

Prevention of Aggression to Bus Drivers



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A report for Bus Association Victoria

Stanley & Co. Pty Ltd.

February 2015

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Chris Lowe, Ingrid Ozols and Michael Esler for their work on the BusVic survey and particularly to Ingrid for conducting many interviews with bus drivers. A special thanks to those in the bus industry who gave their time to share their experiences.

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1 Background

1.1 The issue

There has been little research about understanding aggressive behaviour associated with the bus industry in Australia, or indeed, internationally. This is an oversight if aggression to drivers is present, as research on the impact of aggressive behaviour in general shows that there may be a significant and long lasting impact on the victim. Additionally, the limited work that has been done on aggression in the workplace reveals that an adverse impact can extend beyond the individual victim, to their family, work colleagues and the operation of the workplace.

This report considers how to prevent aggression to bus drivers who work in Victoria, Australia. It draws on the findings from a recent survey on the mental health of bus drivers in Victoria (Mental Health at Work 2015). This report also uses information on aggression to bus drivers from the academic literature and other sources, as well as relevant information from research associated with aggression in other workplace settings.

Ideally, recommendations about prevention tactics should be based on detailed knowledge about: the frequency and form of aggression, the perpetrator, the location, the context and circumstances, the responses to the incident, and the current preventative measures in place and their effectiveness. However, this topic is very new to the bus industry. Thus, this report can only be seen as an initial exploratory approach, on which future knowledge can be built as preventative approaches are better understood and better targeted.

1.2 Issues explored in this report

The following issues are examined in this report:

- What are the reasons for violence to bus drivers in Victoria? This would include both the reasons why the assailant experiences poor control of anger (such as due to reasons of mental illness or substance abuse) and the specific circumstances that trigger the incidence of violence to the driver (why the particular driver was targeted, at the specific location and time). It would also include, where possible, understanding of how the driver responds to the event given conditions such as personal abilities, knowledge about responding to violence, workplace and wider government policy and driver instructions. It includes the response taken by the driver once the immediate danger has past.
- What prevention methods are suggested from these findings and knowledge gained elsewhere that may lead to a reduction of the occurrence of aggression and in the severity of the event?

1.3 Barriers to understanding - defining and recording incidents of aggression

Understanding the extent and type of aggression experienced by victims is difficult due to the variations in how people understand aggression and what aggression encompasses. For example, is spitting a form of physical assault – does it have to be directed at the victim, or can it be aimed in another direction? Almost without exception, only physical assault is ‘officially’ recorded and often this is only where there has been a physical injury, or only where this injury results in a visit to hospital or only where there is an in-patient hospital admission.

The Victorian Government's *Transport Safety Victoria* collects records of incidents where safety is at risk, including those incidents associated with buses. Where assault has occurred, it only records 'serious injury'. This is defined as 'an accident or incident that results in a person requiring immediate treatment as an in-patient in a hospital' (Transport Safety Victoria 2014, p.5).

The Toronto Transit Commission (Leck 2014) adopts differing categories of assault:

1. Common Assault – little or no injury, including spitting
2. Assault Causing Bodily Harm – minor injury, or where a weapon was used
3. Aggravated Assault – bodily harm with hospitalization required

These definitions encompass a wider range of events, but still only encompass physical assault, or the visible result of the aggression, rather than categorising the nature of the event (even when the victim was able to escape from an assault) or the impact on the victim. Psychological violence, a type of violence that can have a long lasting and profound impact on the victim and subsequent work practices (see for example, Stanley & Goddard 2002), may be included in definitions of verbal aggression (where these are gathered), but is mostly overlooked.

An additional problem occurs when seeking to understand aggression towards bus drivers in that the official data about aggressive incidents is dependent on the information being reported. This requires that the victim (or a witness) to report the incident to a manager, who in turn needs to report it to the authority collecting the information. The BusVic survey asked bus drivers, including a small number of other bus employees: '*Do you report incidences of verbal and physical abuse from passengers?*' Just over one-third (33%) said they don't report incidences. Initial work by Lincoln and Huntingdon in Queensland (2013) found that only 10% of verbal and physical attacks against bus drivers were reported. Thus, 'official' data on aggressive incidents is likely to be an under-estimate of the extent of aggression experienced by bus drivers.

This failure to report incidents of aggression is not unique to the bus industry, it being present in other work settings. For example, aggression experienced by staff in psychiatric institutions are said to be under-reported, especially in relation to verbal aggression or property destruction (Newbill et al. 2010). Research in Sweden (Estrada et al. 2013) showed that an increase in workplace offenses reported to the police was due to a shift in definitions of the offenses rather than an increase in crimes committed.

These two complications of defining and reporting aggression, result in a very incomplete, and perhaps even misleading, record of aggression, including that experienced by bus drivers and others in the bus industry.

2 Theory about aggression

2.1 Aggression and its causes

Aggression is the desire to inflict some form of harm on another due to the presence of anger or hostility. Aggression may take many forms, as outlined in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Forms of aggressive behaviour

Category of Aggression	Components
Complaints	Threatened with suing
	Threat of complaint to superiors/politicians/press
	Complaint to superiors/politicians/press
Verbal abuse	Called names/sworn at for a short time
	Yelled/screamed at for a short time
	Extensive verbal aggression
Minor intimidation	Intimidating conversation
	Obscene conversation
	Mockery/humiliation/sarcasm/put-downs
	Glaring/threatening looks
Major intimidation	Threats to property
	Behaviour such as blocking exits/grabbing keys/following/impeding safe driving
	Threats to victim's family/friends/colleagues/passengers
	Sexual threats
Threat of physical assault	Threat to assault
	Threatened with an implement (other than gun or knife)
Attempted assault	
Physical assault	By a person
	By person using an implement
	Sexual assault
A potential life-threatening situation	Threatened with knife or sharp object or gun
	Death threat

Source: Adapted from Stanley & Goddard 2002, p.90.

Aggression arises, in large part, by the negative emotions experienced as a result of adverse events and by negative thoughts that accompany them (Berkowitz 1989). Feeling good about ourselves, or feeling good about others, is incompatible with anger and aggression.

Aggression may be goal-orientated, that is the perpetrator wants to achieve a particular outcome. For example, a person may believe that being aggressive towards a bus driver should result in the driver allowing the perpetrator to travel without paying a fare. Alternatively, aggression may be an impulsive, uncontrollable outburst that may occur due to frustration or an inability to achieve a desired goal. This frustration is onto another person who may be entirely innocent or may have committed a minor offense (Aronson et al. 2005, Berkowitz 1989, Baumeister & Bushman 2008, Marcus-Newhall et al. 2000). This minor offense may create a displaced triggering event for the perpetrator's aggression. For example, a passenger may feel that the bus driver is being unfair or difficult, which triggers the pent-up anger created elsewhere, and leads to the aggression towards the driver.

Thus a minor provocation can lead to an aggressive escalation beyond that which would normally be expected for relatively minor events (Pedersen et al. 2008). However, escalation can be averted if the target is viewed by the offender as having positive attributes and/or reduced culpability around

the triggering event. For example, the bus driver may listen to the person's grievance and suggest ways of addressing the problem.

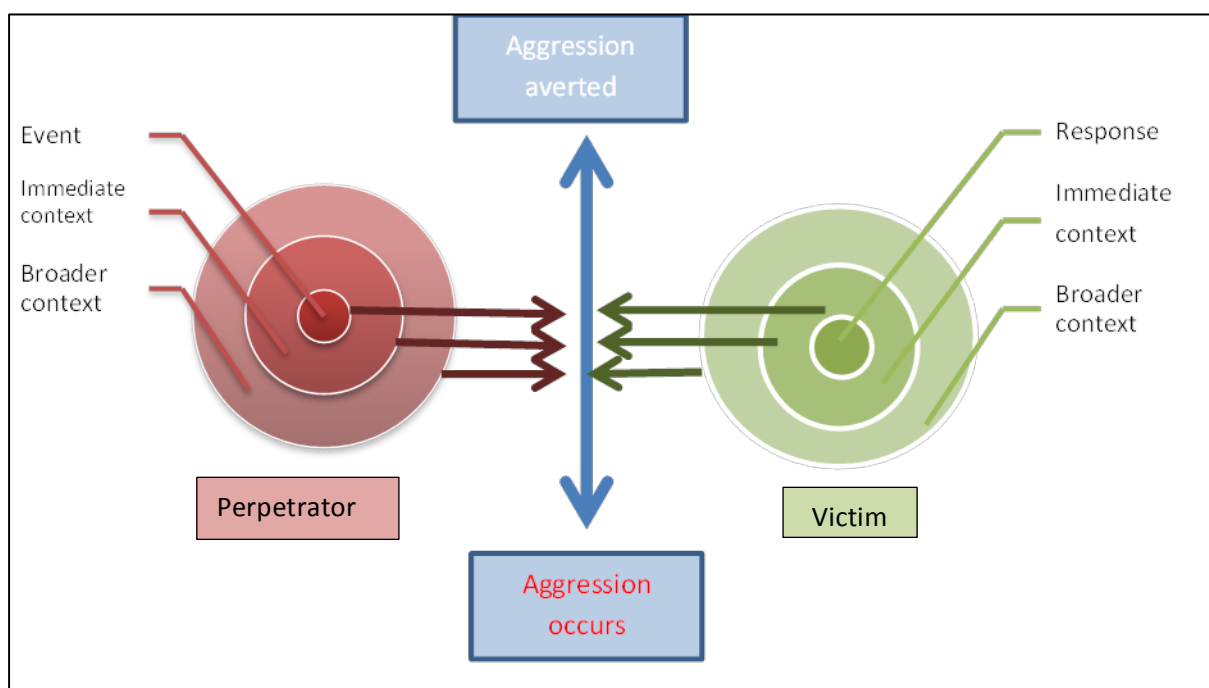
An aggressive response may be learned behaviour – that is, the perpetrator has found that aggression works, perhaps learning this from early family experiences. In some cases aggression may be due to brain damage, such as intellectual disability, where cognitive functioning isn't sufficient to control aggressive behaviour. Testosterone increases aggression, thus male adolescents may be associated with a greater risk of aggression (Banks & Dabbs 1996). There is strong evidence of an association between the consumption of alcohol and violence (Graham & Homel 2008). Alcohol inhibits the ability of the person to control their behaviour, impairing judgment and making people much less cautious than they usually are (Abbey et al. 1996, MacDonald et al. 1995). Australian research estimates that a significant proportion of assaults involve alcohol: from 23% to as much as 73% of all assaults (Poynton et al. 2005, reported in Morgan and McAtamney 2009).

Some ingested drugs, such as ice, can increase the risk of aggressive behaviour. Social situations, such as reinforcement of the behaviour from peers (e.g. a group of youths travelling together) or environmental conditions, such as heat or crowding, are likely to exacerbate a risk of aggression.

2.2 Components of the aggressive event which define the outcomes for the victim

An aggressive incident can arise due to the behaviour and beliefs of the perpetrator and the response and situation of the victim. Figure 2.1 gives a diagrammatic overview of the influencing factors that lead to, or avert, an aggressive incident. The actions of both the perpetrator and the victim are influenced by the immediate and broader settings. The immediate context will include factors such as the location of the event, the presence of other people, the response by the driver, and situational protection for the driver.

Figure 1.1 Overview of an aggressive incident



The broader context includes issues such as the culture of a company and company policies, as well as the personal experiences and attitudes of the bus driver, such as family history, health and fatigue. It also includes societal factors that may create frustration, such as government policy around the ticketing system, and drug use by a potential perpetrator. How all these factors interact will determine the outcome of the incident – whether the potential aggressive event is avoided or not, and the severity of the incident should it occur.

2.3 The impact of aggression

The impact of aggression on the victim will depend on many factors, such as the nature of the incident, past exposure to aggression and the level and form of support offered to the victim. Post incident responses are very important to the victim's recovery process and often to also enable a good recovery outcome for the workplace and home environment of the victim. A poor outcome is for unresolved trauma to remain, possibly leading to on-going damage to the victim, their family and the workplace environment.

There is a risk that unresolved trauma will lead to what is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a medical condition listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5 2013). This condition is characterised by the victim having intrusive thoughts (such as bad dreams or reliving the event or difficulties concentrating), displaying avoidance (such as trying to avoid activities that remind the victim of the event), negative alterations in cognitions and mood (such as persistent and distorted blame of self or others or not being interested in things the victim used to enjoy) and alterations in arousal and reactivity (such as outbursts of anger).

The prevalence of this condition is higher amongst women than men and prevalence increases with multiple traumatic event exposures. In a small study, 22 bus 'crews' who were victims of physical assault were assessed using standardized psychiatric instruments, followed up for 18 months and compared to a non-assaulted control group drawn from the same bus garage. It was found that 23% of the assault victims developed post-traumatic stress disorder - nature and severity of the assault not being specified. PTSD is found in other occupations. Research on violence experienced by General Practitioners found that 73% surveyed reported stress, symptoms of PTSD, avoidance of patients and sites in which work related violence had occurred, and/or a loss of job satisfaction (Cole et al. 2007).

As can be noted from the above description of the condition, PTSD can interfere with normal emotional functioning (Kunst & Winkel 2013), which could potentially be a problem where bus drivers have to face difficult customers. For example, if the driver is suffering from unresolved trauma, he or she may engage in excessive scanning of the environment looking for potential danger that in turn may lead to hostile appraisals of non-threatening situations. In some situations this may lead to a fighting response to misinterpreted danger signals, which in turn may lead to counter-aggression where a victim precipitates an aggressive incident (Kunst & Winkel 2013, p. 671, referring to work by Winkel 2011). This state of hyperarousal in a traumatised person may result in irritability and outbursts of anger – reflecting aggressive defensive behaviour.

Other outcomes of trauma have been recorded in other work settings. For example, in a hospital emergency department, some nurses appeared to deny the impact of experiencing violence (Wolf et al. 2014). This denial seemed to result from an expectation of violence in the environment and

ranged from acceptance of the risk of assault as part of the job to resignation to the reality of the unsafe nature of the workplace. Thus there developed a 'culture of acceptance' and a view that 'nobody cares, nothing changes' (Wolf et al. 2014, p.309). This belief also led to cues, or precursors to violence often missed or ignored by the nurses but visible to others in the setting. As a result the nurses believed there was no provocation for the incident and were apparently taken by surprise when the aggressive behavior occurred.

A discrepancy of views about causes of the incident was noted in research undertaken with psychiatric in-patient staff. Again staff believed that there was no situational cause, while the patient perpetrator saw situational events as triggers for assault, particularly in relation to limit setting, activity demand (getting the person to do something they didn't want to do) and denial of a request (Newbill et al. 2010). On further investigation, Newbill and colleagues found that staff who had experienced assault before engaged in aversive type interactions with patients more frequently than staff who had not been assaulted.

Work by the author of this report found that child protection workers who had been exposed to aggression were at risk of engaging in self-deception and distortion of reality (Stanley & Goddard 2002). They were found to under-recall violent events that had been recorded elsewhere and under-recalled situations where they had previously reported they had felt fear in relation to themselves or a colleague. They also showed acceptance of violence, saying, for example:

It becomes 'like water off a duck's back, but the long-term effect is drip, drip' (Stanley & Goddard 2002, p.132).

Symptoms of high arousal were noted in some child protection workers, as well as feelings of helplessness, lack of control, unsure of their abilities and blocked about getting things done.

This research showed a statistically significant association between the extent of aggression experienced plus how isolated they felt, and the display of trauma-like behaviour. That is, the more aggression experienced and the least support they received, the more trauma symptoms they displayed. Here, aggression was measured as the number and frequency of aggressive incidents experienced, regardless of the nature of the aggression. Isolation was measured as resources to address aggression, staff training, work supervision, perceived managerial support, support from associated people and isolation experienced during the incident.

Of current interest in the research literature is the occurrence of angry rumination. Angry rumination is perseverative thinking about a personally meaningful anger-inducing event and is a risk factor for aggression (Denson 2012). While at present little is understood about rumination, angry rumination temporarily reduces self-control, which can increase aggression. This is especially so with particular personality types who already have poor executive control functions.

Finally, the importance of lower grade but frequent aggression should not be over-looked. In a hospital emergency setting, a doctor noted that:

...constant threats were wearing down staff. ...it is that constant low-grade aggression and violence that has quite a profound effect...It is the continuous exposure over years to that, which wears you down... (McArthur 2014).

The literature suggests that experiencing psychological aggression and intimidation may be at least equally as distressing as physical violence (see for example, Herman, 1992, 1995). Psychological violence is used particularly for trying to gain control over another person. It may only take a minor physical incident to reinforce psychological control over a victim. Indeed, psychological control may be more difficult where a serious injury has occurred, as a physical injury is also more likely to initiate a support response by management, thus reducing the likelihood of the victim developing a trauma response.

3 The extent of aggression to bus drivers

This section documents what is known about bus drivers' experience of aggression, in Victoria. Unfortunately, very little is known about this apart from incidents that reach the press and the official data collected by Transport Safety Victoria. BusVic recently undertook a survey on the mental health of bus drivers, with questions about aggression. Work is underway by Bond University about aggression to bus drivers, and there is some international data about the experience of aggression outside Victoria.

3.1 Type and prevalence of aggression in Victoria recorded by Transport Safety Victoria (TSV)

Transport Safety Victoria registers and reports on issues related to bus security and safety (Transport Safety Victoria 2014). There were a total of 152 bus related incidents reported to Transport Safety Victoria from 2008 to June 2014. Those that contained a description that allowed classification of the incident as 'assault', are shown in Table 3.1. There is a requirement to report incidents relating to an accident with a bus or where a person requires immediate treatment as an inpatient in a hospital or where the driver is in contravention of the bus operator's drug and alcohol management policy (Transport Safety Victoria 2011). A review of reported incidents reveals that 75 events can be classified as physical assault of a bus driver and 14 as verbal assault of a bus driver (Lowe 2013).

Table 3.1: Physical and verbal assaults of bus drivers as reported to Transport Safety Victoria.

Year	Physical assault of bus driver	Verbal assault of bus driver
2008	3	3
2009	8	2
2010	6	1
2011	14	2
2012	17	3
2013	16	2
2014*	11	1
Total	75	14

*Note: 2014 figures are not for a full year.

Source: Lowe 2013, derived from Transport Safety Victoria data

However, Lowe also reports that a brief survey of members of BusVic suggests that there are twice as many 'bus incidents' as those reported to Transport Safety Victoria (Lowe 2013).

3.2 Type and prevalence of aggression in Victoria reported in the BusVic survey

In 2014, Busvic undertook a survey of the mental health of people associated with the bus industry (Mental Health at Work 2015). Of the 507 survey respondents, 87% were bus drivers, the remaining 13% representing a wide range of bus related jobs, including managers, administrators, mechanics and driver/owners.¹ The drivers who responded represent about 6.3% of bus drivers in Victoria. The overwhelming majority of the drivers who responded were male, less than 10% being women, however this is proportionally representative of the approximately 11% of drivers who are female.

The survey asked: *'How often have you encountered rude or angry customers who are abusive or aggressive towards you'?*

482 respondents answered this question. 335 respondents (66%) had experienced at least one episode of this. Table 3.2 gives an indication of the frequency of aggression. 112 respondents (23%) were not sure as to whether they had encountered a rude or angry customer who was abusive or aggressive towards them. 35 respondents (7% of those who answered the question) said they had never encountered this behaviour.

Table 3.2: Frequency respondents encountered a rude or angry customer who was abusive or aggressive towards you (N=482)

Frequency	F	%
Daily	100	21
Weekly	117	24
Fortnightly	30	6
Monthly	88	18
Never	35	7
Not sure	112	23

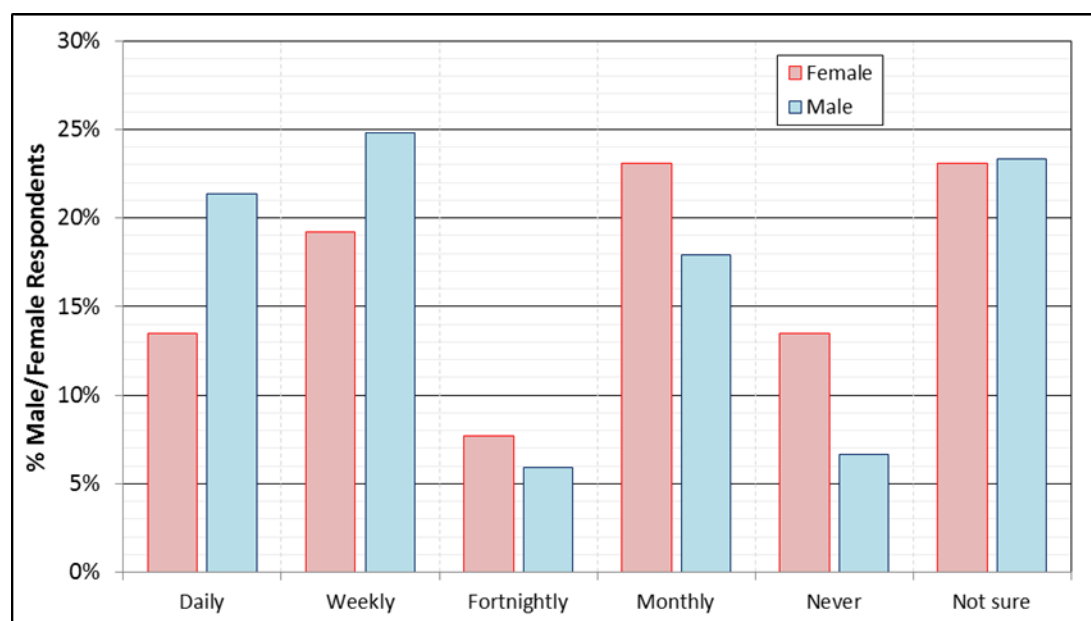
Source: BusVic Survey

Approximately one-fifth of respondents (21%) experienced this behaviour daily, one-quarter weekly, 6% fortnightly and 18% monthly. Thus, the numbers of respondents who experienced this daily (21% of those who answered the question) is concerning, although it is unclear what per cent experienced a form of aggression rather than rude behaviour.

The findings according to gender are shown in Figure 3.1, where it can be seen that females report encountering a consistently lower frequency than males of rude/abusive/aggressive customers, females reporting that they are 37% less likely than males to experience this behavior daily.

¹ When reporting data from the BusVic survey, the data includes all respondents. Where information relates just to bus drivers, this is noted in the text.

Figure 3.1: Frequency respondents encountered abusive or aggressive behaviour towards themselves, according to the gender of the driver (N=482)



Source: Figure prepared by Esler

More specifically, the survey asked whether they had ‘...even been physically assaulted by a passenger’.

Ninety-nine respondents said they had, 378 indicated they hadn’t and 30 people didn’t answer the question. Thus, of those who answered the question, 21% had been physically assaulted by a passenger, at least once. This experience did not vary according to gender. This rate of physical assault suggests that about 510 bus drivers in the present pool of drivers in Victoria have experienced physical assault by a passenger at least once.

However, this figure needs to be treated with caution as how the respondent defined physical assault varied, as evidenced by the 56 respondents who gave some information about the incident. When analysing the 56 respondents who made a comment, five respondents spoke of being threatened and a further five witnessed violence, rather than experiencing physical assault themselves. Additionally, it is likely that some survey respondents chose not to reveal that they had experienced a physical assault. A couple of respondents offered no details about the event but noted that they would prefer to speak personally about the issue to the person undertaking the survey.

Some people indicated the nature of the assault. 16 people (16% of those who reported being physically assaulted) specified that they had been spat on. The nature of other physical assaults reported in the survey varied greatly. Punching was a common offense:

I intervened in a fight between a young man and woman – he immediately punched me in the face causing a blood nose and cut lip

A lady who was drug affected punched and kicked, I was not hurt

King hit in the chest

Respondents also report being kicked:

Knocked unconscious.... Woke up to find the boot being laid in.

Respondents have been assaulted with a weapon:

Attempted robbery with a knife

Passenger tried to hi-jack the bus by holding a knife to my neck

Hit with an umbrella as the passenger was moving off the bus.

The assault involved pushing glasses of the victim's face and slapping a phone out of the victim's hand and smashing it.

Other respondents describe being attacked with a pin and having objects thrown at them.

Information about Injuries was not sought in this survey. It also needs to be remembered that the survey asked for incidents where the driver was the primary victim. Information was not sought on a driver witnessing aggression towards a passenger, or between passengers.

3.3 Aggression to bus drivers outside Victoria

3.3.1 Number of incidents

As noted earlier, the issue of aggression to bus drivers has had little attention internationally. Leck (2013) from the Toronto Transit Commission, Canada, reports 154 physical assaults on bus drivers in Toronto in 2013. The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) (2014) reports that 47 assaults occurred on public transport in 2012. These results cover 75% of CUTA's membership, which in turn represents 65% of public transport employees across urban Canada. Volinski (2014) gives figures on reported assaults on public transport drivers in the United States - 119 in 2008 and 145 in 2013.

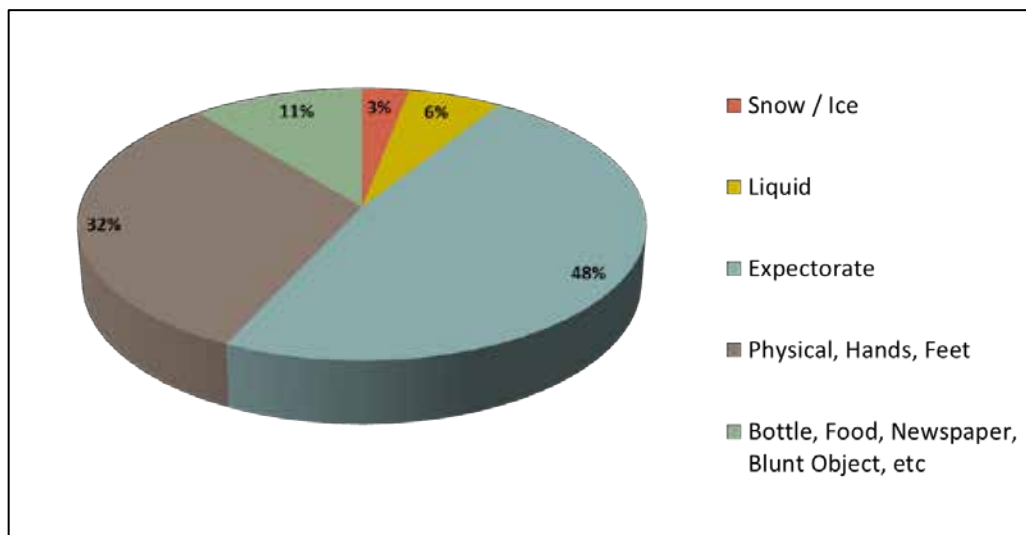
Thus, even the small amount of international data available is of little use in understanding the frequency of incidents targeted against bus drivers. As noted in Section 1.3, the problems involved in reporting incidents, and the varying definitions of aggression and assault require a more consistent international approach before the extent and nature of the problem can be better understood.

3.3.2 Type of assault

Problems with data collection extend to obtaining greater understanding of the type of assault. The weapons reported as being used in assaults to public transport drivers in Toronto from January to June 2013, are shown in Figure 3.2. The dominance of spitting (48% of assaults) is of interest. The occurrence of spitting appears to be higher than that reported in the BusVic study. Of the respondents who said they had been physically assaulted and made a comment about the incident, 16% said they had experienced at least one episode of spitting. This may be an under-estimate as the form of assault was not asked to be specifically identified. There may also be cultural differences in behaviour between Canada and Australia. Again, there will be considerable variation as to whether spitting is, or is not, regarded by the victim and/or data collectors as physical assault. 32%

of assaults in Canada involved use of the assailant's hands or feet and an object was used in 11% of incidents (Leck 2014). Leck notes that in the great majority of incidents (97%) little or no bodily harm occurred.

Figure 3.2: Form of assault experience by public transport drivers (bus and train) in Toronto, January to June 2013



Source: Leck 2014

A review of the literature found that there are indications that the majority of public transport-related workplace violence occurs on buses, ahead of trains and taxis (Burrell 2007, Lincoln & Huntingdon 2013). There are features of bus driving which appear to make the driver more vulnerable than other occupations. These include: the fixed sitting position of the driver with the passenger between the driver and the exit; that the bus may go through some isolated locations which reduces potential witnesses of any incident and is likely to reduce the response time for an initiated request for assistance from police; more than one perpetrator may get on the bus; and there may be few passengers on the bus to assist the driver, and these passengers may be children or elderly people. The driver has responsibilities for the safety of other passengers.

3.4 Association between the experience of aggression and mental health in the drivers.

The BusVic survey on mental health suggests that there are mental health concerns in relation to some drivers (Mental Health at Work 2014). The respondents were asked to rate their own mental health on a 5-point scale, from poor to excellent. Most respondents rated their mental health fairly highly. For the total group of respondents, as well as for the bus drivers only (for those who responded to the questions), there was no statistical association between their rating of mental health and how often they encountered rude or angry customers who are abusive or aggressive towards them. However, when the association between self-judged mental health and at least one experience of physical assault was statistically tested (for those who answered the question), those who had been physically assaulted had poorer mental health ($P < 0.01$).

As noted in the report *Mental Health at Work* (2014), there are suggestions from the survey that there is a discrepancy between the findings from the self-rating judgement of mental health and the presence of mood disorders, and other symptoms of poor mental health. The implication is that the respondents are judging their mental health to be better than a professional independent assessment would rate.

3.5 Experience of aggression with other occupations

Although again faced with definitional and reporting problems, it would seem that other occupations also experience the problem of aggression from customers. In Australia, 10–11% of General Practitioners have been assaulted, 5% threatened with a weapon, and 25–59% have experienced verbal abuse (Koritsas et al. 2007). Overall, the study found that 57% of general Practitioners had experienced some form of violence in the previous 12 months. 82% of paramedics have experienced some form of verbal abuse or harassment (Boyle et al. 2007). A recent study undertaken by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine found that 92% of emergency doctor and nurses reported alcohol-related physical abuse in the past year, and 98% were subject to verbal abuse (McArthur 2014). Over a six month time period, 22% of child protection workers were assaulted, 70% threatened with assault and 78% were subjected to extensive verbal aggression (Stanley & Goddard 2002).

Thus, it would seem that aggression from the public towards certain occupations do occur and at times surprisingly frequently. While little more can be drawn from this information due to data collection problems, it may be helpful to review if there is any relevance for bus drivers in relation to prevention tactics used by these occupations, where these are reported.

4 Location and time of aggression to drivers

While this report concentrates on aggression that occurs on a bus to a driver, it is important to know if this is the predominant location where aggression occurs, and the extent of aggression occurring in other bus industry locations. It is also useful to know if there is a pattern in relation to the day and time of this aggression. If a pattern can be shown, then specific preventative measures can be brought into play at those times, such as a second official police officer travelling on the bus.

4.1 Location of aggressive behaviour

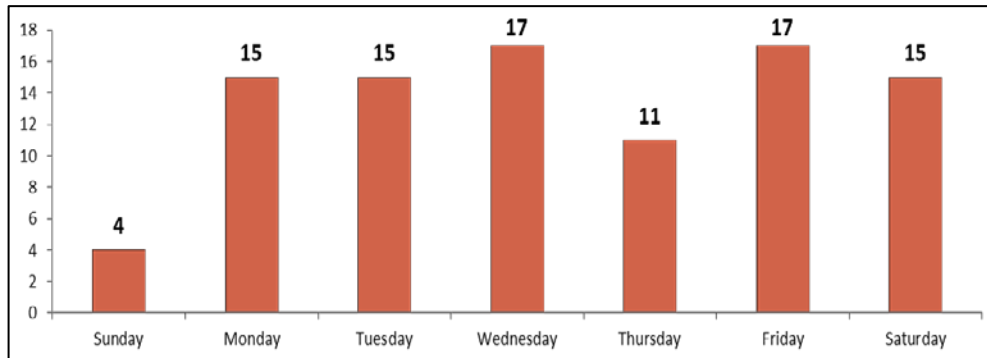
The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) (2014) has gathered statistics on the location of aggression to transport employees. In Canada as a whole, 77% of recorded incidents occurred in a public transport vehicle, 16% in a transport station and 7% around other transport property. However, the proportion of assaults in vehicles varied between states – ranging from 63% of assaults occurring on public transport in Toronto, to 99% on public transport in the Atlantic Provinces, followed by 87% on public transport in British Columbia.

The incidence of crime at a bus stop or on a bus has been found to be higher in areas where the incidence of crime is higher in the local community (Newton 2004, reported in Burrell 2007). Volinski's work in Canada (2014) has found that 10 operators have 80% of all injured drivers. The reason for this is unknown. It may relate to the geographical location of the service or it may relate to operator policy, or other factors.

4.2 Time of aggressive behaviour.

The CUTA study found no particular pattern of assaults over the day of the week, apart from a lower number occurring on a Sunday (Figure 4.1). The relative number of services offered on a Sunday, is not known.

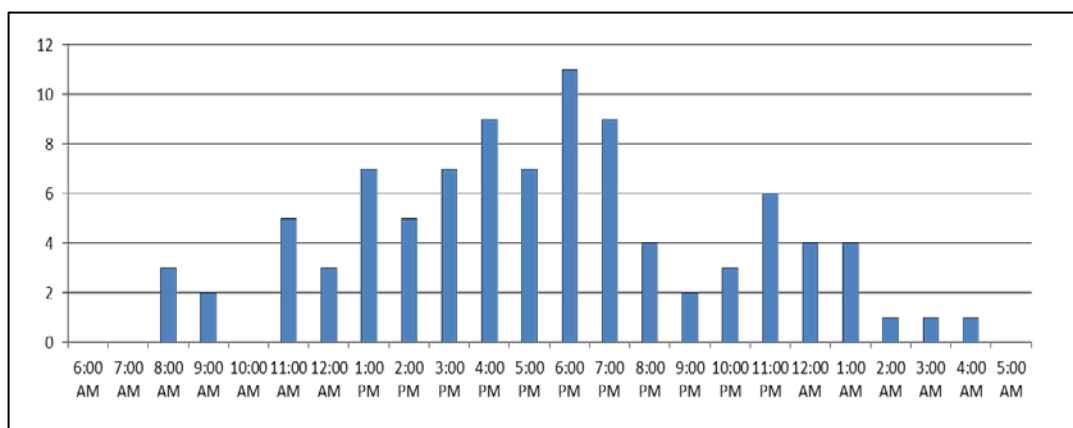
Figure 4.1: The spread of assaults of CUTA members over the week, 2014



Source: Leck 2014

The study found that the time of the assault in a day is varied, but shows a tendency to occur between 4 and 7pm (Leck 2014). This is possibly when the high numbers of people are travelling. It is interesting that assaults are low during the night. This information would perhaps reveal more if the data was given as a proportion of services at that time and/or a proportion of passengers.

Figure 4.2: Time of assaults on transit drivers



Source: Leck 2014

This issue needs further investigation, as there is little evidence at present for the targeting of specific preventative measures to locations and times.

5 Views on why aggression occurs in the bus industry

This report has documented the BusVic survey and other available information about the extent of aggression experienced by bus drivers. It has also given a theoretical overview as to why this

aggression may result in an adverse incident. This section outlines the reasons for the incident given by the respondents to the BusVic survey, plus other available information.

5.1 Survey of bus drivers in Victoria

In the survey of bus drivers in Victoria, the question was asked: *‘Why do you think passengers are aggressive or physically violent towards bus drivers?’*

408 people responded to this question. 32 respondents indicated that aggression was not an issue for them. 12 respondents said they didn’t know the cause of the aggression. 364 respondents (72%) gave at least one reason why they believed the aggression occurred. While some respondents gave only one reason, some gave between two and four reasons. There were 568 reasons given in total, averaging 1.6 reasons per respondent. These reasons are categorised in Table 5.1.

373 (66%) of the reasons offered relate to factors associated with the passengers and 195 (35%) reasons relate to the bus operations. Most respondents believed that substance abuse (drugs and/or alcohol) was involved in aggression to drivers, with this being mentioned by 139 respondents (38%). At times the comment was made that other adverse situations, in addition to the substance abuse, were behind the aggression. For example:

The lack of laws, lack of consequences for their action, no respect, bad upbringing, drugs only inflame these situations and are not the cause

Ice, idiots, alcohol, ethics

Mental illness was said to be responsible by only 21 respondents (6%), expanding to 25 respondents if descriptions of being ‘nuts’ is added to mental illness. 41 respondents felt that the aggression was due to person or family problems.

Bad day, looking for someone to take it out on

Life pressure and they take it out on the drivers

Many felt that the problem centred on poor behaviour displayed by the passenger, such as being self-centred, lacking respect, rude and ignorant.

They think they own the bus and it should do what they want

People have no respect or the concept of the responsibility that a bus driver has. I have had a primary school student on a Victorian government school bus tell me I am just!! a bus driver, you cannot tell me what to do, after I had asked them to sit in their seat correctly and put on their seat belt

Because they are stupid and don’t have to do anything. Most of the people who are physically violent never work and get money from Centrecare

A belief was expressed by 14 respondents that aggression is a result of ‘the state of the world’:

I feel that a lot of people on the street are aggressive not only to us drivers

Table 5.1: Summary of reasons given by respondents to the BusVic survey as to why aggression occurs to bus drivers (N=568 reasons)

Personal to passenger	
Substance usage	139
Stress in life/having a bad day/ personal issues/ family problems	41
Self-centred/ lack of respect	32
Mental illness	21
Poor background	17
Stupid/ignorant/uneducated	16
"Angry at the world" "not happy" "aggression common" "state of the times"	14
Poverty/unemployment	14
Passengers are by nature aggressive & violent / "looking for a fight"/pretend to be tough	11
Poor passenger time management	11
Believe they can get away with it /"because they can" /They do whatever they want	11
Negative attitude to driver / Annoyed with something driver did	9
Rude/smart /ignorant	8
Don't take responsibility for their actions/ think they have the right	7
Confused/don't understand/ no common sense/don't understand the system	6
"Biggest low lives on earth" "dead shits" "idiots" "arseholes"	5
Boredom/tired	4
Bad attitude "they are nuts" "Some people are just crazy"	4
Arguing on the bus spreads to others/peer pressure	3
Sub-total of reasons related to the passenger	373
Related to bus	
Want free ride/fare evasion/ price of fare	44
Bus running late	43
Vulnerability of driver	32
Passenger doesn't like the authority of the driver	22
MIKI/ticket system	20
Some drivers aggravate some customers /The way some drivers talk to people	19
Timetable/modes not co-ordinating	6
Drivers uneducated, lack training of drivers, inexperienced drivers	4
"Buses are disgraceful inside"	1
Pressure bus drivers are under	1
Driver looks after other passengers	1
Driver's uniform looks too militant	1
Bus braking system	1
Sub-total of reasons related to bus operation	195

Source: Data analysed from the BusVic survey

In relation to a bus operational problem, the most common reason given (44 respondents) was a belief that passengers wanted the ride to be free or cheaper. Concerns about the myki ticketing system were expressed by 20 respondents, making a total of 64 respondents (18% of reasons)

expressing a view that there was a problem with payment for the trip. Examples of these issues include:

Don't want to pay. Biggest problem is fare evasion. It is now endemic in the system and government has been too slow to address the problem. When I started there was not problem. There is no police or enforcement backup

It's all about myki cards. They get very angry when we ask them to touch on

The passenger had large notes (\$50) and because I accepted the money and issued a ticket he punched me and left the bus

43 respondents felt the problem of aggression arose due to the bus running late.

Buses leaving their check points too early

When buses are late they take it out on us but they forget we deal with a lot of things like heavy traffic. It's worse around school times. Making sure the elderly, disabled, parents with pushers aboard safely and are seated before departure. Road detours. We give it 110% to try and have every bus run on time. They then have the disrespect and ring PTV

Thus, the respondents mainly commented on why the passenger may be angry/aggressive. However, some respondents mentioned the behaviour of the driver as a problem. This included the driver expressing authority (22 respondents):

Trying to do the job by the book always upsets somebody

Some respondents (19) said that some drivers aggravate passengers due to a lack of training and their inexperience as drivers (4), one mentioning 'the pressure drivers are under'. These driver events total to 46 comments (13%).

Some bus drivers make some things personal and aggravate some customers, e.g. if a passenger says that they have just lost their wallet some bus drivers will ask them to get off...why?

Sometimes the driver might be curt/short with the passenger resulting or provoking a negative response from the passenger

Some drivers don't have passenger service skills and respect for passengers

Only because of the way some drivers speak to people

In my opinion, the passengers are aggressive because the drivers don't know how to treat passengers

Of concern is that 32 comments were made about the driver being vulnerable, with an additional 11 comments shown in 'passenger section' (Table 5.1) which could also be interpreted as associated with driver vulnerability - 43 comments in total (12%). Many of the comments suggest that the driver may be feeling somewhat helpless to adequately respond to the aggression.

Because there are no consequences for the passenger, we are not allowed to do anything

First point of target and bus drivers can't defend themselves

Because passengers think it is their right to abuse a bus driver because we are public servants and we would not fight back and we are on our own and by the time help comes they would be long gone

Culture of 'they can get away with it' Doesn't rate high as a crime (trivial only). Some passengers know how far they can go'

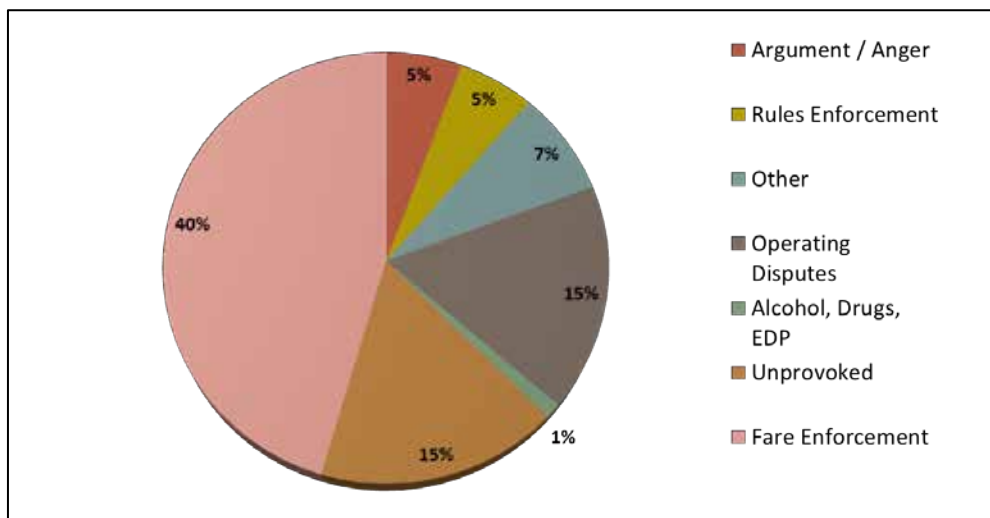
We are any easy target and can't get away from the passenger. We are the face of the system that we operate in

An easy mark. The driver's responsibility to bus and passengers means they are trapped in the seat

5.2 Internationally reported aggression towards bus drivers other public transport drivers

According to Leck (2014), most driver assaults in Toronto were related to fare enforcement (40%) (Figure 5.1). Leck notes that at times there is an inconsistent enforcement of the fare policy. Some drivers seem to be relatively non-confrontational regarding fare payment, whereas some others may be very rigid about 'enforcing the rules'. In the latter situation the passenger may take exception to the treatment and react physically to being challenged, and how they are being challenged, about the fare structure (Leck personal communication 2014).

Figure 5.1: Reasons for driver assaults in Toronto



Source: Leck 2014

The next two most common causes were said to be operating disputes and 'unprovoked' assault. Leck says that unfortunately there are people in Toronto with mental illness problems who use public transport (personal communication 2014). This can create irrational, erratic and/or violent responses in situations that would not be a serious issue for most people. Leck notes that 45% of

accused individuals before the courts are directed to the Mental Health Courts. Drivers are trained in ways of defusing and de-escalating situations, but sometimes there are 'simply random acts of violence that are difficult to prevent at the best of times'. This also applies to those affected by drugs or alcohol.

Dubord (2014) reported that 33% of assaults on bus drivers were related to an issue with the fare. However, this was based on a very small number of records of members of CUTA. Thirty per cent of assaults were related to drivers dealing with bad behaviour in customers. He noted that there was an expectation from other passengers that the driver would be able to deal with the bad behaviour.

Volinski (2014) reports that assaults occurred around fare disputes, rules, a patron being unhappy with the service and the escalation of a verbal argument. He noted that people who assault drivers have lots of other issues – most having mental health issues and/or addiction problems.

5.3 Conclusions

The opinion of respondents to the BusVic survey as to why aggression occurs would seem to support the theory that aggression may be goal-orientated, in that the perpetrator wants to achieve an outcome, such as not pay for the trip. There is also evidence supporting the other main cause of aggression where the perpetrator holds anger and directs it to the driver due to a triggering event, for example the bus may be running late due to traffic congestion.

There appears to be some evidence that drivers may be (most likely to be unintentionally) exacerbating the risk of aggression. The qualitative material clearly illustrates that some drivers have a negative view of some passengers. There is a risk that displaying these feelings may act as a triggering event for aggression. Given that there is a risk that PTSD may occur after traumatic event, it is possible that some drivers may be suffering from unresolved trauma, which is leading to unhelpful interactions with potential perpetrators, such as hypo-arousal. For example, danger may be misinterpreted or projected onto others and there may be latent defensive responses in some drivers. Such outcomes have been found in research on other occupational groups.

Finally, the qualitative comments reveal that some drivers have a feeling of helplessness, lack of control, unsure of their abilities and feel blocked about getting things done. This may be ground in reality, such as due to a culture that minimizes the impact of aggression, or be part of an unresolved traumatic response. It would appear that some drivers reported having these feelings, 25% reporting feeling at least hopeless, worthless or helpless. However, almost a quarter of drivers (23%) did not answer as to whether they did or did not feel these conditions. The causes of these reported conditions are not known, but the potential impact on interaction with troubling customers, is of concern.

There is also evidence that some drivers feel vulnerable, both in a physical sense (such as seated in a fixed position), due to their responsibility for the safety of the bus and other passengers, and due to their isolation. The latter encompasses the fact that police may not be able to respond quickly, even if alerted to the problem, and that there is a perception expressed by some that there is a lack of managerial support and that they are on their own.

6 Action taken in response to aggression

Appendix A overviews some responses recommended or undertaken in Victoria and internationally to prevent aggression to bus drivers. The effectiveness of these tactics is not known.

The next few sections document what responses are undertaken presently in Victoria, as reported by the respondents to the BusVic survey.

6.1 Immediate response taken in BusVic survey

The survey asked ‘when passengers are verbally or physically abusive, what do you do?’

389 people (75%) of respondents gave an answer to this question. Most of the answers related to an immediate response to the event. Many people responded in more than one way, such as trying to calm the person first and then if this did not work taking another approach, such as asking the perpetrator to leave the bus or calling the police. Responses are shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Action taken by respondents to aggressive customers (N=389)

Response	No. %
Ignore, do nothing	112 (29%)
Placate them, defuse, calm them, don't argue	105 (27%)
Call for help – police, depot manager, ring 000	48 (12%)
Stay calm	41 (11%)
Reason, explain, issue an instruction	39 (10%)
Stop the bus and/or tell the passenger to get off the bus	35 (9%)
Respond in an aggressive way or a way that annoys	30 (8%)
Empathise, agree, give in, thank them	13
Smile, say have a nice day, thank them (facetious?)	9
Listen to them	9
Get out of their way, leave or run	5
Be careful, unsure, no hard and fast rules	5
Threaten to them they will call the police	4
Report the event to the school or their boss	4
Tell the person to report the event	4
Remind them they are being recorded	4
Get to bus stop as quickly as possible	3
Check the safety of the other passengers	3
Don't pick them up	2

Source: Analysis of BusVic survey

The most common response was to no nothing or ignore the person (112 respondents or 29% of those who responded to the question).

Try to ignore them. Very hard when you feel scared and alone

Try to ignore them. It is easy for management to say ignore them but I think it builds up inside us and is not good for our health

....I don't let anger travel from my mind into the gaze of my eyes, into the words of my lips, into the acts of my hands. I forgive the person.....

Nothing if it is over paying for fares – I just let them on...

Nothing you can do as you are in the wrong if you retaliate

Say nothing – just cop it, causes less confrontation

105 (27%) respondents said they try to calm the person down and defuse the situation.

Try to de-escalate the situation

Calm them down to the best of my ability

Ask person causing trouble to calm down. What is the trouble? Can I help?

48 (12%) respondents said they would call someone to help – either the police or the depot, 14 said they would do this if other tactics failed. 41 respondents talked about staying calm themselves.

I must control myself

39 (10%) said they would explain the rules, issue an instruction, ask them to please take a seat, or say it is company rules.

Try to sort out issues as quickly as possible

We can't do much because we don't have much rights only try to explain the reasons.

35 (9%) respondents said they would either stop the bus or tell the person to get off the bus, an additional 3 saying they would try to get to the person's bus stop as quickly as possible.

Advise them to settle down or leave the service

30 people said they would respond in an aggressive way, such as defend themselves if the interaction was physical, annoy them or abuse them back, and lose their temper

I don't take their crap

I do not get paid to be verbally or physically abused by anyone so if I was ever in such a situation I would verbally or physically abuse them back.

Haven't encountered yet – but I am not a punching bag so would have no hesitation in defending myself against a physical assailant depending on circumstances eg. weapons, number of people, customer safety and personal safety. Verbal customers – ignore.

13 people said they would empathise, agree with person and thank them. Nine respondents said they would smile or say have a nice day. 9 said they would listen to the passenger.

Although not asked, 10 respondents commented on the adverse impact on themselves:

Ask them to calm down. If they don't, ask them to leave the bus. This can be very stressful as there is very little back up.

Too frightened to do anything these days. They might assault us.

Thus, most respondents either ignored the aggressive person or tried to calm the person down and some tried to explain the situation to the person, listened and empathised. Of concern is that only a small number called for outside help (12%). A few tried avoidance tactics – don't pick up the person or get out of the way themselves. Some respondents took an aggressive or annoying stance towards the perpetrator.

6.2 Reporting aggressive behaviour

Respondents were asked: *'Do you report incidences of verbal and physical abuse from passengers?'*

78 respondents did not answer this question. However, most (284) reported an incidence, representing 56% of all who took the survey or 66% of those who answered the question. These people said that they reported to their manager, or supervisor, 'the boss', depot, operations manager, and occasionally to the school, front desk or other drivers.

However, 145 people said they didn't report an incidence. Eleven respondents said they don't report because they have never had an incident and 2 said they did report, while 21 respondents said they did report but made the comment that they didn't or only did sometimes. Thus, a concerning number of people, 153 respondents, stated that they don't report an incident at all, or all the time, representing 46% of those who said they were certain they had experienced at least one incident of a rude or angry customer or was abusive or aggressive towards them.

Looking at the data a little closer, of the 99 respondents who said they had experienced physical **abuse**, 71 (72%) said they do report instances of physical and/or verbal abuse to their employer, while 25 (25%) respondents said they do not report to their employer. Three people who had experienced physical abuse did not respond to this question. Thus a quarter of the drivers who had experienced physical abuse do not report this event.

136 people made a comment as to why they didn't report, some giving more than one reason (Table 6.2).

53 respondents (39% of those who gave a reason for not reporting) said they didn't report as nothing would be done.

Why bother, nothing will come of it. There are a million stories of abuse that can be told

Because nothing gets done, or cares, you are a big man get over it

Even when instances are reported nothing is one about it. The impression drivers get is that management doesn't care.

22 (16%) respondents felt they would only report if there was physical abuse or the abuse was serious enough. The findings reveal many negative reasons for not reporting.

Physical abuse reported to supervisor. Verbal abuse not reported as it is common and best to avoid or ignore as it is time consuming.

Table 6.2: Reason for not reporting a rude or angry customer or person who was abusive or aggressive towards them (N=136)

Reason for not reporting	Number
No point, not worth it, nothing done	53
I'm seen (or may be seen) as the cause of the problem, the passenger is always right, repercussions	13
Incident not severe enough	12
Never had an incident of physical abuse, or serious event	10
They don't care	9
Abuse happens too often	9
I don't care, it doesn't upset me, let it go, don't care	7
Too complex, too much trouble, paperwork difficult	6
Generally the issue has been resolved by myself	6
Not much can be done afterwards	4
No time	4
No-one said I had to report, who would I report to?	3
Only if it happens again	3
It rarely happens	2
I would be sacked	2
Had training	1

Source: Analysis from BusVic survey

Some of the comments suggest that some respondents believe there is a lack of support, for example:

Did it once (report) but the manager says it is part of the job. The passengers are always right and our depot manager will side with them no matter how unreasonable or incorrect and tells me there is the door if you don't like it.

Not any more – no confidence in a certain manager ...'customer is always right'

Thus, while most respondents reported an incident, there a feeling of disillusion came through in a minority of respondents, in that they felt it wasn't productive to report an incident and even at times may cause them further damage. This situation was present for some respondents, even where they had experienced physical assault, an issue of considerable concern.

Analysis by Esler shows, for the total group of respondents, the self-rated mental health of respondents was significantly better for those who said they reported instances of verbal and physical abuse from passengers ($P < 0.05$).

A hypermasculine culture, where there is a perception that low-level incidents should be dealt with by the drivers and it was better not to cause a 'fuss', was noted in the bus industry (Lincoln & Huntingdon 2014). In other occupational settings, there is also at times a reluctance to report offences. Hagan (2014, p.2) writes that she was told that doctors in a hospital setting may be reluctant to report due to a 'fear of retribution from disgruntled people who knew where to find them'. This is likely to be the situation with bus drivers, although moving the driver to another route,

this is possible, and other similar tactics, would in part address this issue. A further barrier to reporting by nurses, was, as with bus drivers, the inconsistency and length of official forms, as well as a lack of follow-up on completion of the form (Hagan 2014). Three main reasons have been posited for this underreporting (Bishop et al. 2009). These are issues that arose in the BusVic survey: management inaction (a belief that nothing would result from the reporting of incidents despite policies to the contrary), time constraints and paperwork (that the complex forms require additional time and commitment at the end of a busy shift).

6.3 Support and assistance after the incident

When asked if their employer had ever offered support and assistance after any incident of physical or verbal abuse by a passenger, 145 said they received support and assistance, 29% of the total number of respondents and 37% of those who answered the question (N= 395). However most, 242 respondents, said they didn't receive support (seven commenting that they didn't need it), 48% of the total number of respondents and 63% of those who answered the question.

103 respondents who received support, described the type of support (Table 5.3). 25% received general support, 17% received de-briefing at work, and 14% said they received counselling.

Table 6.3: Form of support described (N=103)

Type of support received	No. %
General support	26 (25%)
Debrief, talked about what could be done next time	18 (17%)
Counselling received or offered	14 (14%)
Police called	12
Given time off, checked OK to continue working, changed run	10
Medical help	5
Report to an authority, incidence report	4
Employee Assistance Program	3
Anger management course, re-training	2
Took to hospital, took to police station	2
Tried to solve the problem	2
Removed passenger	1

Source: Analysis from BusVic survey

Five respondents also made the comment that the manager was very supportive, such as:

Because they care about us on the road so anything happened on the bus or on the road they always help.

However, eight people offered a qualification to the support, for example, saying that they gave more favourable treatment to female drivers, more could have been done and a two page report was expected.

Of the 242 who said they didn't receive support, only 21 commented as to why they did not receive support. Four said that the driver was blamed for the incidence, for example:

Management can be too quick to implicate drivers in many incidents and therefore do not offer much assistance.

Two respondents who said they had received support also made a similar comment.

One respondent said:

Was told by my manager that accepting abuse was now part of my duty statement.

Of those who said they had experienced physical assault and do report instances of physical and/or verbal abuse to their employer, 41 said they were offered support and assistance by their employer and 30 said they didn't. Seven respondents who said they do not report to their employer received support from their employer, presumably the employers were alerted to the incident(s) another way. It is not known how the respondents receive this support or whether or not the support relates to the physical abuse.

Thus, the perceived lack of support after an aggressive incident is high, and the fact that many respondents do not report an incident, can perhaps be understood. Of the 99 respondents who said they had been subject to physical abuse, 48 (just under half) said they received some form of support from their employer.

Analysis by Esler shows in that in the total group of respondents, those who did not receive support from their employer had poorer self-rated mental health ($P < 0.05$). The reasons for this need further investigation, as the type and extent of support needs to be understood and it may be that someone with poor mental health may not be able to recognise or use support offered.

The respondents were asked who they talk to in relation to a wide range of work challenges. It is interesting to note that the analysis by Esler showed that when a range of people were suggested in the survey: family, friends, colleagues, manager, other person, and no-one, two findings stood out. Those who said they didn't talk to anyone had the (statistically significant) lowest self-rating of mental health ($P < 0.05$). Secondly, those who talked with their manager, had better self-rating mental health ($P < 0.073$). Again the direction of this association needs caution, as it may be that those who are able to talk with their manager may hold better mental health in the first place.

The respondents were asked: *'Do you feel supported by your employer with respect to your general mental health and physical wellbeing?'*

While this question does not relate specifically to the experience of aggression, analysis by Michael Esler suggests that employer support is important. While a high number of 36% didn't answer this question, 37% believed they did receive support and 28% believed they didn't receive support. Those respondents who felt they didn't feel supported by their employer had a significantly poorer judgement about their own mental health ($P < 0.01$).

7 Prevention of aggression

7.1 Conclusions from BusVic survey

The findings from the BusVic survey suggest that many drivers have experienced a rude or angry customer who was abusive or aggressive, and many experienced this often. While the severity of this aggression is unclear, an important minority of the survey respondents said a passenger had physically assaulted them at least once. The time the respondents have been in their current job as a bus driver (418 people) is on average 8.6 years, however, there is a standard deviation of 7.9 suggesting this time varies widely. Most drivers have been in the job five years and under, with there are quite long stayers - 20 years and over. Further investigation is needed to better understand the prevalence of physical assault, especially as some of the respondents indicated they didn't wish to respond to this question.

The survey suggests that drivers respond differently to the aggression. While many are aware of the need to defuse the immediate situation, some respond in a less than ideal way and some feel alone in dealing with the problem. While some drivers report good support, a worrying number say they didn't report the incident, even when physical aggression was involved, and others, when they did report, felt the support wasn't there. There are indications that the welfare of the respondents was higher where they did report physical aggression and where they believed they received support.

7.2 Methods of prevention of aggression - theory

Preventing aggression to bus drivers involves addressing a range of tactics. In addition to taking steps to avoid or minimise the aggression, where an incident does occur, it is important to take the learnings from the event in order to avoid a similar event occurring again. Again, where an incident has occurred, the task is to take steps to minimise the impact of the event for the victim and those associated with the victim.

The particular position of a bus driver needs to be acknowledged, an issue referred to by some drivers in the BusVic survey and discussed in Section 3.3 of this report. While many standard practices in dealing with aggression can be followed by bus drivers, some of these are more difficult to undertake where the offence is committed on the bus while the driver is seated.

For a criminal event to take place, a motivated perpetrator, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian need to be present (Clarke 1997). All these aspects need to be addressed in the prevention approach. The approach involves the management or design of the immediate environment where the event takes place and causing the behaviour to be more difficult and risky, for the target of the aggression to be more protected and to maximise the opportunities for the target to receive back-up support. The model is based on the idea that a perpetrator weighs up the benefits derived from offending, the potential risks of being apprehended and the associated costs of apprehension. The assumption is that the perpetrator is able to make these judgements, which may not be the case where there is cognitive impairment, such as intellectual disability, intoxication or some forms of mental illness. There is evidence that situational crime prevention is an economically efficient and effective strategy in reducing crime, both in Australia and overseas (Welsh & Farrington 2007).

Table 7.1 overviews methods of prevention of aggression. This table is adapted from a general model of crime prevention (Cornish & Clarke 2003). The model, suggests the following broad actions:

- Increase the effort that the offender needs to take
- Increase the risks for the offender
- Reduce the rewards for the offender
- Reduce provocations for the offender
- Remove the excuses for the offender

Table 7.1 Model to assist in the prevention of aggression to bus drivers by influencing the potential perpetrator

Increase the effort that needs to be made by the potential perpetrator	Increase the risk for the potential perpetrator	Reduce the awards for the potential perpetrator	Reduce provocations to the potential perpetrator	Remove excuses for the potential perpetrator
Target harden	Strengthen formal surveillance	Deny benefits of aggressive behaviour	Reduce frustration & stress	Set rules, post instructions and assist compliance
Control access	Public Transport Police	Deny a bus ride	Avoid disputes	
Reduce presence of potential weapons	Emergency communication devices		Improve interactions between the victim and potential perpetrator	
	Report all incidents to operator & police		Discretionary fare policy	
	Reporting APP			
	Media campaign			
	Reward for information leading to arrest			

Source: Adapted from Cornish & Clarke 2004, p.90.

The particular tactics that could be used, where the driver is targeted within the bus, are outlined further in the next sections. Where the information is available, approaches outside of Victoria and their effectiveness are considered. Consideration is then given to another form of prevention, that is, where an incident does occur, processes need to be put in place to enable the victim to recover and to prevent the experience of on-going trauma. This enables the victim to return to health and perhaps to be better able to cope with future experiences of aggression. The learnings from the incident need to be taken and responses instigated which aim to prevent the same, or similar, event occurring in the future.

7.3 Increase the effort needed for the perpetrator

This approach to prevention is to make it harder for the perpetrator to carry out an aggressive act.

Target harden

The approach here is to put a physical barrier between the driver and the passenger, as shown in Picture 7.1. Barriers are installed in some buses internationally, however, they are not always pulled shut. Leck (2014) reports that 20% of drivers in Canada used closed barriers in October 2012, although the driver is encouraged to use the barrier through the distribution of posters (Picture 7.2).

Picture 7.1: Glass barrier between driver and passenger as used in Canada

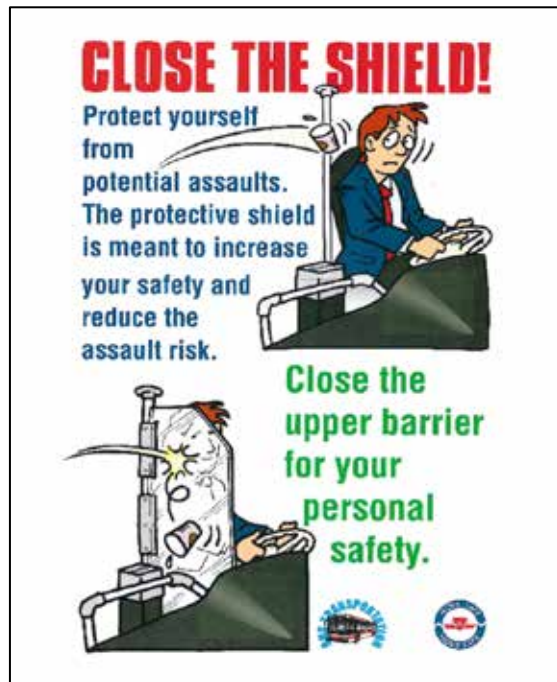


British studies on screens around bus drivers show that they reduce assaults on drivers, the 1988 study claiming a 90% reduction of assault on drivers (Chappell & Di Martino 2006, Poyner & Warne 1988). However, in France, screens are not perceived to be effective. In Australia, screens were reported as being discarded in favour of emergency buttons and hidden microphones linked to the bus office, which were believed to be of greater deterrent values (Lincoln & Huntingdon 2013).

Dubord (2014) reports that bus drivers commonly choose not to use the barrier because they prefer to be able to interact with customers. Some bus drivers believe that using screens makes it difficult for them to hear and interact with passengers, thus raising tensions. Also, the design of the screens means that there remains ample potential for drivers to be physically attacked (Lincoln & Huntingdon 2013). While CUTA believes that barrier use contributes to a reduction in driver assaults,

it was found that between January and September 2013, 17 assaults occurred where the perpetrator reached around the upper barrier to spit, punch, or throw liquid on the driver. The prevention properties of screens need further investigation. It may be that where a driver has good communication skills, he or she may be able to de-escalate the situation and, for example, prevent a perpetrator moving their aggressive behavior from the driver to a passenger.

Picture 7.2: Posters to encourage use of protective barrier in Canada



Source: Leck 2014

The barrier could be a change in design, such as raising the height of the driver's seat may offer better protection. Exit doors in the centre of the bus is also said to reduce assaults that occur when passengers disembark. Careful placement of a bus stop may discourage people from an area known to house difficult customers, for example if they have to walk a distance to a stop (Clarke 1997). Good lightening on a bus stop will facilitate the bus driver's ability to observe passengers and perhaps avoid stopping to pick them up if, for example they appear to be intoxicated.

Control access to the bus

Passengers should not enter the bus if under the influence of drugs or alcohol. However, this rule may be hard for the driver to enforce, as the condition of the person may not be obvious until he/she is on the bus and the person may not leave when asked. Posters and media campaigns warning that intoxicated people are not allowed on the bus and that police may be called if this is not adhered to, may act as a deterrent for some people.

Reduce presence of potential weapons

Removal of all loose heavy objects on the bus, and reminders to passengers that they should not litter on the bus, leaving bottles and cans (potential weapons) through the distribution of posters, would be likely to have some value.

7.4 Increase the risk

The intention here is to increase the chances of the perpetrator getting caught and making the potential perpetrator aware of this fact as a deterrent.

Strengthen formal surveillance

The use of closed circuit TV (CCTV) on a bus may act as a deterrent to a potential perpetrator as well as assist in a conviction where an incident occurs. All route buses and some school buses in Victoria use this technology, although it was reported that the technology is not always working. In Canada, where there is a camera on a vehicle, about 95% of arrested perpetrators plead guilty and the victims don't have to attend court (Leck 2014). However, despite the use of a camera, only 21% of perpetrators in assault incidents are arrested. Film from CCTV was recently used by the Victorian police to obtain two convictions in relation to offenses on buses (Turner, personal communication).

A review of the impact of CCTV on crime concluded that CCTV has a modest but important positive effect on preventing crime outside the bus industry (Welsh & Farrington 2008). However, the cost of establishing, maintaining and monitoring a CCTV system can be very expensive (Clancey 2009). It is possible that advertising the presence of a camera, even if it is not a working one, may offer some deterrents – an issue which needs investigation.

Public Transport Police

It is interesting to note that Transit Police are used on buses in some international settings, while Protective Service Officers (PSO) are only deployed on the metropolitan rail network in Victoria. Some scale economies could possibly be achieved if the PSOs were also deployed on tram, bus and v/line services and it would send a message to the public that bad behaviour on all public transport is not acceptable. An investigation of the use of PSOs on buses would be worthwhile, especially targeting bus services that are known to carry difficult customers at times. This would assist in curbing anti-social behaviour by acting as a deterrent.

Emergency communication devices

Two-way radios enable staff to communicate rapidly with the control point and then on to the police. However, the value of radios, silent alarms etc depend on the driver's ability to reach them and the speed of response by the police. As so little assistance was reported as been called on in the BusVic survey, this also needs to be examined further to understand if such devices are not available to drivers, if there is a belief that response will be too slow to be of help, or if it is felt that assistance wouldn't come anyway – or indeed some other barrier is present.

Report all incidents to their manager and the police

Reporting by the bus driver victim offers benefits to the victim, as revealed in the BusVic survey. Reporting allows further action to be undertaken, as appropriate, such as a referral to the police, initiation of support and perhaps other action, such as changing the driver's bus route, or time from work. Reporting all incidents also allows records to be kept of the incidents, including the nature of the event, location, time etc. as well as providing the opportunity to alter preventative responses or take new action.

Once a report is made, it is important that there is follow-up by the operator and/or at the industry level to encourage prosecutions of offenders and a punishment that reflects the severity of the crime. Such an approach would link into a media campaign that offers the message that it is not acceptable to be aggressive towards or threaten a bus driver, and if you do, you will be caught and given a punishment that reflects the severity of the crime.

Reporting App

The UK government acknowledges that a large proportion of crime on public transport is not reported (DETR, 1998, reported in Burrell 2007). Examples of why passengers and other witnesses do not report such behaviour include a reluctance to delay the onward journey of the vehicle, the absence of a suitable person to report the incident to, the belief that the report will not be taken seriously and a lack of confidence that the offender will be caught (Cozens et al. 2004, reported in Burrell 2007).

A texting number has recently been introduced in Canada, offering public transport customers a discrete way of accessing the police without bringing attention to themselves (Duport 2014). The APP also offers a broad range of information for passengers, such as bus information, missing persons, special events and major service disruptions, Transit Police news, a link to Crime Stoppers, next bus information, trip planner and access to social media – Youtube, Facebook and Twitter. The offer of all these services encouraged use and familiarity with the site and kept customers connected with the police. Use of text message reports has increased each month since its introduction. These reports are additional to the usual reports to Transit Police in Canada.

Media campaign which reports prosecutions and impact statements

Advertising the prosecutions of offenders, the impact of aggression on bus drivers, and the fact that aggression to drivers will not be tolerated, may act as a deterrent to potential perpetrators. Such a campaign has been initiated in Canada, where posters with these messages were put in every bus in Vancouver (Dubort 2014). Picture 7.3 illustrates one message.

Other messages included: 'Offenders will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law'; 'Put an end to assaults on bus operators' and 'Assaults on bus operators will not be tolerated'. The notices commonly included a text number and emergency call number, and some notices provided the Crime Stoppers contacts. Press releases are written for cases where the culprit is sentenced to a significant time in jail.

This initiative is straightforward and easy to accomplish in the short term. It could be the first initiative for an inter-agency taskforce on the prevention of violence to drivers in Victoria (see Section 9 of this report), and is likely to offer early runs on the board.

Picture 7.3: Poster in bus in Canada



Source: Leck 2014

Rewards for information leading to an arrest

The possibility of introducing a monetary reward to persons who provide information leading to the arrest of an offender on public transport was considered in Vancouver, mid 2014 (Dubort 2014).

7.5 Reduce the award for the perpetrator

Deny benefits of aggressive behaviour

The message to the travelling public should be that crime or other offenses on a bus don't pay. However, in practice, compliance with the demands of an aggressive person may save a driver from injury. A rigid approach and insistence by the driver, such as the cessation of smoking on the bus, may increase the risk for a driver. The BusVic survey respondents identified the use of 'authority' as leading to a potential aggressive situation. Once the immediate situation has passed and it is safe to do so, reporting to an authority as soon as possible, such as the police, may allow apprehension prior to the perpetrator alighting from the bus, or soon afterwards.

Deny a bus ride

Clear vision of an approaching bus stop for the driver combined with lighting at night will enable the driver to assess the condition of the passengers, perhaps making the decision to deny them a ride should this be judged to be necessary

7.6 Reduce provocations

Reduce frustration and stress of passengers

An efficient and high quality bus service should minimise excuses for passengers to show aggression towards the driver. This includes factors such as keeping to the time-table wherever possible, the driver looking professional and a clean bus and smooth driving. It may also include attention to information for passengers, such as a correct and readily available time-table, and clean, comfortable and well lit bus shelters. Better information on waiting times has been said to reduce passenger tension. Rotating staff on particularly demanding routes to improve a speedy and efficient service, as well as avoiding long hours of work and providing adequate rest periods should assist.

Avoid disputes – driver training to reduce emotional arousal

The BusVic survey suggests that some drivers need assistance on improving their interaction with passengers, especially in relation to non-provoking language and remaining calm, where possible. This includes tactics such as actively listening to the customer and giving them the opportunity to explain, being courteous and polite, giving the benefit of the doubt, staying objective, not getting dragged into a dispute. Training should include avoiding approaches that may increase aggression, such as: a patronising attitude, talking down to someone, telling people they are wrong to behave as they do, telling people how they feel, and trivialising a person's problems.

Refresher courses should also be offered. Such an approach is not easy for the driver who has had a number of bad experiences, and may be under other pressures, such as keeping the bus to schedule. Much good information is available on the internet about de-escalating aggression, such as: <http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/dealing-with-aggression2.html#ixzz3OMjMbxnd>

Improve interactions between the victim and perpetrator

Newbill and colleagues (2010) looked at ways of prevention aggression in a psychiatric in-patient setting. They looked at how limit setting was done, finding that the most anger-inducing limit-setting style was one that made the patient feel belittled and at the mercy of an uncaring system. The least anger-promoting style was one that provided validation of the person's experience and then discussed how the person's goals could be achieved. This is also described as 'empathetic communication', described as, for example, acknowledging patients' arrival/waiting time. Similar approaches have also been taken to avoid violence in a hospital emergency department (Lau et al. 2012).

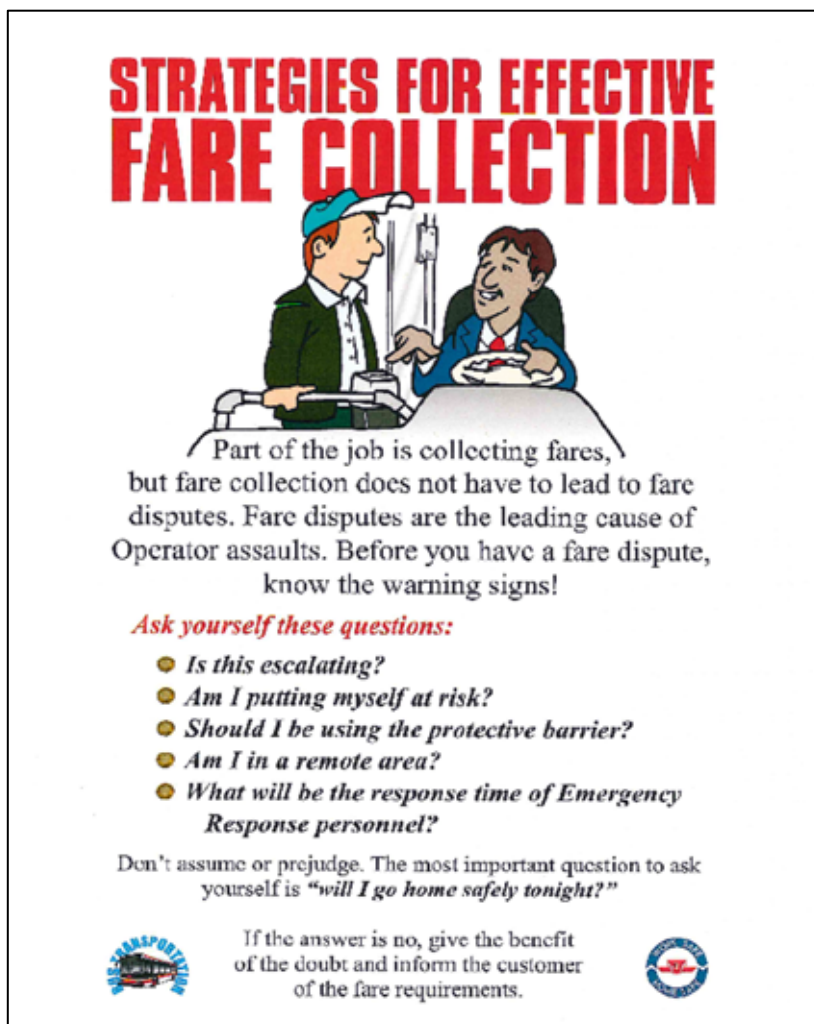
Newbill and colleagues also explored staff training. They note that initially this was centred on self-defence, then de-escalation of a situation, but they suggest that the best training deals with refraining from agitating patients from the start – validation of the person's distress. They note that the skill of validation needs training to acquire. For example, a request could be responded to with a straight 'no'. Alternatively, the response could be followed by:

But I know how eager you are to get back home, so if you'd like to discuss some steps you can take to achieve that goal I'd be glad to help you" (which would be recorded as instances of Reflect/Clarify and Doing With, i.e., engaging in shared appropriate activity with the patient) (p.187).

Discretionary fare enforcement policy

While there is a responsibility to collect fares, this should not be done at risk of the driver's safety. Posters advising about a potential fare dispute approach have been distributed in parts of Canada (Picture 7.4).

Picture 7.4: Poster offering an approach to fare disputes



Source: Leck 2014

7.7 Remove excuses

Set rules, post instructions and assist compliance

Newbill and colleagues (2010) note that rules need to be clearly understood by the staff member and the patient, as well as the reasons for the rules. They say:

If staff notice that a particular rule appears to generate conflict, that rule should be reviewed by administrators to see if the reason for the rule is appropriate and if the rule is being implemented as intended (Newbill et al. 2010, p. 186).

Creating awareness of transport policies should assist cooperation, such as a sign on the bus stop asking people to finish smoking prior to boarding the bus.

8 Other prevention tactics

8.1 Prevent the impact of aggression by improving support

The BusVic survey found an association between experiencing aggression and reduced wellbeing. It found that those people who received support were better off but too many drivers either did not seek support or believed that support would not be offered (see Section 6.3). The extent of this issue and the implications of support failures (whatever the reason) would appear to be severe.

Appropriate and timely support to drivers who have experienced trauma is likely to improve their wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of their family and colleagues.

The perception that support is available if needed and that the industry cares about their staff is important in itself. By supporting the victim to best overcome trauma, the industry is placing the driver in the best place to deal with future incidents in the best way possible. It is also gaining information to better understand aggression to drivers, and therefore enabling the establishment of better prevention approaches.

There are many ways support could be offered, depending on the nature of the incident and the impact on the victim. These include: listening to what happened, assisting with forms, adjusting work for the victim as needed (for example, time off), assisting with any medical bills, providing legal representation, counselling, maintaining contact and tracking recovery.

Dubord (2014) reported research being undertaken on sentencing of subjects charged and convicted of assaulting bus operators across Canada. They found that sentencing information was not commonly collected by relevant agencies. Of 117 possible agencies (who have membership with CUTA), only 4 collected sentencing information. The failure to collect such information risks a perception that the issue is not important and the opportunity is lost to use this information in media campaigns to deter potential perpetrators.

System of court advocates

One form of support is to introduce a system of court advocates, as practiced in Toronto. Of course, this form of support presupposes that the crime was reported to police and the perpetrator has been arrested and charged. Between 2009 and 2013 court advocates assisted 2,266 employee victims of violent crimes, some victims multiple times. Court staff lawyers and judges accept Court Advocates' attendance as a regular part of the court system in Toronto. The bus industry could establish a court advocate support structure. The type of tasks undertaken by such a group would include:

- Contact the victim as soon as possible and open a file
- Advise all people involved about the impact of trauma
- Negotiate with management in relation to issues such as time off, changing routes
- Communicate with the police and track the progress of court procedures

- Advise the victim on how court system works and attend the court hearings, reporting back to the victim
- Assist with Victim Impact Statements
- Advocate for appropriate significant penalties – jail time, transit system bans, probation

8.2 Improve wellbeing, self-esteem and confidence of drivers

The BusVic survey found that some drivers do not have good mental health. This has been reported in the small number of (mainly old) studies on the public transport industry. Duffy and McGoldrick (1990) found that 13% of bus drivers suffered mental ill-health, and Fisher and Jacoby (1992) reported that 23% met the criteria for chronic posttraumatic stress disorder, a rate similar to victims of natural disasters. Other research has reported on psychological outcomes for drivers that include high levels of pervasive and persistent feelings of hopelessness, clinical depression, anxiety and hypervigilance (Tse et al. 2006, reported in Lincoln & Huntingdon). Recent work on the health of transport drivers was undertaken in the United States, where it was found that transport employees and bus drivers in particular, are more likely to have certain serious and chronic health problems, compared to other workers (Witters 2013, reported in Transit Cooperative Research Program (2014) . Most of the health problems identified in bus drivers are affected by a combination of lifestyle choices, genetics, and workplace and environmental conditions.

The BusVic survey asked: '*What are the biggest challenges facing you at work?*' and were asked to choose all that apply of 17 options, as shown in Table 8.1. A wide range of issues were said to challenge drivers.

Table 8.1: Challenges at work

Challenges	Frequency	%
Traffic Congestion	247	48.7
Types of passengers	210	41.4
Running bus on time	209	41.2
Road rage	179	35.3
Finding rest/comfort points	130	25.6
Safety of locations on route	127	25.0
Interaction with passengers	120	23.7
Myki/Fares/Tickets	109	21.5
Roster/Hours worked	100	19.7
Late night work	100	19.7
Job security	94	18.5
Workplace conflict/bullying	80	15.8
Interaction between passengers	75	14.8
Manager	71	14.0
Work in family business	30	5.9
Wearing uniform	28	5.5
Working alone	25	4.9

Source: BusVic survey

A person with good mental health is best able to cope with set-backs and aggressive incidents. Thus, both addressing these concerns of drivers (where possible) and improving the mental health of drivers would be a high value win/win situation and a good preventative measure for better coping with aggression, should it occur.

Measures to reduce a masculine dominated culture would be valuable. Such steps as employing more females as drivers, giving greater priority to inter-personal relationships such as partnered social evenings for drivers, offering a more supportive structure in the workplace, and offering drivers a greater role in decision-making in matters that directly impact on them (Putri 2011). The need to improving the nutritional habits and financial literacy of drivers, were two issues noted in the Mental Health at Work (2015) report. Simple approaches such as placing fruit in staff rooms and replacing sweet vending machines with fresh sandwich vending machines, and implementing initiatives where employers can help staff manage their finances or train them in fiscal management should off health benefits to drivers and other depot employees.

8.3 Improve the community's mental health and reduce substance abuse

Rather than focusing on the physical environment, social crime prevention is most commonly directed at trying to influence the underlying social and economic causes of crime, as well as offender motivation. This approach tends to include crime prevention measures that take some time to produce the intended results. This may include action to improve housing, health and educational achievement, as well as improved community cohesion through community development measures. Crime on public transport increased by 9.5% in 2013/14 over the previous year, with assault increasing 8.3% representing 1,421 assaults, trains and related places featuring strongly (Victoria Police 2014). This figure refers to assaults to all people, not particularly drivers. Reported or detected crime on buses or bus stops in Victoria totaled 918 offences in 2013/14.

In the BusVic survey, respondents said that they felt a lot of aggression was due to substance misuse. The media reports a rise in drug use in the community over the past 5 years (Butt 2014). Use and possession offences for all drugs have increased 68%, while cultivation, trafficking and manufacturing offences have jumped 25% in the past 5 years. According to Victorian Police crime statistics, 23,444 drug offences were recorded in 2013/14, an increase of 8.6% compared to 2012/13 (Victoria Police 2014). Amphetamine use/possession offences were up 18.5% in 2013/14 from the previous 12 months.

9 Establishing prevention practices

9.1 A concerning problem about which little is known

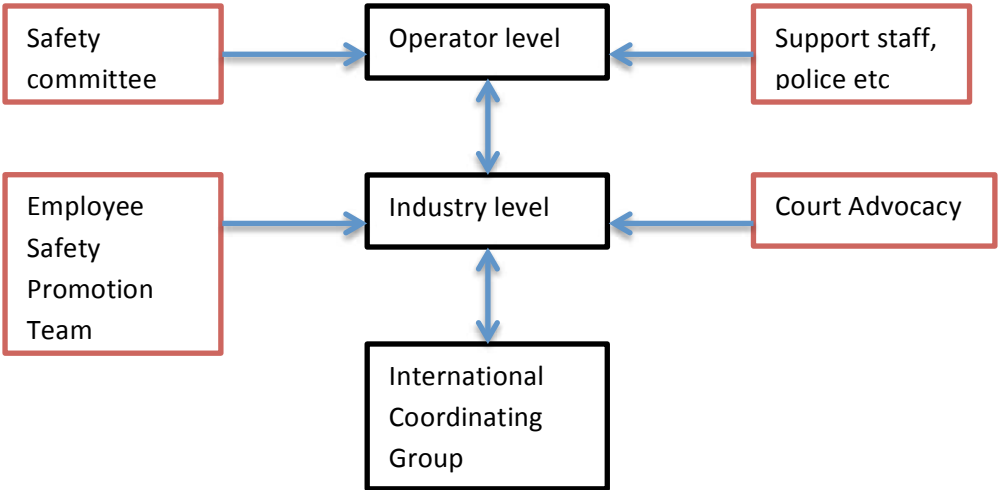
While it would appear that bus drivers at times face difficult and even aggressive customers, at the same time, there is a significant lack of information to appropriately address and prevent this problem. Almost no research has been undertaken internationally to define the problem, nor to evaluate the most effective methods of prevention. The situation is not helped by the paucity of research in this area in other occupations.

9.2 A model for developing prevention practices and knowledge

This report proposes one way to start a preventative approach. It is suggested that cooperation is needed from all levels of the industry (Figure 9.1). The operator instigates prevention approaches specific to local conditions and challenges, establishing a representative safety committee to oversee the program. Close cooperation is made with local external bodies, such as local counselling and support staff, training personnel and the police. A coordinating Safety Promotion Team is established at the state Industry level. This Group represents a range of stakeholders, such as state

government, the police, Crime Stoppers and union representation. It aims to advise and support the operators and undertake monitoring and evaluation work. Such a group could undertake advocacy work and instigate some wider preventative approaches, such as through the media, messaging and drawing attention to broader issues leading to aggressive behaviour, such as drug use in the community. The Court Advocacy program (Section 8.3) would be managed at this industry level.

Figure 9.1: Cooperation between all levels of the industry

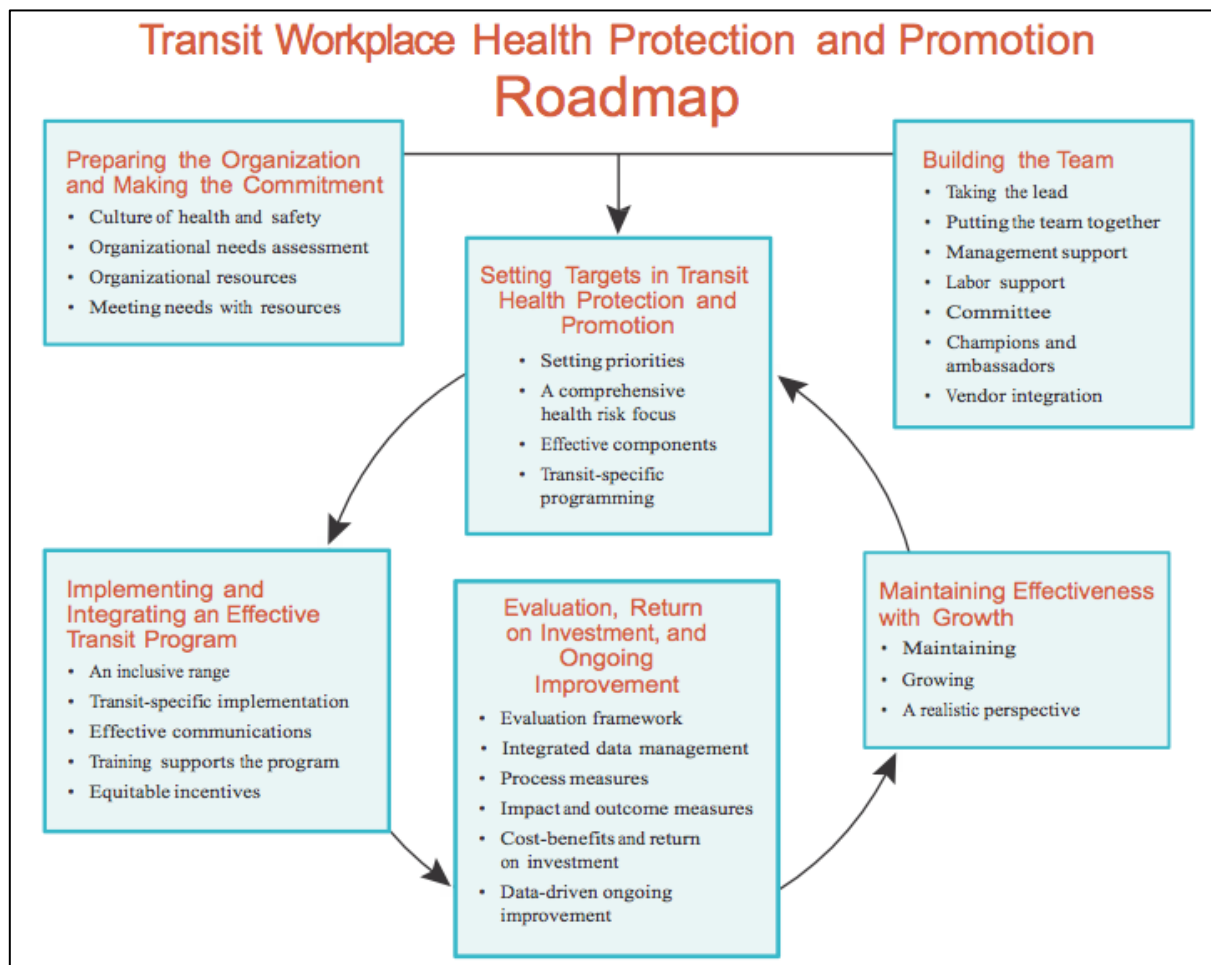


It is the author’s view that an International Coordinating Group would facilitate a much more effective response to the problem of aggression, as the issue is as yet little understood and a significant ‘catch-up’ approach is needed. Such a group would act as a Clearinghouse House to disseminate information about the more effective prevention approaches, share experiences. A second important role would be in data collection to understand trends, in association with various prevention tactics, with a role in monitoring and evaluation.

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) in the United States has produced a report that offers best practice guidelines for improving operator health and retention (2014) (See Figure 9.2). Such an approach could be adapted at the operator level to the adoption of driver safety measures. Preparing the organisation and making a commitment is an important first step. This encompasses reviewing the extent and form of aggression towards drivers and what contributes to these problems such as situational aspects of the physical environment, organisational factors, such as culture, practices and policies and individual factors, such as particular challenges faced by some drivers.

The process will include building the team. This includes consideration of the personnel available within the local industry and the local community; and setting priorities and both short and long term targets, with an emphasis on gaining early successes. The preventive approach is likely to need multiple tactics to address different issues. Tactics need to be implemented with adequate resources to maintain oversight and monitoring and evaluation of the program, leading to improvements in the approach.

Figure 9.2: Approach to workplace health promotion that could offer a guide to practice around safety at the operator level



Source: TCRP 2014, p. 135

10 Conclusions and recommendations

10.1 Conclusions

1. It would appear that there are many more incidents of aggressive behaviour occurring towards bus drivers than are officially recorded. For example, Lowe (2013) reports that operators say there are twice as many incidents than reported to Transport Safety Victoria. The BusVic survey suggests that drivers don't always report incidents to operators or other officials.

2. 'Official reporting' internationally, commonly involves only what is classified as 'serious'. This is defined a number of ways but commonly refers to physical assault or physical assault which results in hospitalisation. This classification overlooks the work on the impact of psychological violence and repeated 'lower levels' of violence, events that may lead to outcomes such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and/or other forms of stress in drivers.

3. It would seem that jobs that have a public interface, such as health professionals and social workers do carry a risk of assault. However, it would seem that the bus driver is particularly vulnerable to experiencing aggression, in part due to the nature of the job, as outlined in the BusVic

survey (e.g. long periods of sitting, dealing with traffic congestion) which may lead to a range of stress levels in itself, and partly due to their vulnerability, with issues such as isolation, confinement in a drivers' seat and the responsibility for the safety of other passengers.

4. The problem of aggression to drivers is only just being recognised internationally, with some prevention tactics beginning in some locations. More knowledge is needed to understand varying responses as some drivers reported they received good support after an incident, others reported a bad experience or tried to overlook the incident. The issue should eventually be broadened to encompass more information on the location and time of incidents to drivers, as well as other incidences between passengers on the bus and in other bus environments. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some members of the public have a concern about travelling on public transport arising from the behaviour of other passengers.

5. Putting in place measures to prevent aggression to bus drivers is a very important. The employer has a duty of care to employees, it could also be said that a less stressed driver is a better driver and there is a need to change the behaviour and perceptions of some members of the general travelling public. This approach should also improve the availability of people applying for bus driving positions and reduce staff turnover. It should also reduce workers compensation claims, industry costs and reduce the cost to the community of mental health problems (Lowe 2013).

10.2 Recommendations

The findings in this paper support the recommendations made in the paper by Lowe (2013). Other recommendations are also offered:

1. The problem of aggression to drivers needs to be addressed collaboratively. It needs to be tackled at the operator and industry (in partnership with other stakeholders) levels, as well as on a collaborative basis internationally.
2. More information is needed to better understand the problem and the more effective methods of prevention.
3. A campaign is needed to inform passengers of the unacceptability of aggressive and anti-social behavior while travelling on a bus or in locations associated with public transport, such as bus stops. This will need to be approached carefully so as to not feed in to public perceptions about a lack of safety on public transport. Such a campaign could be an early accomplishment for the Employee Safety Promotion Team of inter-agency stakeholders in Victoria.
4. Training needs to be provided for all drivers on how best to manage communication with difficult passengers.
5. Improve the quality and consistency of support given to drivers who have experienced an aggressive incident, without judgment by management as to what the impact of the event should be. This includes listening to the driver, offering a range of assistance and importantly, taking action against the perpetrator by providing evidence to support a case and encourage a prosecution, followed-up with an appropriate punishment of the offender.
6. The introduction of a range of prevention measures. The choice of measures should be guided by particular situations at the operator level and based on the knowledge and work of the overarching Employee Safety Promotion Team that has wide stakeholder

representation. Consideration should be given to the deployment of Protective Services Offices on buses.

7. Instigate approaches to improve the wellbeing and mental health of drivers, including life skills, good eating habits and financial skills.
8. Systematically collect data to understand issues such as trends and patterns of aggression and to identify hot spots and precursors to incidents, and evaluate the effectiveness of all prevention measures.

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Appendix A: Suggested Programs to Prevent Aggression

Appendix A offers recommendations from other jurisdictions about how to prevent aggression to drivers.

A1 Transport Safety Victoria: Managing difficult passengers

The following are extracts of advice from the website of Transport Safety Victoria

<http://www.transportsafety.vic.gov.au/bus-safety/safety-duties/bus-operators/managing-difficult-passengers#drivertraining>

‘Drivers may encounter difficult or aggressive passengers during the course of their duties. These passengers have the potential to distract and distress the driver. This page provides guidance for bus operators about how to manage the risks posed by disruptive passengers.’

‘The driver’s main priority and safety duty to the passengers is to concentrate on driving safely. If a passenger’s conduct distracts the driver it may be unsafe to continue the journey.’

Driver attitude and behaviour

‘If the driver remains calm and respectful toward the difficult passenger it may de-escalate the situation and reduce the risk of physical and verbal assaults.

Below are some tips for drivers:

- treat passengers with dignity and respect at all times
- accept differences in culture, language, religion, accents, gender and speech patterns
- speak clearly and ask passengers to repeat information if you are unsure
- remain calm, polite and professional at all times. Don't take insults or offensive language personally. Remember, your response may turn a minor situation into a major conflict
- maintain self control. Loss of temper affects drivers' judgment, reduces their driving ability and increases their stress
- empathise with the passenger when possible.

It is important to remember when dealing with difficult, intoxicated or drug affected passengers that their ability to make reasonable and rational decisions is greatly reduced.’

What to do if the situation escalates

‘Drivers should try to avoid conflict at all times. However, situations may arise that cannot be tolerated or ignored, such as when an assault has occurred, a threat has been made or other laws have been broken. In these circumstances, the driver should call **000** as soon as possible.

If the driver is concerned about a passenger's behaviour, the following actions may help:

- stop the vehicle when and where considered safe
- open all doors
- remain in the driver's seat or area if appropriate
- request the difficult or aggressive passenger to alight from the vehicle
- do not physically handle the passenger unless you are acting in self-defence. (If acting in self-defence the amount of force used must be reasonable and proportional)

- call 000
- call a supervisor.

If the difficult or aggressive passenger refuses to alight from the vehicle the driver could also consider the actions below:

- engage the handbrake, switch the engine off and remove the keys
- advise the other passengers that they may alight the vehicle
- alight from the vehicle
- wait until the police arrive.

Driver training

It is crucial that every driver understands the procedures and is given the opportunity to practice applying the procedures in a variety of situations.

Interpersonal skills training of frontline staff can be a proactive way to reduce the risk of difficult passengers. 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. For example, arguments, abuse or assault.

Consideration could be given to training in customer service, behavioural assessment and conflict prevention/mitigation.

Operator protection measures and technologies

Operators could also consider the use of available protection measures and technologies to assist in the management of difficult passengers.

Operators need to consider their own operational environment and the level of associated risk. The use of such technologies may be appropriate for high risk operations. ‘

Additional protection measures and technologies may include:

- duress alarms and emergency communications systems
- audio and/or video surveillance, such as CCTV
- barriers to protect the driver
- signage prohibiting violence to drivers
- GPS-based vehicle tracking
- self-defence tools and training for drivers
- counselling and employee assistance programs

A2 Steps taken to prevent violence to bus drivers in North America

The following seven preventative approaches have been taken in Toronto, as reported by Leck (2014), from the Toronto Transit Commission:

- CCTV placed in buses
- Court advocates to assist victims of crime
- News releases to raise public awareness of the problem and the impact of the event

- 'Professional' behavior of the driver
- Discretionary fare enforcement policy
- Barriers to protect the driver
- Employee Assault Prevention Team

Dubort (2014) noted that the Metro Vancouver Transit Police have nominated 17 responses against violence to drivers:

1. Respond to the scene if possible
2. Open a file on every operator assault
3. Assign an investigator who is responsible
4. Follow up with victim on every case
5. Employ all investigative techniques
6. Actively track status of all cases
7. Actively practice offender management
8. Investigate all threats
9. Expedite CCTV
10. Media awareness and news releases
11. Text and App Initiative
12. Monetary awards for tips
13. Court advocacy
14. CUTA lobbying Legislators
15. Workplace violence committee
16. Case Law Research on sentences
17. Report monthly at CAR

Volinski (2014) reports that prevention tactics given to new bus drivers are customer service skills; annual training on assault in relation de-escalation of events; use of video cameras on buses; development of a passenger code of conduct; and support to employees, maintaining contact with them.



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