

# New seating rules on buses and trams

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Transport reporter

The front row of seats on Melbourne's trams and many buses will be out of bounds to commuters, and inquiry holes on tram driver cabins will be sealed in a bid to protect drivers from the coronavirus.

But the Rail, Tram and Bus Union is calling for stricter measures for frontline transport staff which are already in place in Europe, such as installing a cordon around the driver's cabin on older trams and requiring passengers to use the rear doors.

The union also wants more clarity on how staff should be handling Myki and cash, with transport workers in NSW, ACT and New Zealand now refusing to accept cash. Gloves and hand sanitiser have been shared with transport staff, but these resources are running low. Many drivers are wearing gloves and using disinfectant sprays to wipe down surfaces. Social distan-

cing rules requiring a minimum of four square metres per person in indoor gatherings are not being enforced on public transport at this stage, but Yarra Trams has now installed signs telling commuters they cannot sit in the front row, to "help keep your driver on the road".

The operator has already sealed off inquiry holes in 50 of Melbourne's trams with plastic tape and will roll this out across the rest of the fleet. Meanwhile, Metro is understood to be developing "pandemic leave" policy, which would require unwell staff or those in quarantine to exhaust their sick, carers and annual leave, before they are granted 10 additional days of paid leave.

Secretary of the union's tram and bus division Tariq Koc said workers should not be forced to use personal leave if they fall sick with the virus or services are reduced.

A Transport Department spokeswoman said operators were ramping up cleaning and safety measures on public transport to curb the spread of COVID-19.