

January extended track closures - impacts all lines



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14 March 2019 | South East Queensland

Sixteen officers are being recruited to boost ticket inspector numbers to combat a surge in fare evasion on Queensland's public transport.

Transport and Main Roads Minister Mark Bailey said a significant jump in fare evaders on public transport, particularly school buses, was costing about \$25 million a year in lost revenue.

"Last financial year, Queensland's school bus drivers recorded more than 1.53 million fare evasions, compared to about 875,000 the year before," Mr Bailey said.

"That trend was mirrored on urban bus services, where there were almost 600,000 more fare evasions in 2017/18, compared to the 1.06 million the year before.

"The majority of passengers do the right thing and pay their way, but we clearly have a growing problem with fare evasion on public transport.

"The government has a duty of care to ensure the safety of passengers but some of them, particularly older teenagers, are taking advantage of that.

"Bus drivers have told us about groups of young people who demand free travel, telling the drivers they have to let them on or the drivers could lose their job.

"This kind of behaviour can cause other passengers to feel unsafe and more free rides means less revenue for new and improved public transport services."

Mr Bailey said he had instructed TransLink to hire up to 16 new Senior Network Officers (SNOs) to add to the current pool of 55 officers that patrol all modes of public transport.

"The SNOs do an excellent job and boosting their numbers will give us a greater presence across the network," Mr Bailey said.

"Officers handed out more than 17,000 fines for public transport ticketing offences last financial year, but it's not possible to have SNOs on every bus, train, tram or ferry.

"We're committed to ensuring young and vulnerable passengers can get home safely but we need to have the conversation with our community about fare evasion and the best way to deal with it."

Mr Bailey said a roundtable would be held next month, inviting experts across government, the community services and education sectors to share their views on how to discourage fare evasion and address associated behavioural issues.

"Our public transport officers target known fare evasion hotspots, carry out joint operations with police and present education programs at schools, but clearly more needs to be done," Mr Bailey said.

"We'll use it as an opportunity to discuss policy options, enforcement, penalties and whether we need more education or early intervention programs.

"It will also look at how our frontline staff deal with fare evasion and discuss whether legislative changes would have an impact.

"There are no easy answers on this challenging social issue and we'll be drawing on the expertise and contributions from stakeholders across government and industry and the community sector to help us develop an action plan on fare evasion."

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