

Australian bus drivers demand increased security

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Work delegates representing bus drivers working for private companies in the Australian state of New South Wales will meet next week to consider industrial action. The drivers are angry over the increasing number of assaults on drivers because of the failure of operators to provide adequate security.

A recent survey revealed that almost half the 300 drivers interviewed had been assaulted or robbed. A spokesman for the Transport Workers Union said they were an "open target". "Government bus drivers are equipped with up-to-date training and security cameras, something that the Coach Association and private bus companies refuse to provide," he said.

In reality, government bus drivers, like their private sector counterparts, have been subject to cuts negotiated by their union that have resulted in one-man operations even on late night services.

In May 1997 a woman driver, Sue Benson, was raped at knifepoint while driving a government bus late at night. Even then, the Public Transport Union refused to demand two-man operations. Instead it accepted a government offer to pay for women drivers to receive instruction in self defence. Improvements to security have been minimal and assaults continue.

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