

## Appendix 2 – The evolution of bus contracting in NSW from 2003

Table 6 is a detailed timeline of the evolution of bus contracting, TfNSW strategies and major government events from 2003 to date.

**Table 6 : Timeline of the evolution of bus contracting from 2003 to date**

Date	Event
2003	Unsworth review commissioned to create a bus transport system with standardised fares and consistent service levels.
2005 (multiple dates)	The 87 existing contract regions across Sydney were consolidated into 12 regions, with four regions operated by the State Transit Authority of New South Wales (STA).
December 2012	TfNSW released the 2012 Long Term Transport Masterplan for NSW. This plan was high-level but included several strategies which aimed to improve bus travel in the metropolitan Sydney area.
2013 (multiple dates)	The existing contract regions were consolidated into ten regions. Of these ten regions six were serviced by private operators under Sydney Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts (SMBSC), and the remaining four continued to be operated by the STA.
December 2013	The ‘Sydney’s bus future’ report was released detailing the NSW Government’s plan to make bus services ‘simpler, faster and better’. The report did not include targets for improvement or measures for bus performance. This report also noted ‘many bus services follow the original ... routes designed a century ago and do not take into account the shifting travel patterns of today’s customers’.
2013 to 2022	TfNSW produced one bus-specific plan – the 16 regional cities services improvement program, which reviewed and revised bus timetables and routes in 16 regional hubs.
July 2018	The first of the remaining STA regions (region 6) was transitioned to a private operator using the Sydney Bus Service Contract.
February 2022	Portfolio Committee No. 6 of the NSW Legislative Council established an inquiry to investigate into, and report on, the ‘privatisation of bus service’s via the Sydney Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts.
September 2022	The parliamentary committee reported that the privatisation of Sydney’s bus network had incentivised cost-cutting, and recommended (a) winding back privatisation in some regions, and (b) changing key performance indicators (KPIs) to include the quality of service provided.  Three members of the Government who sat on the Committee lodged a dissenting statement questioning the findings and motivations of the report.
September 2022	TfNSW released the updated ‘Future transport strategy 2056’ (the Strategy), which outlined plans to make travel easier, safer and more efficient. The Strategy is broadly agnostic to the mode of public transport used.

Date	Event
2020 to 2023 (multiple dates)	<p>The remaining three STA contract regions were transitioned to be private bus operations. Sydney Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts expired progressively and TfNSW used a competitive tender process to select operators to deliver new bus contracts.</p> <p>All of these contracts use the Greater Sydney Bus Contract, except region 6 (Inner West) which uses the Sydney Bus Service Contract.</p> <p>The number of operators servicing metropolitan Sydney decreased from nine to six.</p>
May 2023 to September 2024	<p>The NSW Bus Industry Taskforce was appointed by the incoming NSW Government to investigate operator performance and performance issues. The Taskforce had a broader remit than this audit and a statewide focus.</p> <p>The Taskforce found that driver shortages were the cause of most service cancellations and made several recommendations to alleviate the shortage. Other recommendations include a more collaborative approach to TfNSW’s management of bus contracts and that TfNSW undertake organisational change to focus on delivering services by mode – that is, TfNSW create an organisational unit that is accountable for bus, ferry and light rail, and consolidate the resources of TfNSW in the new unit to focus on public transport delivery.</p> <p>The Government has supported, or supported in principle, most of the Taskforce’s recommendations to date, and these actions form the basis of the Government’s current plan for bus sector reform. To date, TfNSW has actioned recommendations on the recruitment of more drivers and is in the process of actioning other recommendations.</p> <p>In its second report, the Taskforce advocated for the creation of a medium-term bus plan to represent a ‘unified approach to addressing current service gaps or improving and expanding services to deal with growth and changing patterns of demand’. TfNSW has advised that this plan will focus on future bus services and not on strategies to improve services under the GSBC.</p> <p>In its final report, the Taskforce highlighted the main themes arising from its work as a whole, and made recommendations on areas including the passenger experience, bus service contracts, safety and workforce strategy.</p>

Source: Audit Office of NSW analysis of TfNSW strategies, plans and policies, feedback from TfNSW, contract data, evidence from the parliamentary inquiry, and reviews commissioned by TfNSW.