much difference between different places around here. About 90% of our passengers are regulars, and we don't have many issues with the regulars except not paying and late running. The timetable is the biggest issue. If the timetable was fixed, buses would be reasonably on time and we wouldn't have so many arguments. Abuse wears drivers down over time, especially abuse over late running. Drivers are stressed anyway, as they are trying to make up time and have people on their back.

Sometimes aggression is random, and the driver has no idea what caused it or why it escalated. Our training is that if a passenger is causing trouble, call the police. If they are not paying etc., but not causing trouble, ignore them. We don't have a 'stay in your seat' policy, but we say don't confront them. We don't use the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book. Drivers make decisions based on how they read people.

In regard to debriefing and follow up, with everyday verbal abuse, drivers just move on. The follow-up depends on how the driver handles it. We had that driver punched about four years ago, who was referred to WorkCover and a psychologist. We had a driver involved in a fatal collision who was offered support, and we would do the same for any similar assault or incident. Since we were reaccredited we haven't had an incident that required reporting to the government.

We don't know of any drivers being threatened with a weapon, or being threatened with violence at a later time. Drivers don't know if someone has a weapon. We (the office) haven't heard of spitting, but a driver had half a pie thrown at him. Some hoons don't have cars, so they use the bus. We haven't really had many drug and alcohol-affected passenger issues, or not that drivers have told us about. We had a passenger vomit on the bus, and another removed by police when he fell asleep from whatever cause. There is occasional passenger to passenger verbal abuse, but it has only once escalated into a physical fight. One lead driver is good at settling things down.

The government requirement to ask for fares is unrealistic. Bus drivers used to sell tickets, but now it's about touching on. Myki has a lot of problems, it's a monster. Myki top-up machines don't always work; they randomly deactivate. There should be no topping up on buses, so people don't have to wait to board. Myki was supposed to do away with selling on board. It doesn't read cards quickly. Buses have problems by being mobile; it's not like train stations with fixed cabling. If the driver isn't logged on, the readers don't work, and they take time to start up when he gets back on after a meal break. This makes no sense now that headless mode is gone, because if the driver's card deactivates during the day, no-one can touch on for the rest of that driver's shift.

Operator K (Large operator)

We interviewed the operator and the HR manager together, then we moved the interview to the drivers' lunch room where three drivers with several years' experience joined in the discussion of on-road issues. We additionally had separate comments on some of the issues by phone from a depot manager when we first rang to arrange the interview. Physical assaults on drivers have been low but steady over the past few years, except for spitting which has risen, and verbal abuse has got worse. Drivers don't bother to report verbal abuse, which is every day. Drivers said it would have to be an injury or assault before they'd report it, as nothing could be done about verbal abuse anyway. One said it is "water off a duck's back". The major trigger for abuse is ticketing; asking for touch ons or fares. The causes of abuse include disrespect for drivers, a lack of any enforcement by AOs, a belief by some that public transport should be free, and a growing culture of fare evasion that is obvious to other passengers.

They have 40-50% minimum fare evasion. Drivers keep a count of non-payers so the company can compare numbers with the myki touch-on count. Some patrons make no attempt to pay and often do not have a myki card. They just ignore requests to touch on and walk past. Others say, "What are you going to do about it?" Aggressive or violent behaviour such as door kicking often results from a driver advising a customer to pay a fare when boarding the bus. We have had drivers in the past who have tried to insist that passengers pay a fare, and tell them of the possibility they may face a fine if inspectors board the bus. This has more often than not resulted in verbal and sometimes physical abuse to our drivers. Since the driver was burned in Brisbane, drivers are scared to say boo to passengers. A couple of drivers quit after it was in the news. We had one driver ask some of a group of about 20 who walked on to touch on, and he was dragged out of the bus and assaulted; one assailant was charged by the police. School kids often just walk on without touching on; it's at all levels. Vline staff told kids at the station that they didn't have to touch on when they went from the station to the school. We have told Vline that's wrong, they all have to touch on, but a lot don't.

We have 2-door buses. The depot manager said that all passengers board through the front door and are required to 'touch on' the terminal located opposite the driver. As part of induction, drivers are advised of their 'ask once' procedure. Drivers are required to ask a passenger once to 'please touch on' when boarding the bus. If a passenger does not hold a valid myki card and refuses to comply the driver is to let them on the vehicle regardless. They are told to put their safety first. The operator gave a modified version of this approach, that drivers ask once for touch on, depending on whether they feel safe. There is a difference between management instructions to drivers to meet the PTV contract requirements by asking for fare compliance, and daily practice. Three of the suburbs on their routes – a large part of their coverage – are known as 'feral' spots; lower socio-economic suburbs with high levels of welfare clients, high incidences of drug and alcohol problems, family violence and other issues. These areas have about 80% fare evasion. Drugs and alcohol are a problem, more alcohol than drugs. It's worse on dole day, then eases back. Passengers aggressively do not touch on or pay, and any request to do so is met with instant aggression. A driver said, "You don't ask. If you say nothing, you're safe. It's not worth getting punched for \$2.00".

The company puts all drivers through a "managing difficult people" training day delivered by an experienced external specialist. The depot manager said it provides employees with skills to manage aggressive or challenging situations, and strategies to manage positive outcomes in a professional manner. It also provides employees with strategies they can utilise to help develop further resilience ensuring ownership of their own emotional wellbeing and develop appropriate coping strategies, during these difficult interactions. Refresher courses occur every 12 months and employees are encouraged to practise the skills and strategies they learn. In the actual training, CCTV footage is shown of abuse and assaults on drivers, together with discussion of what has triggered the interaction. Typically it has escalated from a simple request to touch on. Drivers were at one point instructed to announce to the bus in general, not to any particular passengers, that passengers need to touch on and off each trip. There is no microphone in most buses, it was just called out. This triggered abuse and aggressive responses from passengers 95% of the time, and was abandoned.

In the training they are told to avoid face to face or individual confrontation. In practice drivers don't say anything for fear of the predictable abuse escalating to physical confrontation. The training goes through a 4-step process beginning with 'show empathy', but many passengers are more concerned with not paying than interacting with drivers. The stage of conversation is simply not reached in the first place with many of them. The training focuses on avoiding physical conflict; things to say and not to say to avoid escalation, and how what you say affects people's response. It does not look at physical defence, and is more about not provoking aggression and de-escalation, including by not asking for fares if people walk straight past you.

The operator said that "best endeavours" to obtain fare compliance has failed; if drivers say anything to passengers, it escalates. Whatever the policy is, drivers don't have any ability to enforce it, and there is no regular enforcement from AOs. If a bunch of people get on and walk past you, don't say anything because that's when the verbal starts. Some get on looking for trouble. Drivers get frustrated by passengers not paying, but are powerless to do anything about it. We carry more regular than non-regulars, and we have a lot of regular non-payers. Mothers with 3 or 4 kids just walk on, and abuse you if you say anything. Even workers in some areas don't touch on or off.

Myki has been a complete failure, it was bad from day one. Before myki we had our own paper tickets and 100% fare compliance. After myki control of the system was taken away. School kids may or may not have passes, but they are not touching on, and the volume of annual passes has declined. For school kids non-compliance is probably 50%, and could be 80% with some schools. The kids have learned the system. Route service is at least 40% fare evasion. A lot of people do \$2.00 top ups, just enough to cover their concession fare. The myki system is frustrating, and passengers vent at the drivers. We also get passengers ringing the office and complaining to drivers about other passengers not paying. Youths text when the AOs are around, and get off before that location. One driver said that when the AOs were at the station one day, everyone who got on held a myki. Half an hour later, when they'd gone, no one got on with a myki. Texts and social media have changed the game.

All buses have a two way radio which has the local police station and 000 programmed into it, as well as the depot manager, and a broadcast function to alert all drivers of any risk/situation. If a driver find themselves in a situation with an aggressive passenger, they are required to stop the vehicle in a safe place (if not already in a bus stop), open all the doors, and call police and the depot manager. Management acknowledged, however, that passengers can hear the driver on two-way and this can escalate the situation, especially if the driver is calling the police. Police can rarely attend quickly and buses are not necessarily a priority. Most vehicles are equipped with CCTV. This may act as a deterrent for some passengers, but one driver said it doesn't influence behaviour at all. It can provide useful footage for the company and the police when investigating any incidents. They are also going to install driver security screens and loops. One driver said some thugs might see the screen as a challenge to mock drivers. The drivers present agreed that the screens would make them feel safer, but that it would only give you a few more seconds, not much real protection if someone really wanted to have a go at you.

If drivers report physical or verbal abuse, they are replaced by a relief driver and sent home for the remainder of the shift. They debrief with their depot manager. We offer external professional counselling, over the phone for low level issues, in person for high level. We have introduced an Employee Assistance Program where, for example, a driver could call to talk over a bad day. But if they're not reporting issues, we don't know about them. One driver was spat at the previous week when he asked a passenger to touch on, but he said it missed him. He hadn't reported it, and said that he probably wouldn't have reported it even if the spit hit him. An Indian driver who passed through said he has a lot of comments made about his race and accent but he doesn't report it, as he often sees passengers at the shopping centre on weekends, and doesn't want himself or his family to suffer abuse there because he reported someone for investigation. In this lunch room part of the interview, HR said they would introduce a tick sheet for verbal abuse to gain some data about

what and how much drivers are experiencing but not telling them. A couple of drivers said that was all very well, but why bother as you can't change it.

There is passenger to passenger verbal and physical conflict. Recently a couple had a fight on board with another passenger, and the driver said it was so common he didn't think he had to report it. If a driver says something in response to passenger to passenger hostility, the typical reaction is "Shut up and drive". We have cases of passengers fighting or arguing at bus stops, then they get on the bus and continue it. The driver's focus has to be driving, not resolving passenger conflicts, which they are powerless to do anyway. All they can do is stop the bus, open the doors, and wait. Incidents are only reported to TSV if there is a physical injury. There are mixed messages from TSV for their reporting criteria. Anything has the "potential to escalate" with passenger interactions. As TSV increase the level of reporting criteria, the reporting gets more complicated and time consuming. It is not simple to report. You would be reporting all day if you reported every negative interaction.

AOs are infrequent. They do a blitz for a day, then we don't see them for months. AOs come and patrol outside the station, and sometimes ride the bus from the station to the shopping centre, but they don't go out on the routes out of the centre of town. No-one has ever seen or heard of an AO issuing a RONC [report of non-compliance] on their buses; they just give verbal warnings. We had a case of a girl who said she had no money and sat down. A male and female AO got on the bus. The driver pointed the girl out to them as a regular fare evader. When they went to speak with her, she assaulted the female AO. Police were called and she was charged with assault. If passengers assault trained AOs, why should drivers be put in the position of fare enforcers?

It would take a permanent pool of AOs to make any difference. That might get an evolution over time towards compliance. People used to pay before myki. A regular AO presence would get both compliance and better behaviour on board, which might increase patronage. Another suggestion was to have a levy and let passengers travel free. Someone said that wouldn't be fair as we workers are already paying for the non-payers; that it should be a levy on welfare payments, maybe instead of their next payment rise, as they are the biggest non-payers.

Operator L (Medium operator)

We interviewed the General Manager, who also has extensive hands-on operations experience. There has been a steady rise in verbal abuse, particularly in one area we service, but physical assault is still rare. Verbal abuse happens to all drivers at least a couple of times a week. It is so rampant that we only get told about it by drivers who call for assistance, more from fear of it escalating into assault, or from a physical assault or on-road incident happening. Up the point of direct threat they don't report it. There has been one physical assault in the last 6 months, by a drug-affected passenger.

Of what is reported to us, only serious physical injury would be notified to TSV. They are also told of any incident that may appear in the media, probably to alert the Minister. Minor physical injury is reported to PTV. WorkCover statistics are rising in the bus industry. The TSV abuse and assault figures would be the tip of the iceberg.

The three main causes of aggression for us are in order, first, late running. This triggers the most intense abuse, where drivers are personally blamed for the lateness, and for missing train connections. If people have missed a bus by a minute, they have to wait 40 minutes, and the next driver cops it. Second, ticketing issues, with people not paying, and then abusing the driver if they are asked to touch on. Third, and down the list, are young gangs of foul mouthed kids, often riding the buses in school time, skipping school. There is also a lot of aggression in road accidents. The worse times of day for on-board aggression are morning and afternoon peak, and late at night.

We also do some bus replacement work for rail [trains]. People are angry at the drivers, who get a lot of verbal abuse as if the rail replacement is their fault. Drivers have to cope with road delays and traffic issues, as well as the replacement problems that caused it. There are also unplanned delays like rail breakdowns or emergencies, which are not planned and notified in advance like level crossing replacements. Drivers are first on the scene and cop the grief.

We have lots of issues with tickets and transactions. The interaction between drivers and passengers changed with myki. Before that it was old school; people paid to get on. There was respect for drivers, and everyone knew they had to pay. For a while there were two ticketing systems operating at once, which caused a lot of grief for drivers. Early on myki was often not working, and the general rule of PTV was if it's not working, let them on free. It started then and became worse as it went on, with an increasing amount of conflict between drivers and passengers. The young kids have grown up with that, and it's steadily grown worse. Kids have not paid for five years, and tell drivers to get stuffed if they are asked to touch on.

The main behaviour issue is with kids who are under age. The 14 and 15 year olds tell the 13 year olds what to do, and turn them into aggressors; pressure them to behave aggressively, as nothing can happen to them. They swear and spit on the bus; there is no respect for drivers. The police and AOs know this, and can't do anything with them. Other passengers see the verbal abuse and do it too, as nothing is done about it. It's copycat abuse.

We cover two large growth areas. There are not enough services to cater for them, and people get off-side. They struggle to afford houses and need public transport, but get 40-50 minute service frequencies, and they think, why should I pay for it? The public transport package is not effective. It's a privilege to have public transport at a subsidised price, but they think it's a right. Each new development area has its own hassles - new infrastructure, roadworks, delays and diversions, but people don't accept it. There is conflict over timetables, which are stop-specific now. They are no longer based on meeting trains. People think the timetable means exact timing, and show no tolerance. Buses have to deal with bus incidents, breakdowns, etc., not like rail.

Some passengers feel scared on the bus. There are mental health issues, high unemployment, and commission housing. An AO was assaulted in [one of our suburbs]. The policy in case of trouble is to stop the bus, open the doors, and tell the public that police have been called. Nine times out of ten the troublemaker gets off. We don't have many drug and alcohol-affected passenger issues. There is not much passenger to passenger conflict. The PTV call centre gets a lot of complaints from passengers about others not paying. They email the operator to tell us, and we notify the AOs. Fare evasion would be about 40%. The biggest problem is school kids who don't touch on.

Their excuse is that they have a yearly ticket, but it puts the service at risk. We have two areas of very high non-compliance, and these have been highlighted to the AOs. Older people are more compliant. It goes back to respect; some younger people don't show the respect that the service is entitled to. There was a rise in throwing things and spitting on board at one school. We went to the school and got one of the kids suspended. The key is to get action taken straight away. If you just report it to the AOs, it takes a month to get anything done, and then it's a short term fix.

With physical assault, we have a no confrontation policy. If we feel a person is trouble, we ask once, and if there are any hassles, we say just take a seat. The general rule is to ask once, but we don't have a policy in practice. Some old school drivers ask for the fare/touch on; others don't. We don't enforce the 'ask once' rule. If passengers have tattoos and an aggressive look, don't even ask.

We have seen the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book; that may have been the motivation for our own driver training booklet. The Public Transport Ombudsman has a good course on complaint resolution and handling; about how people react and think. That's what we use ourselves. The book is on the Ombudsman's web site, called '*Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct*'. Basically it's about giving people time to vent first, then they calm down. We look at how to debrief too.

We feel training has dropped off in the industry. There is a higher pressure to run trips and kilometres, rather than interest in staff. Stressed drivers means there is more danger of distraction and bus accidents. We are looking for personality type in recruitment. We say, don't try to enforce ticketing. Our training puts driver safety first as the main thing, then look after your passengers, in that order. It's not a course as such. It's a basic job description and a no confrontation policy. We consider customer service and disabilities, road rage scenarios, guide dogs, what you do and how you react. We have a 'don't get out of your seat' policy. We tell them to call for assistance on their mobile phone if in doubt. There is a police station fairly central to our routes, and there are PSOs at the station, so we are fairly lucky in that sense.

We have a multicultural driver distribution, which generally reflects this area. Some passengers are quite prejudiced. With one female driver, the office had complaints about her on days when she wasn't actually driving. There has been verbal racial abuse about some drivers' place of origin.

When there is an incident, the supervisor assesses the situation by phone. In business hours, we try to send a supervisor out. After hours, a mechanic or one of us [management] goes out. We see if the driver is fit to drive the bus in or out of service. If it is an assault, and the driver is waiting for police, we send a senior driver out. The following bus gets the people; we deal with the affected driver first. Debriefing is first done with the supervisor. If the matter is more serious it is escalated to two managers.

We have a lot of local commuting, especially in older, pre-1950 areas, but not between rail and hubs. All our buses are 2 door, low floor, and about 40-50% have CCTV. We have short routes, so people are on and off. But now every passenger has a smartphone, and they send clips to operators as complaints about anything.

We have a lot of top ups. The volume of cash handling has increased, and reporting requirements have increased. Early on, people were putting the exact fare on. Now, more are doing \$5 top-ups. Small top ups are counter-productive. Others walk past while a top up is in progress, they don't wait.

If you're going to have top ups, there has to be a minimum top up rule, to \$5.00. The AOs try to fit attendance into their schedule. Mostly they are located at hubs checking tickets, not on buses. They did some plain clothes work in 2016 on our buses, but not ticket checks, more looking at behaviour, with a car following behind. They don't check tickets when the bus is moving.

We disagree with the regulations on fares, as there is no support for drivers and no follow-up action. Drivers should not be enforcers, the same as on trains and trams that buses predominantly feed to. PTV need to make a decision about asking for fares. If they want bus drivers to ask, they have to give operators and drivers the support and tools to do it. If that's not the case, and it isn't, drivers shouldn't be asking for fares, the same as train and tram. The reality is that PTV provides no support at all. AOs come around and fine people, and the next day people have a go at the driver for not tipping them off that the AOs were around. PTV need to decide if the priority is getting fares or providing a safe bus service from A to B. There should be no money interaction at all on bus, just as in train and tram.

Operator M (Medium operator)

We interviewed the operator together with the manager and six drivers. Physical assaults on drivers are very rare in their service, less than once in five years. No-one could recall an instance of drivers being spat at on their service, but there had been a couple of instances of spitting on the bus floor. Although the operator said that verbal abuse is low in their service, the drivers said that rudeness and abuse over ticketing is normal if they ask for touch-ons or fares, so they don't ask. Most passengers on their runs are regulars and well behaved. There is not much rudeness from regulars; the drivers get to know them, and the operator tries to put the same drivers on the same runs where possible, to facilitate this. Drug and alcohol-affected passengers are rare, as is aggression from passengers with impaired mental health. They service a relatively well-off socio-economic area; passengers are mostly working families and commuters.

The causes of aggression towards drivers are, in order, ticketing (well in front), then late running and passengers missing trains, then road rage from people who have parked in bus stops, especially near the station, and they arc up if the driver toots them to try to get them to move. Train links used to be included on the timetable but PTV removed them. One station they service doesn't meet DDA requirements, so it can take passengers 3-4 minutes to get to and from buses to trains. Some passengers see a train leaving as the bus is arriving, and complain to the driver as if he/she caused the passenger to miss their train. But the train they saw might just as easily have been a different train, since there is no longer train linking information on the bus timetable.

The operator said that the drivers cope with verbal abuse and don't report it. The drivers said that it happens all the time, mostly if they ask for touch-ons, then people abuse them and walk past. One said it's nothing; he tells the abuser "I love you too", which usually ends it. This was an unusual approach due to the driver's personality; the training is to say nothing back, otherwise it escalates. The view was that it all gets back to how drivers behave and interact. The general view was that if you get a rude passenger, just tell them to take a seat and the problems end.

All drivers are trained up to a Certificate in Bus Operations delivered by an experienced external consultant, which includes safety, customer service, and de-escalation by focussing on what the issue is. With ticketing issues, we tell them to just wave the people on. We try to tell the drivers not to say anything. There is often a language barrier between drivers, many of who are from immigrant non-English speaking backgrounds, often with strong accents, and our passengers who tend to be native English speakers regardless of background. The training is always to avoid escalation.

There is a report form for any accidents or incidents, but very few are submitted by drivers, and none for verbal abuse. The drivers said it would have to be pretty high level verbal abuse before they'd bother to report it. They said it would be at the level where they thought it could escalate into physical confrontation, where they felt physically threatened, before they would report it or call the depot. Another source of stress in being cut off by turning cars; you can't just slam on the brakes with a bus full of people. There is a lot of pressure on drivers driving a heavy passenger vehicle, without provoking more abuse by trying to enforce ticketing.

The Regulations are that we use our "best endeavours" to request fares. We tell drivers to do their job, but not at the expense of their own safety. They are told to take the path of least resistance, and don't enforce ticketing. In practice they don't generally request fares or try to enforce compliance. Passengers touch on at their own volition. The experience is that drivers who request touch ons and fares get the most aggression. The interviewed drivers said it's not worth getting thumped over a \$3.00 fare. The more 'old school' drivers are more likely to ask for compliance but there are less of them now; they have retired or mellowed. We probably call the police to attend a bus about twice a year but they either don't come, or don't come quickly. What happens is, the driver says "Code Red, we've called the police", and the person jumps off. We hardly ever see AOs. We have occasionally asked for AOs, but they are very rare. The drivers are on their own. We're lucky it's a better area than many others.

The operator's guess is that on route service around 10-15% walk past the driver without touching on, and another 5-10% pretend to touch on but don't, so maybe around 30% fare evasion all up on the buses. The drivers' estimate is that probably around 40% of route bus service passengers don't touch on, with females worse than males. Yet many of these touch on when they catch the train, so they're still a paid public transport user. Many think that when they have touched on once, such as on the train, they have a valid transport ticket, despite the bus touch-on signage. The operator recently rode on another operator's bus for a trip into the city, and observed that of about 40 people that boarded after him at various places, only 4 touched on during that trip.

There are probably more touch-ons in off peak than peak; or maybe it is just more obvious. The majority of school students don't touch on. AOs ignore them, they never check school students' tickets. A lot of kids don't have myki cards, or have old expired ones that they wave around but don't work. Sometimes only 1 or 2 will touch on from a bus full of school kids. The buses are getting fuller, but the touch-on numbers have dropped. The drivers estimate about 90-95% of kids don't touch on. The service carries at least the same number or more passengers as it always has, but this does not match PTV figures, so obviously a lot are not touching on. We do top ups, but these vary; some top up only small amounts, some are bigger. Either can cause delays. We have two new buses on order and these will be fitted with counters to quantify passenger numbers. It is an extra cost, but it is the only way we will get reliable figures. We have tried driver counts, but these are not accurate. Drivers are busy; they may miss a few, realise it, then hit the counter a few times. We guess driver counts are around plus or minus 5% accurate, but that's a lot of people over a week's service.

If there was a physical conflict, drivers are instructed to bail out – just leave the bus and look after themselves. There has been no need for any driver to do this, but that is the instruction. They are told not to try and intervene or confront passengers. Although drivers tend to see the bus they drive as 'their' bus, with a sense of ownership, they are told that they are better off turning a blind eye to minor misbehaviour and vandalism than getting into confrontation. There is some seat slashing and window-scratching, but it is not extreme. We don't have a policy as such that drivers should stay in their seat, but most days this is not an issue anyway. Conflict between passengers on board or at bus stops is almost unheard of. The driver often wouldn't be aware of it anyway unless it was loud or physical. When issues are reported, we do debriefing with the operator or manager. We have external counselling available if needed. Some drivers might say they're OK after reporting; others need help. It really depends on what happened.

PTV is backing the installation of security screens for drivers, so it must be aware of and concerned about assaults over ticketing, as this is the main cause of aggression. We don't really want screens in our buses as it separates the drivers from passengers, but we have to fall in with the industry. The newer buses have CCTV, but police don't want to watch the footage of minor incidents. There is a duress alarm, but what's the use if the police don't go. There are difficult social issues out there, and the bus driver cops it. He wears a uniform and is seen as working for PTV. There is no respect for bus drivers. People generally aren't brought up with an idea of responsibilities, but they all have rights.

Government policy on fares should be the way we interpret it. Driver safety has to come first. If the myki system had been done properly we wouldn't have these problems. All drivers said myki was the biggest problem. Without pay-wave or phone pay, the system is not viable. Drivers lost authority to obtain fares with myki, and it is dangerous to try to go back. The myki system was not reliable when it was introduced. Cards weren't readily available, and the government lost control of it forever. All train mykis were free at the start, but a bus starter was \$5 when it was introduced. People on buses had to pay the fare but tram passengers didn't, and they took it out on the drivers. The situation is not recoverable. It should not be up to drivers to ask for fares. The best solution would be to charge a small percentage of property rates to cover public transport. So people in Toorak would pay more, people in outer suburbs and the bush would pay less; but the closer people are to the city, the more public transport services and options they have. That would be the fairest way of funding it.

Operator N (Medium operator)

We interviewed the operator together with another director and a shift supervisor. Prior to 3 or 4 years ago they had no physical assaults on drivers, but they have had 6 over the last 3 years. Of these, one resulted from a drug or alcohol-affected passenger, one from a mentally impaired passenger, one from road rage, and three from unknown causes. There is not a lot of spitting, although there was none 3-4 years ago. They do not have a high level of verbal abuse, it is not the norm; but road rage stood out as an abuse factor. Drivers might say something to their supervisor if they have had bad verbal abuse. It has a cumulative effect and is wearing over time, but it goes with the job.

They are an inner city operator with high levels of daily traffic congestion, and can often run 20 minutes late on a 20 minute service. There is a perception of poor service due to the timetables, and people don't want to pay for poor service. It is often hard to access bus stops due to street traffic, so DDA low-floor access is not always possible as the bus can't pull into the stop. There is some lower level verbal abuse from passengers over late running, but drivers take it in their stride as they can do nothing about it. Apartment blocks are taking over single house lots with redevelopment. Some blocks are built with no car parking, only bike parking, so residents' cars are forced to occupy space in the surrounding streets, adding to congestion. There are also some less cars from environmental sympathies, which means more public transport users.

There are different levels of patronage on different routes. Our passengers are mostly professionals, the elderly, and schoolkids. Predominantly we carry school kids mornings and afternoons, with commuters and professionals in peak. Passenger to passenger conflict is rare. There are no particular hot spots for trouble or huge behavioural issues, including with the schoolkids. Ice produces more aggressive reactions, but it is less prevalent here as the area is increasingly affluent. More incidents happen at major bus stops than elsewhere, but this may reflect that there are more passengers at the major stops.

Drivers are told the contractual requirement to request a touch on or fare, an "ask once" policy, and to say to non-payers that they travel at their own risk, but we don't enforce this. In practice it is "shut up and drive" and don't worry about the fare. It is not worth a fight for a \$3 fare. If the driver asks for compliance, passengers tell them that there's nothing they can do about it. We only get AOs if we call them. AOs go to hubs; they rarely travel on a bus any more, and if they do, they don't walk around when the bus is moving. Fare evasion would be between 30% and 40%, and is more prevalent off-peak. Schoolkids don't touch on; they just pile on. The elderly touch on, but the new generation doesn't, as there is a low chance of getting caught. The kids all produce cards if the AOs are around, but not when they aren't. The chances of someone getting caught without a validated myki are very slim.

With training, we mostly employ drivers who have worked for other companies, so they know how it works. A lot of training is not required. We offer a more accommodating roster system than some others, and are seen as a desirable place to work. There is low staff turnover. We tell them our expectations, that we are contractually obliged to ask for touch ons or fares, but it is not enforced. What they do is up to them. We need to take tasks off drivers, not add to them. The obligation for drivers to use "best endeavours" to obtain fares is unreasonable, and doesn't apply to train and tram drivers. Most drivers do not see themselves as fare enforcers. They have plenty to do already, and they have no powers to enforce fares. There are no AOs to back them up. Drivers have given up asking. Other passengers don't get involved and don't say anything. In practice, fares are not a confrontation trigger because the confrontation doesn't happen. Because of that, on time running and kerbside access are the major issues. If we could solve those, the issues would vanish.

Drivers mostly don't talk to passengers. They are now behind mesh screens and separated off from passengers. The office is not manned on weekends. If drivers are in any doubt about a passenger situation, the instruction is call 000 first, then the depot. We have a 'stay in your seat' policy; we say the security screen is your safety zone, stay behind it. One driver was assaulted through a gap between the loop and the safety screen recently, and we had the loop further modified to eliminate the gap. Roughly 30% of our buses have CCTV at present, and it is installed on all new buses.

Drivers will always report any physical assault or confrontation. We tell them to ignore rudeness as best they can. Some will say they've been verbally abused but don't care. If a driver is abused of course he's likely to fire back. For most it's water off a duck's back. If they report abuse we ask if they want to take it further, but most don't. People don't like doing paperwork or incident reports. We check to see if they are OK, and how far the driver wants to take it, and go from there. If they want to take a matter to the police, we support them to do that. They are not offered counselling at this point; we don't get an external provider involved as routine. If it was a more serious assault it would be different, but the assaults we've had have been at the lower end of the scale. We don't push counselling on them, it depends on how they present. They are offered the rest of the day off, or a few days off depending on the situation. We look after their safety first. No-one has left the company because they feel unsafe.

Ticketing has been a failure from Metcard on. Myki is much worse than Metcard, it's an honour system where people have to touch on. We have tried manual passenger counts and there were significant discrepancies between our count and myki data. There is less discrepancy now, but also drivers are complacent about counting. Touch ons went down and stayed there at a low level, but our buses are carrying the same numbers. Top-ups dropped off for a while, but are coming back. There is a low percentage of auto-top ups. Most top up with \$5 or more. It should move to a pay pass/credit card system with proximity deductions, so drivers wouldn't have to do fares. Without system changes myki won't get better. People are not getting what they're paying for. They get poor timetables, poor service and think why should they pay? People believe the system doesn't work, and no-one polices it.

We have 2-door buses. The old myki readers were mounted on the right hand side on a pole, and also at the rear door. The readers on new buses are being mounted at the front on a security loop closer to the driver. A driver looking at passengers not touching on is likely to lead to escalation. The Brisbane death has added to driver stress, as it was so unpredictable. Stress can also come from something external to work, such as events at home. Ideally, drivers should have no interactions with passengers at all, just drive them safely. People decide themselves if they are payer or non-payers, and travel accordingly. Public transport should be funded from a tax levy. The way it is now, the system shortcomings are thrown back on the drivers. Buses should have myki readers only, with the driver totally separated, as they are on trams, and be policed by those with the power to do that.

Operator O (Medium operator)

I interviewed the operator and the general manager, both with substantial operations experience. There is a fair bit of verbal abuse, passengers swearing at drivers, telling them to mind their own business. We have had some decline in abuse over the last 6 to 12 months, but overall there has been a steep rise over the last 3 or 4 years. Maybe we're managing it better recently. Verbal abuse may wear drivers down, but it tends to be reported only if they feel threatened, or it's in their face. Drivers don't report minor verbal abuse below that level. If a passenger approached and verbally abused a driver, it would be reported back to us, but not if it was just said from their seat.

With physical assault, spitting was never the norm; it didn't happen. Now it happens occasionally. Drivers are likely to mention being spat at. We've had passengers fighting on the bus, then drivers have asked them to stop it or get off, and been pushed or spat on. Years ago there were generally only evening incidents; now it's spread out at any time. Probably over the last 2-3 years it has got worse. There are more people who are drug-affected and looking for confrontation. Druggies don't sleep; drunks do. You can pick the dodgy passengers. The safety loop rail is only a deterrent. You need a full mesh cage to stop an assault.

We have a 'stay in your seat' policy. We tell them if there is trouble, say something only once, and politely; then stop the bus and open the doors, but don't interact. Don't play cop. There are less incidents from less interaction, so don't escalate it. Contact the depot if you need to, but don't interact with the passenger. The old school drivers owned their bus and controlled passengers; now they are asked not to. The new wave of drivers, over the last 5 years, don't want to risk their job by arcing up or having confrontation. Even with tagging [graffiti], we say don't approach the people. We photograph it and send it to the police. The police will act if they have evidence. The three biggest causes of verbal abuse for us are ticketing, late running, and drivers giving an instruction to passengers, in that order.

With ticketing, passengers are more likely to just walk past the driver. If the driver asks them to touch on, some might comply, some give verbal abuse, and some make excuses. Some passengers act like they're touching on without doing so. Drivers will ask some people to touch on, but we say don't ask anyone who looks suspect. The drivers know their regulars; they know who to talk to and who not to talk to. Most of the passengers are regulars, including the troublemakers. Fare evasion would be around 25-30%. On school buses maybe a quarter of them touch on, so evasion is about 75%. In the early days of myki, drivers were trained to ask for and insist on fares. We had no passenger conflict issues with Metcard. Conflict started to increase with myki, and it's been a slow avalanche.

Drivers are blamed and abused for late running, whether it's justified or not. It happens especially in peak hours, which are longer now; about 4 hours or more. Our morning peak is about 7 to 9:30am; afternoon peak is about 3-7pm. There is a lot of traffic congestion, and a lot of roadworks.

Verbal abuse from drivers issuing an instruction to passengers is a weekly event, and it has increased recently. There have been instances of passengers threatening drivers, e.g. "I'll get you". We pass that around and tell drivers not to confront them. It's word of mouth. Parents ring up and say the driver can't tell their kid what to do. Drivers tend to know who will bark back, and they leave them alone. Having a low turnover of drivers helps. With unacceptable behaviour, there's not much the driver can do. Some ethnic drivers are seen as weak targets. We get kids fighting on board as well as adults. There are maybe 2 or 3 passenger fights a year; about 3 or 4 cases where a driver has got involved in a passenger dispute and been punched. Our instructions are to stop the bus, open the door, and don't get involved. Call the depot, and operations will tell the driver what to do.

Operations do our training. We have a driver training handbook. We haven't used the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book. We look at passenger behaviour; how to interact and not interact. We say to pick the passengers to ask for fares. Safety comes first, for drivers and passengers. Our instruction is to avoid confrontation at all times. Try to defuse any trouble, and if you are concerned, call the depot. If there is any physical incident, call the police. All our buses have CCTV and two-way radio. We think passengers tend to behave a bit better when they know they're being watched. In the past some drivers have escalated incidents, but not in recent times. Drivers know they're under surveillance themselves, and it makes a difference.

Drivers look to the operator for support, and generally they do feel supported. For us there are no differences between peak and off peak behaviour, and no special hot spots. The only time drivers feel isolated is when late night idling at a terminus. If an incident is severe, operations assesses the driver to see if they are OK to drive, both physically and mentally. If not, we send another bus out to take over. With reported abuse or assault, we think we're handling it well. If a driver has an incident we ask if they want counselling, and if so we refer them to an external company that does WorkCover, etc. We coach drivers through what happened; talk to them about how they feel. Talking eases them back in.

The regulations are OK as regards best endeavours to collect fares, but not the requirement that drivers must ask every passenger. We have recently moved to an 'ask once' policy, but in practice, you ask if you feel safe to do so. Our incidents are low now, so what we're doing works.

There is not much AO presence, and we would like to see more. Drivers are not enforcers. We ask AOs to come for fare evasion, not behaviour. Passengers are not touching on between major centres. Some have said it's better to pay the fine. When it was the \$75 spot fine [up to 1 January 2017] it was cheaper to pay a fine every 2 weeks if you got caught, but most times you wouldn't. AOs go on buses and to shopping centres. They won't fine students who are the biggest evaders. They just give a warning. No student has ever been fined on our buses. School kids get used to not paying, including when they travel into the city. The kids know when to touch on or not without getting caught.

The myki system has separated drivers from passengers. We're carrying the same numbers of passengers, but there are less touch-ons. You don't have driver interaction with passengers unless they are topping up. For a while, the volume of top ups we were doing went down, but now it is back up. When you look at the demographics, it's a cash place. People aren't doing credit card top ups. We will be installing passenger counters soon to get reliable passenger figures, as manual counts are unreliable. Myki wasn't operating properly at the start. There was a period of free rides, and validation took place away from the driver. We've had five years of non-compliance. Moving the FPD might make a difference regarding guilt. It's easier to ask for a touch-on if you're closer, but the horse has bolted.

Operator P (Small, regional operator)

We interviewed the operator together with 2 drivers, one female, one male. We are in a close, small town community. We don't get much verbal abuse. There is some occasional verbal abuse from passengers, usually if they have no money or no myki card. Drivers sometimes get abuse from trains not connecting with a bus. Myki has been the major cause of a deterioration of the relationship between passengers and drivers. But we know most of our passengers by their first name, and everyone knows us. We show passengers respect from the start, and they respect us for it. The words please, thank you, and some respect goes a long way. Nothing much has changed here as regards abuse over time. There has been no physical assault in the last 3 years.

We don't operate past 8pm any nights. The majority of our passengers are am/pm commuters and daytime shoppers. We run high frequency town services. It is not rail-based; we don't wait at the station. If someone misses a bus there'll be another one in 10-15 minutes.

We think fare evasion would be about 10%, maybe a little less. Mostly that is from passengers not having money on them, from poor planning. Drivers enforce and control fares; we are more alpha male drivers, and our female driver is upfront about it too. We want touch-ons to show the buses are carrying people, and we are showing passenger growth figures. We are pretty active in confronting passengers about their ability to pay. One driver had an issue with a passenger who repeatedly didn't have a myki. One time he said to him, "no card, no ride", and refused admission. The passenger turned up later with his myki, and the driver hasn't had a problem since. If they don't have cash but have a card, we carry them. It's a small town, and our paths cross regularly.

We carry a lot of passengers from a major facility into town, mostly to and from the station. They have to have a card to use the train. We reinforce that. Sometimes they get caught out and don't have myki cards, so we carry them in good faith and tell them to get a card and use it next time. In our experience they mostly do. We take a lot of cash on Saturday mornings; they pay then, on their way to the station. We get a lot of people paying small amounts of coins to cover their trip from A to B. Cash is a pain for drivers. Top ups of \$2 and \$5 are the most common. There are a lot of \$2 top ups in small change. A \$5 top up should be the minimum. We would like to see less cash handling. If we had EFTPOS it would be much better.

We don't have a big issue with passengers standing over drivers about fares. A couple of people told a driver that they were members of the police force, and showed what the driver thought was non-authentic ID, claiming that as police they didn't have to pay to travel. We need to check if police get free travel, but we don't think so unless there was an emergency, and we doubt they were police.

There is not much congestion. It's a small town, and the runs keep pretty regular. Delays are mostly from walking frames, prams, etc., small delays. We don't see AOs often, but they do ride on the buses sometimes. The only concern drivers sometimes have is waiting at the terminus at night, and going into the depot late at night, as it's pitch black and was broken into some time ago.

All our drivers are long-term. They are not keen on having driver security screens fitted. They don't want to be seen as separating themselves from the community. There are always concerns with the community, with drugs, etc., but it hasn't impacted on what we do. One day something's probably bound to happen. We use some of the TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book in our in-service training. We try to train drivers to be alert to issues like ice. There are some drunks, but these are not normally any trouble. They just take a seat and behave.

A new driver has a run through with an established driver; they are put on with an old driver for a bit. Some young guys mouth off sometimes, but we stand on it. You have to be consistent. There are two couples who both have domestic conflicts going on. The drivers know them and try to keep

them on separate buses if they get off the same train. We are worlds apart from the metropolitan situation. Most of our passengers are regulars, and catch the bus nearly every day. None of us would drive in the city. We know about drivers being belted, spray cans on the bus, abuse over fares, and so on, but it doesn't happen here.

Appendix 2 – Non-Operator Agencies

2.1 Transport Workers Union observations on the extent and reporting of abuse and assault of bus drivers

We interviewed the Senior Vic/Tas bus organiser together with two bus organisers, both with extensive bus driving and industry experience. There has been a sharp rise in aggression towards bus drivers in the last two years, but it is hugely under reported. As a result the TWU commenced a campaign on 21 October 2016 called “Passenger aggression: Report it or it doesn’t exist”.

Routine daily verbal abuse and aggression experienced by drivers consists of a range of insulting behaviours such as being given the finger, told to f-off, told to shut up and drive, called a d-head or idiot, told “you are only a bus driver”, and similar disrespectful comments. This happens to most drivers a couple of times a day or more, and drivers typically see it as normal and “water off a duck’s back”. It is so widespread it would rarely if ever be mentioned, even at lunchtime.

Mid-range verbal abuse is more loud or interactive, such as a raised voice or insulting argument, or where a passenger has said something to more actively provoke a driver, often deliberately. This is also fairly widespread, but is unlikely to be reported to a supervisor. It is largely expressed in lunchtime grumbles or not at all, except by sharing upon hearing other drivers grumble. At least 40% of drivers are verbally abused daily and it’s not reported. It may be mentioned to a supervisor but it never goes on a form.

High level verbal abuse is behaviour such as shouting, getting in the driver’s face, personalised insults including about race, appearance, religion where apparent from clothing accessories, gender (directed at women drivers), etc., and threats of various kinds such as “I’m going to come back and get you”, provocations to fight, etc. These are likely to be reported back to a supervisor, and in the case of sustained abuse or threats, the depot is likely to be called for instructions. Depending on the situation, and especially in the case of passengers fighting or making overt threats, including with weapons or syringes, the driver may also call the police, but they can take a while to get there.

These are high-end events, and drivers are typically distressed. The fact that a driver has been distressed enough to call the depot for assistance or instructions does not mean they will be taken off their run. It seems to depend on who the supervisor happens to be as to what they decide to do. There is no consistency in how it is handled between different companies or across the industry. In reality, distressed drivers are often left in the lurch. From what we hear, debriefing is minimal. It varies between operators, even from depot to depot and manager to manager. Sometimes there is very little; sometimes a driver has been told to keep driving.

A lot of verbal abuse and aggression is filtered out of the reporting process. First, drivers typically don’t bother to report routine or mid-range verbal abuse. We estimate at least 80% of verbal abuse is never reported. When a driver is subject to high level personalised abuse but has not felt a need to radio for assistance, they are likely to tell their supervisor after the shift, who will typically ask if they want to take it further. Most drivers decline, as once they have got it “off their chest” they are not interested in form-filling but want to go home. The supervisor’s concern is typically how the driver is coping, not with paperwork. The effect of this short term view of support is that the long-term mental impact of verbal abuse become invisible. Drivers are also human, and there’s a limit to how much abuse and aggression you can take before it gets you. Drivers used to report it and nothing happened, so they stopped trying. As long as they don’t get physically assaulted, they ignore it.

Physical assault would nearly always be reported, although drivers do not always report spitting or having liquids thrown on them, and lower level physical assault such as pushing or shoving a driver may not be reported by more alpha drivers. Anecdotally, spitting at drivers has risen, particularly when leaving the bus, over the last couple of years. It is prevalent and easy. We know that other physical assaults have risen quite a bit over the last two years.

When a supervisor does a report form it might go to a senior manager or it might just get filed. If every driver reported everything, a supervisor is not going to push it up the chain. There has been a wane in driver reporting as nothing happens. A lot of the time it's over, and nothing can be done about it. Who's going to get the police and go to court because someone pushed or spat at them. Physical assaults generally follow the WorkCover process. They are not normally reported to TSV if reporting is not required. For verbal abuse, support would be almost non-existent unless the driver was very proactive about wanting it. With physical assault, the system seems to take care of it OK, but not much happens for lesser incidents. Some operators have been good about providing extra support; others are not proactive. If the driver sticks his hands up he gets support; otherwise no.

Far and away the biggest cause of aggression to drivers is ticketing, miles in front of everything else. Requests to touch on are a catalyst for assault. Up to 2016 all drivers were told to ask passengers to touch on. Driver training is basically saying that if drivers change the way they ask, then assaults will reduce. That's what the companies' "ask once" policy is about. They want to meet the PTV contract requirements by having drivers ask once for fares. That's what triggers most abuse and escalation. Having a policy of "pick and choose" who to ask to touch on causes problems, as the request can be interpreted as singling people out. They think, why did you ask me to touch on when you didn't ask the big tattooed guy who got on before me. So why should I do it if he isn't. The drivers' job is not to enforce fares, and they can't do anything about it, as passengers keep telling them to their face. If someone wants to ask for a top-up that's OK, but it's not OK to enforce it or ask for touch-ons.

Myki has been a disaster and the drivers are told to manage it; sell cards, do top ups, and confront passengers for touch ons. Some few drivers insist on touch ons, and it slows everything down. Passengers abuse drivers for system failures. Top-up machines are not widely available. If a driver has to shut the bus down for a break, or go to the toilet, it takes time to restart myki, and the only choice is to wait till it loads or offer passengers a free ride to stick to the timetable. There are plenty of times when myki is down or not working. Then PTV want to fine the operators for not getting fares. When myki started it was supposed to be a cashless system. Monday is the worst day for drivers, as myki takes longer to top up at stations than to top up on buses. It takes up driver time and can affect late running, then other passengers get upset at the driver for any delay. Drivers should have no obligations for ticketing at all. Due to ongoing verbal and physical aggression to drivers, mostly over ticketing, TWU launched the "Enough is Enough" campaign on 5 October 2016, which advises members to decide for themselves whether to request passengers to touch on.

The second biggest cause of conflict is timetables and late running, which are becoming a growing issue with increasing congestion, and are definitely linked with verbal abuse. Buses run late in heavy traffic, and PTV are reducing timetables, which means less services, then people get on and blame or abuse the driver. In school holidays buses can run early, as there is less traffic. The bus can't leave a time point early, and passengers go nuts if the bus is sitting at stops or timing points to adhere to the timetable. If they drive slower to keep to time points, or when supervisors who track the buses by GPS instruct drivers to go slow to stay on timetable, the drivers get road rage for slowing the traffic, plus abuse from passengers for going slow.

Passenger behaviour is another issue. There was a smoke bomb thrown on a bus by an aggressive passenger. Passenger to passenger conflicts happen, and a passenger can come to the driver for help to intervene, but it's out of the driver's control. Except for stopping and opening the doors, he/she can't often do anything except radio. If a driver does intervene, they can be in trouble from the operator for doing the right thing to help a passenger. Ice and other drugs and dealing are a problem, especially with kids. There are hot spot areas with social issues; a cycle of poverty,

unemployment, public housing, low car ownership, and these are your major public transport users. People can be physically drug and alcohol-affected; asking them to touch on triggers aggression.

PTV says that bus passenger numbers are down, but that's not true; they are increasing. School kids jump in through both doors, don't touch on, and they are a big factor in lower passenger numbers. They are still paying for public transport if they use the train as well, which a lot do, so they are not travelling free, but are not being counted on buses.

PTV say there are 91 dedicated bus AOs, but they are not generally around with high visibility. They do short blitzes in an area then disappear. One driver said he'd been driving for 35 years and never seen one. When we asked drivers in different depots how many AOs they thought there were, most thought about 15. Nobody is challenged or confronted, so no one pays. AOs don't ride the buses; they stay at high traffic locations checking people coming off the buses. Kids advise each other of AOs by Twitter and mobile phone. Passengers have phones that make a tap on noise, but it's safer for drivers ignore them than confront them. There's passengers who hold their phone out at the driver and make the myki sound, daring them to say anything. Buses are soft targets for fare evasion. Screens do not always deter violent passengers. In one case, two hoons ripped a screen off and assaulted the driver. Some companies have installed mesh driver screens, but they don't stop spitting or liquids. We have been working with the bus industry to get full security screens and loops installed and retrofitted, but it is not happening fast enough. Three fleets cut support to drivers by shutting down two-way radios at various times, so drivers could not readily call for assistance or warn other drivers of trouble, but they restored it after union involvement. CCTV is not in all buses and often not working; there are footage glitches, and hard drives corrupt.

Training about dealing with passengers is fairly nominal across the industry. There is no consistency; we aren't aware of any standard type of training. The reality is that being on the road is a different world from the training room. You don't know what's going to happen in a split second. Someone can look normal and just go off, from being asked to touch on, or even just saying good morning. If you're talking about skills to defuse aggression, removing ticketing is the answer to 90% of it.

The new [company name deleted] driver training DVD is probably OK for new drivers, but it's a bit warm and cosy. We have all experienced much worse passenger behaviour than it shows. The TSV *Managing Difficult Passengers* book would probably be very different if it was done now. We're past "difficult passengers", and into active fare evaders and people out to cause trouble, including on board vandalism and graffiti. Passenger behaviour has got way worse in the last two years or so. The nature of physical assaults has got more extreme, and they seem to be happening more often. They are less discriminate regarding aggression towards male or female, or older or younger drivers. Ticketing is directly linked with physical assaults now. Drug users including sniffers have become an increasing problem, and taken over from alcohol. There are more people out and about looking for trouble. We ramped up our Bus Driver Safety campaign on 20 October 2016, with a range of measures put to government for discussion. The three biggest things to fix are ticketing, AOs and PSOs. There should be mandatory sentences for anyone assaulting a bus driver.

2.2 Authorised Officer (AO) Bus Pool observations regarding the extent and causes of abuse and assault of bus drivers

We interviewed a bus AO team leader together with two senior AOs from the Multi-Modal Authorised Officer (MMAO) bus pool, all with lengthy experience on bus. They think that most drivers would not bother to report verbal abuse, and that most would not report physical assault unless they thought the offender/s would be caught. One officer described the level of abuse and assault on drivers over the last two and a half years as bad; another said it has definitely not got better over that time.

Some locations have a history of poor and threatening passenger behaviour. There are examples of drivers who feel physically sick on going into those areas, and at the thought of going there, such as when heading to start their shift; and of kids goading drivers by opening the rear engine cover as a bus is moving off. Some aggressive behaviour is youth bravado; they're out to give the driver a hard time. Bus drivers work on their own, and some areas are not likely to have rapid police response. There are places with signal dropout where a driver cannot radio or call for assistance.

Drivers get worn down, and that can cause them to over-react to other passengers about minor things they would normally ignore. There was a Safe Travel Task Force some years ago, which recommended the development of a mobile phone app so that incidents could be immediately notified to operators and the police. However there was a lack of funding and the Safe Travel Task Force was subsequently disbanded, and no action was taken on this recommendation. There is a definite need to capture information, both for deterrence and prosecution, and to help with allocating resources to hotspots.

Some areas are consistently more problematic than others, with drugs, racism, unemployment, etc., but bad passenger behaviour happens especially at hubs; not just poor areas, but busy areas, where there is a lot of passenger traffic, e.g. centres where buses meet trains and people congregate and hang out. We are trying to create better relationships with bus companies so we can get to specific areas that operators request.

MMAOs are trying to establish a practice where the officers commence and finish some of their duties at a bus depot. We believe this will enable the AOs to meet drivers and get to know what they are facing and where the problem spots are, and generally to help target problem spots for behavioural and ticketing offences. We are also building relationships with the Transit Police.

At least 90% of aggression towards drivers is about ticketing. Late running is the next biggest factor. The driver is the gatekeeper, working alone, and seen as a soft target. Some drivers escalate aggression by insisting on fares. AO1: Drivers have a contractual obligation to ask for the fare. AO2: Drivers are by themselves; we don't expect them to be fare enforcers. AO3: Drivers should take top ups but not do any more than that; not ask for fares.

Fare evasion varies. It is high in some areas, others not. Some buses have peak runs with no top-ups. Passengers without valid tickets often tell the AOs that the driver told them to take a seat. We can still enforce a fine, but we have to ask the driver if what the passenger said is right. When we ask, drivers mostly say the passenger just walked on. CCTV generally supports what the driver told us. PTV fare evasion figures come from ticket inspections. We count the number of valid tickets we check, versus people with no ticket, invalid tickets, or travelling concession with no concession entitlement. That gives the fare evasion percentage. There is also an allowance for absconders, the number of people who see us and run off. PTV count around 80-90% of absconders as fare evaders. We would estimate fare evasion on bus as easily double the official figure, probably 15-20%.

Drivers should tell passengers who walk past that they travel at their own risk of a fine, but that can also trigger escalation. AOs expect escalation from passengers, but drivers don't. Passengers then escalate against AOs if the driver hasn't said anything when they got on, and they might also have a go at the driver afterwards. The driver is caught in the middle.

There should be a pre-recorded message, like trams, to remind passengers that they need to touch on, to remove the driver from asking. There should be signage at stops, especially interchanges, warning that inspectors are about. It worked measurably for Yarra Trams.

High escalation points for drivers are passengers demanding to be let off at a place other than a bus stop, asking for touch ons, not stopping at a bus stop, and being misinterpreted as rude by passengers, sometimes from language barriers. Another trigger is a bus finishing its run early at a point where the person is expecting it to go further.

Drivers tell passengers to get on when the myki readers are not working. Possibly operators were more concerned about cash flow when they got the fares, rather than the government. There may have been a greater sense of ownership, as drivers knew the money was going to the company.

There are a number of issues with myki. There was not a huge difference between Metcard and myki system wise; the issue is having to buy a myki when coming from interstate. Retailers can be hard to find. Drivers often don't have enough mykis to sell; sometimes only 4 full fare and 4 concession. One bus we checked had 6 starter pack cards that had passed their 4 year expiry date; i.e. it hadn't sold 6 in 4 years. Long runs like Orbital can run out of cards and can't get back to the depot to restock.

The old myki readers were slow; the new ones are fine. FPDs are mostly mounted on the right hand entrance pole, whereas the old Metcard validator was near the driver. We have issues with FPDs not working; sometimes it could be because a driver has not logged on. The CVM (fixed point) myki machines are not prevalent, and experiences like declined transactions put people off using them.

It would be better if buses did not sell myki cards. Selling is time-consuming and causes late running. In practice, drivers just wave people on to keep to the timetable. The \$20 on-bus top-up limit causes hassles as it requires multiple sales transactions. Some people ask to put a large amount on to try to get waved on. In Sydney you need to put multiples of \$10, and it works much better. A few years ago a lot of people were topping up \$1.00, or just enough to keep their card active. Small transactions slow boarding down. A lot of people don't get their card out until they get on the bus.

Drivers want more AOs around all the time; they want us to tackle offenders. Some of it is driver perception that we are not around when we are in plain clothes. People definitely behave better when we wear uniforms; it has a pacifying effect. Wearing plain clothes, you see different attitudes in passengers.

AO deployment is controlled by PTV. They decide whether we are at interchanges or mobile (on board buses); or in uniform or plain clothes. We work maybe 25-30% of our time mobile, the rest at stops and interchanges. When the AOs were part of BAV they were initially 100% mobile. When they began doing interchanges, efficiency improved by more than 100%, in terms of reports of non-compliance issued and tickets checked. After a while people got used to AOs being at hubs, and started alerting each other through social media, such as mobile phones and Facebook.

It is hard for AOs to ride and check buses in peak, as they are packed. We generally do interchanges during peak, then go mobile between peak. We can get an instruction to go to an area and from there to go mobile as required. The team can then use their discretion as to what route/s they go on. There is an impression of disrespect to bus drivers. The majority of passengers think drivers are OK. Most people get on, put their headphones on and just ride. Some people complain about driver language and rudeness, but it's often a cultural divide. The driver is not being rude, but speaking or

gesturing in a way that is different from Anglo-Australians, and they take it as rudeness and speak to the driver aggressively. Some people arc up whatever someone says to them.

The media has created negative public perceptions of some ethnic groups as aggressive, e.g. the Apex gang (young Sudanese), or Aboriginals, and drivers won't ask for touch ons. On the other hand CDC's Maori Wardens program has been successful in relating to youth on buses. We have older Africans come up to us and say, "We're not all like Apex".

There is not a huge problem with physical passenger to passenger conflict on board and at bus stops. Verbal abuse between passengers is usually from intoxication, but again not a huge problem. There is almost no robbery of drivers.

Aggression towards AOs is frequently from drug and alcohol-affected people; the same people are likely to arc up at bus drivers. Trouble comes with ice, speed, and alcohol, they're the aggressive drugs. The other drugs, heroin, grass, trips, they don't generally cause trouble, they just sit there.

CCTV with a screen showing people getting on and off the bus would be good, so they see themselves being recorded. We don't have a percentage, but CCTV often has unreliable footage from hard disk failures or other causes. Whenever we've asked one fleet for CCTV footage they say they don't have it. Maybe a Go-Pro could be mounted on the Bus Driver Console to capture faces.

Driver security screens provide a physical barrier between the driver and aggressive passengers. Most drivers say to the AOs that they want the screens. Some drivers think it separates them from their passengers, but they can still be personable with a screen in place.

Appendix 3 - Key Interview topics Analytic Grid

De-identified Operator entities (A-P), and Non-Operator Agencies. Blanks squares indicate the operator did not comment on that issue.

Appendix 3 - Key interview topics Analytic Grid: De-identified Operator entities (A-P), and Non-Operator Agencies. Blanks squares indicate the operator did not comment on that issue.																			
Topics	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	Topics	L	M	N	O	P	TWU	AOs
Frequency of verbal abuse	Common; increasing	At least once a day	Common; weekly	Under reported	Daily	Daily most days	Frequent	Daily to all drivers	Daily to most	Constant; CCTV shows lots	Daily to all drivers	Frequency of verbal abuse	To all at least twice a week; increasing	Normal, so they don't ask for touch on	Not high (operator), high (drivers)	Daily; and weekly from instructing pax	Low (small country town); some over fares	40% daily, and not reported	Bad over last 2.5 years
Any increase in physical assault in last 2 years?	Increasing	Increasing over fares		Increasing	About the same	Increasing; more per month	Increasing; rise in spitting	Increasing	Increasing	Increasing	Increasing; rise in spitting	Any increase in physical assault in last 2 years?	Not much physical assault	Road rage	Increasing; rise in spitting	Increasing; rise in spitting	No; rare	Rise in spitting	CHK
Key triggers, in order (OTR = On-time running)	Ticketing (Ask fare); OTR	Ticketing (Ask fare)	Ticketing; OTR	Ticketing; OTR	Ticketing; anti social behaviour	Ticketing main reason; OTR; buses not meeting trains	Ticketing = alright not at stops = unknown	Ticketing; behaviour	OTR; then ticketing	Ticketing; asking escal. into verbal	Ticketing (Ask fare)	Key triggers, in order (OTR = On-time running)	OTR; then ask for fare; then behaviour	Ticketing (Ask for fare); OTR; cars parked in bus zone (road rage)	Ticketing (Ask for fare); OTR; road rage	Ticketing; instructing pax	(Minor) ticketing; OTR	Ticketing (Ask fare)	Ticketing (Ask fare)
% Aggression from ticketing/ask for touch on	Biggest cause	70%	90%+	Many cases of escalation	Mostly fares; then escalates	#1 reason	Equal rating of above 3 triggers	80%+	Would be biggest if pushed fares	Would be biggest if pushed fares	#1 major trigger	% Aggression from ticketing/ask for touch on	Mostly fares	Mostly fares	Equal with OTR	Mostly fares	Equal with bus not meeting trains	Biggest cause	90%
% Fare evasion/non-compliance	A lot by kids	40%+ in school hols	10-50%; depending on place	Would not guess, but PTV numbers far too low	Dep 1, 15-20%; Dep 2, 25%; Dep 3, Unsure	10%+	20%+	10-20%	30-40%; PTV is grossly under	30% route and school	Av. 40-50%+; 80% some areas; 50-80% schools	% Fare evasion/non-compliance	40%	30% (operator); 40% (drivers); 90% school kids	30-40%	25-30% route; 75% kids	< 10%	A lot	15-20%
When do drivers report abuse to depot, and what is reported or not	Only if adverse outcomes; don't mention it if they think it's resolved	5% report it, if especially bad	Verbal - only if full on; minor physical possibly not reported	Don't necessarily report verbal, but do report physical assaults	Only if verbal in face; do report physical	Most verbal incl. strong verbal, & minor physical not reported.	Minor verbal not reported; physical reported	Most verbal and some physical isn't; only violent things	Verbal rarely reported; not all physical; only if radioed in	Verb. only if high intensity/ fear of assault; Physical assault reported	Only injury from assault; not spitting; not verbal, incl racial	When do drivers report abuse to depot, and what is reported or not	Only if in fear of assault or actual assault; nothing below direct threat	Not below physical threat; have to be very high level verbal before reported	Verbal rarely reported; physical assault reported	Verbal only if threatening or in face; report physical	No physical assault in the last 3 years	High level verb likely reported; physical mostly, but not spitting, liquids thrown	Most would not report verbal; most only report physical assault if think offenders would be caught
What is reported to TSV?			Mandatory; Hospital	Mandatory; not spitting	Physical assault only		Mandatory; Hospital	Mandatory; TSV is time consuming	Mandatory; physical	Mandatory	Mandatory; physical	What is reported to TSV?	Mandatory; physical				No TSV reportable incidents	Most only report the mandatory	
Training done. Stop = Stop bus, open doors, call police/depot	Cust service; OTR; own reactions; Stop; a full day's training	Cust service; attitude; don't ask dodgies; don't confront	Own safety first; drivers interp training in diff ways	Have own training program; language; interaction; things driver can control	Accept evasion to avoid escalation	Not systematic; Don't escalate; watch own behaviour	Standardising training; don't confront; cust service; escal.	Ask for fare; safety first; don't argue with pax	Cert in Bus; ignore aggro; don't engage; standardising would be good	Don't enforce' confront; drivers' reactions affect how situations develop	Special training day; "ask once if safe", but they don't ask	Training done. Stop = Stop bus, open doors, call police/depot	Don't confront over fares	Cert in Bus; cust service; own safety; don't talk back; de-escalate	Ask once; don't enforce; own safety first	Own safety first; how to interact; pick who to ask	Told to ask and enforce; TSV book used in in-service training	Training inconsistent; problems with "pick and choose" asking	
Own risk analysis	Y			Y	Y, "read" pax				Y	Y		Own risk analysis					No, we ask		
Warning re fines Drivers not AOs	Y - Can backfire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		No	No more	Warning re fines Drivers not AOs	Y; don't enforce	No	Y; don't enforce	Y	Y	Y	N/A
Stay in Seat	Y		Y	Y	Y	No rule	Y	Not a rule	Y			Stay in Seat	Y	No rule	Y	Y	No rule		
Wears you down		Y			Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Wears you down		Y	Y	Y			
Myki flaws	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Myki flaws	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shouldn't have to ask for fares	Y			We think OK to ask - we ask if safe	Y	Y		We ask		Y	Y	Shouldn't have to ask for fares	Y	Y	Y	Y	We ask	Y	Y; but contracts require asking

Appendix 4: Legislation impacting drivers in respect of passenger behaviour and ticketing

1) Passenger behaviour and safety duties

Regulation 66(2) of the **Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2015** provides that an authorised person (conduct) may ask a person to leave a bus or public transport premises if (a), the person is behaving in a violent, noisy or offensive manner; or (b), the person is reasonably believed by the authorised person (conduct) to be so affected by alcohol or other substances that the person is likely to behave in an offensive manner. Under Section 5, an “authorised person (conduct)” includes a bus driver.

The **Bus Safety Act 2009**, Section 15, imposes a duty on the operator of a bus service to ensure the safety of that bus service, so far as is reasonably practicable. Section 17 imposes a duty on a bus safety worker (which includes a driver) to take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of persons who may be affected by the acts or omissions of that bus safety worker.

BSA Section 14(1) imposes a duty on a person to ensure safety so far as is reasonably practicable. To achieve this, a person is required to eliminate risks to safety so far as is reasonably practicable; and, if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate risks to safety, to reduce those risks so far as is reasonably practicable. Section 14 (2) provides that regard must be had to the following matters in determining what is (or was at a particular time) reasonably practicable in relation to ensuring safety - (a), the likelihood or the hazard or risk concerned eventuating; (b), the degree of harm that would result if the hazard or risk eventuated; (c), what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk and any ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk; (d), the availability or suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk; and (e), the cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk.

The **Bus Safety Regulations 2010**, Reg. 4, defines a bus incident as including any circumstance, act or omission that resulted in, or had the potential to result in, the death of, or serious injury to, any person, a loss of control of the bus, or ... an accident or incident that results in a person requiring immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital. Reg. 24 requires that any such event must be notified to the Safety Director (TSV).

2) Farebox compliance obligations

The **Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017**, Reg. 23, imposes duties on the driver of a bus operated for the purpose of a regular passenger service where myki ticketing equipment is not installed on that bus. Subclauses include (2), If a person who boards a bus does not hold a ticket that is valid for the whole of that person's travel in the bus, the driver must, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the driver not to do so, (a), request that the person pay the correct fare for the whole of the person's travel in the bus, unless the person has already paid the correct fare; and (b), on payment of the correct fare for the whole of the person's travel in the bus, issue the person with a ticket authorising that travel.

Regulation 24 imposes a duty on the driver of a bus operated for the purpose of a regular passenger service if myki ticketing equipment is installed on that bus and is operational. Subclauses include (2), If a person who boards a bus requests the driver to sell the person a myki and gives the driver sufficient money, the driver must, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the driver not to do so, issue a myki to the person; (3), If a person who boards a bus requests the driver to accept money and have the value of that money recorded on a myki, the driver must, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the driver not to do so, comply with that request; (4), If it appears to the driver that a person who boards a bus holds a myki, but has not had the myki scanned by a smartcard reader, the driver must, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the driver not to do so, request the person to

have the myki scanned; and (5), If it appears to the driver that a person who boards a bus does not hold a ticket or that the ticket the person holds is not a myki, the driver must, unless there is a reasonable excuse for the driver not to do so, request the person to produce for inspection a ticket that is valid for the whole of the person's travel in the bus.

The **Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2015**, Reg. 5(1)(d), provides that an “authorised person (conduct)” includes “a person employed by a passenger transport company or a bus company who has duties in relation to the issue, inspection or collection of tickets for travel in, or the operation of, a passenger vehicle”, i.e. bus drivers. Reg. 66(3) provides that an authorised person (conduct) may ask a person to leave a public transport vehicle or public transport premises if the authorised person (conduct) reasonably believes that (a) if the public transport vehicle is a passenger vehicle, the person has failed to comply with regulation 7(2) of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017 in respect of travel in that passenger vehicle; or (b) the person has failed to comply with regulation 6(2), 8(2) or 10(3) of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017 in respect of an entry to a designated area that is part of the public transport premises; or (c) if the public transport vehicle is a passenger vehicle, the person has failed to comply with regulation 6(1) or 9(3) of the Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017 in respect of travel in that passenger vehicle.

The **PTV Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual** (1 January 2017), p. 5, requires that “A customer who undertakes a journey in a passenger vehicle, or makes an entry to a designated area, for which a fare is required, must pay at least the correct fare in accordance with the conditions contained in this manual for the travel in a passenger vehicle that consists of or includes the journey or for the entry”. Page 56 states, “For a journey on a bus (other than a bus used for a Night Coach network service), (a) unless subparagraph (b) applies, a customer must touch on the myki immediately upon boarding the bus; (b) if it is necessary for a myki to be purchased or for value to be loaded on a myki on board the bus in order for the myki to be able to be touched on, the customer must touch on the myki as soon as possible after the myki has been purchased or value has been loaded”.

The **PTV Metropolitan Bus Services Contract (Local Services Contract)**, Clause 18.3, ‘Fare Revenue protection measures’, states that the Operator agrees to, and agrees to ensure, that each Subcontractor who provides *regular passenger services* does (a) use its best endeavours to ensure passengers have the correct Tickets and that those Tickets have been validated; (b) use its best endeavours to ensure that passengers travelling as concession card holders have proof of their concession status; (c) use its best endeavours to monitor passengers to ensure that they are in possession of a valid Ticket while on board a Contract Bus; (d) direct passengers to purchase a valid Ticket if intercepted without one; and (e) inform the Director of any matter relating to Fare evasion in relation to the Bus Operations of which it should have been aware.

PTV Country Regional Urban Bus Service (CRUBS) Contract, Clause 16.3 is as per the MBSC clause above, but with an additional sub-clause 1.1.6: Supervise the handling and management of fare revenue and conduct regular reviews of counter measures to prevent fare evasion.

References

- Barabino, Benedetto, Sara Salis, and Bruno Useli. 'What are the determinants in making people free riders in proof-of-payment transit systems? Evidence from Italy'. *Transportation Research, Part A: Vol. 80* (2015): 184–196.
- Brennan, Madeline. 'Bus drivers abused, assaulted and spat on by angry passengers', *Darebin Leader*, 15 November 2016, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/north/bus-drivers-abused-assaulted-and-spat-on-by-angry-passengers/news-story/5457da67f9c20f8aaaddf678e60e4cee>
- Bus Safety Act 2009. Incorporating amendments as at 31 October 2014
- Bus Safety Regulations 2010. S.R. No. 110/2010. Incorporating amendments as at 18 June 2013
- Carey, Adam. 'CCTV: women punch and spit at driver', in 'Bus drivers rally for safety following spate of violent attacks by passengers'. *The Age*, 15 November 2016, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/bus-drivers-rally-for-safety-following-spate-of-violent-attacks-by-passengers-20161115-gsphvc.html>
- Delbosc, Alexa, and Grahame Currie. 'Four types of fare evasion: A qualitative study from Melbourne, Australia'. *Transportation Research, Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, Vol. 43 (2016): 254–264.
- Evans, Gary W. 'Working on the Hot Seat: Urban Bus Operators', *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 26.2 (1994), 181-193.
- Levine, Ned, and Martin Wachs. 'Bus crime in Los Angeles I: Measuring the incidence. *Transportation Research, Part A: General*, 20.4 (1986): 273-284.
- Lincoln, Robyn, and Yolande Huntingdon. 'Driver as flashpoint: Designing out crime in the Australian urban bus transport sector'. Design and Crime Conference. Sydney, New South Wales. October 2013.
- Lincoln, Robyn, and Adrienne Gregory. 'Moving Violations: A Study of Incivility and Violence against Urban Bus Drivers in Australia', *International Journal of Education and Social Science*, 2 (2015): 118-127.
- Lowe, Christopher. 'Driver Safety Discussion Paper', Port Melbourne: BAV, 25 October 2013.
- Lowe, Christopher, and Julia Evans. 'Addressing on-board assaults and driver health and well-being in the Australian bus and coach industry: A Voluntary Professional Association's approach'. *Sociology Study*, 6.11 (November 2016): 683-692.
- MentalHealth@Work* [Ingrid Ozols]. 'Creating A Safe, Mentally Healthy, Resilient and Supportive Work Environments for the Victorian Bus Industry. A Review of the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the bus and coach industry.' Melbourne: Mental Health @ Work, January 2015.
- Motherwell, Sarah. 'Assaults on bus drivers rising: union'. News.com.au, 22 March 2017. <http://www.news.com.au/national/breaking-news/assaults-on-qld-bus-drivers-rising-union/news-story/6624ea8869cd6da02653622dd50c3c3b> Accessed 4 April 2017.
- Public Transport Victoria. *Metropolitan Bus Contract - Local Services*, and *Country Regional Urban Bus Service (CRUBS) Contract*.

Public Transport Victoria. *Victorian Fares and Ticketing Manual*, effective 1 January 2017.

Public Transport Ombudsman. *Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct*. 2nd edn., 2012.

Stanley, Janet. *Prevention of Aggression to Bus Drivers: A report for Bus Association Victoria*, Melbourne: Stanley & Co., February 2015.

Swanton, Bruce. *Violence Today, No. 5: Violence and Public Contact Workers*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, October 1989.

Transport Safety Victoria. Guidance, *Managing Difficult Passengers*, June 2013.

Transport Safety Victoria. *Omnibus* monthly newsletter.

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Ticketing) Regulations 2017, **S.R. No. 48/2017**.
Authorised Version incorporating amendments as at 1 July 2017.

Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) (Conduct on Public Transport) Regulations 2015, S.R. No. 72/2015. Authorised Version as at 27 June 2015.