

Bid to halt grand prix tram strike

Sumeyya Ilanbey

The Andrews government is placing pressure on the Fair Work Commission to intervene to stop tram drivers striking during Melbourne's grand prix next month.

The government will today refer the tram union to the commission, although no date has been set for when the case will be heard.

Trams ground to a halt for four hours yesterday, with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and the network's operator, Yarra Trams, still at loggerheads over a pay deal.

More strikes are scheduled throughout March, some of which will directly impact the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix.

Public Transport Minister Melissa Horne has been under increasing pressure to end the impasse.

Yesterday she said the extraordinary intervention was the result of safety and economic issues surrounding the grand prix.

"Hundreds of thousands of people travel to and from the grand prix, and [we need to make] sure there are sufficient services in place, which is actually paramount to ensure the safety of the travelling public," Ms Horne said.

"If we're seeing any sort of crush loading or seeing any sort of lack of capacity on our tram network, that potentially is a safety risk."

The grand prix is the busiest time of year for Melbourne's trams.

Last year, more than 134,000 race fans used more than 7000 tram services throughout the four days.

Ms Horne said she warned Yarra Trams and the union earlier this week that she would refer them to the commission if industrial action was not called off.

She said she understood a final point of contention is Yarra Trams' desire to lift a cap on part-time workers from 4 per cent to 15 per cent, a move the minister says would benefit women.

Yarra Trams said it has offered workers a 12 per cent pay increase over four years and remains committed to continuing negotiations.

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