

# Sunbus goes cash-free

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## Drivers refuse fares today as part of union action

PASSENGERS on Cairns Sunbuses today may receive a pleasant surprise.

About 100 of the city's bus drivers will be refusing to accept payment for fares as part of a fair work protest.

The drivers, who are part of the Transport Workers Union (TWU), are taking part in the action in a bid to have fair pay rises and working conditions.

TWU Queensland branch secretary Peter Biagini said the

action would prevent a full strike, while still sending a message to Sunbus and TAG Australia.

"This form of protected action, the non collection of fares, is the least disruptive action that drivers can take," he said.

"We hope that we can sign an agreement soon and end these actions, but it won't happen until our members are satisfied that they have not only

reasonable, but also secure, wages and conditions."

He said neither Sunbus nor TWU were ready to budge from where they stood on wages and work conditions.

"While there has been some productive meetings between Sunbus and TWU members, with both sides making some concessions, there hasn't been enough done to allay members' concerns about their rates of pay," he said. "Sunbus needs

to sit down with TransLink and work out a proper way to give these drivers what they deserve."

Sunbus Cairns general manager Bob Osmond said negotiations had reached a standstill.

"We regret that we are at an impasse in our negotiations with the TWU, despite our every effort to negotiate in good faith and reach a reasonable agreement," he said.

He said the strike action TWU held last week left people in Cairns high and dry without transport around the city.

"Tomorrow's refusal to collect passenger fares is another example of the TWU orchestrating pointless action, rather than negotiating in good faith towards a reasonable outcome," he said.

"We have been left with no choice but to apply for dispute

conciliation through the Fair Work Commission before further action damages our business beyond repair."

Today's work action follows last Friday's stop work action, leaving only two Sunbus services to cater for those in Cairns reliant on public transport.

Unlike last week's protest against current wages and working conditions, today's action will not negatively affect Sunbus passengers.

## Setback for casino ambitions

KELMENY FRASER

PLANS for a regional Queensland casino project have been dealt a new blow as another Chinese-owned developer says it is no longer interested.

Hong Kong casino billionaire Tony Fung's withdrawal in August of the \$8.15 billion Aquis project in Cairns from the state's mega casino-resort building scheme raised expectations it would open the way for fresh bids.

But a previous rival to Aquis, resort developer Fullshare Group, says it has chosen not to bid if a new round of licensing opens. Fullshare, which owns the Sheraton Mirage resort at Port Douglas, was one of 12 applicants in 2014.

Fullshare Brisbane manager Helen Hei said it had viewed Aquis' withdrawal as an opportunity.

But, she said, it had decided on a "direction change" for its Laguna Quays resort south of Proserpine to "health and well-being" after "numerous international discussions" about casino opportunities.

State Development Minister Anthony Lynham yesterday said the Government may go back to the market to seek expressions of interest, but had not yet made that decision.



NOTEWORTHY MILESTONE: Mabellina Wong, Angela Harding and Esther Knight are Cairns Street Chaplains celebrating their third birthday.

Picture: MARC MCCORMACK

## Chaplains keep on taking message to streets

KIMBERLEY VLASIC  
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EVERY weekend for the past three years, a group of dedicated volunteers has patrolled the streets of Cairns to ensure the city is a safe place for locals and tourists alike.

Revellers know that without fail Cairns Street Chaplains will be there to help them in times of need to offer first aid, directions or simply a kind word.

Tonight the street chaplains and their supporters will gather at the Cairns Esplanade to

mark the organisation's third anniversary and celebrate the launch of their new rest and recovery vehicle.

Angela Harding has been there from the first day, along with Esther Knight and Mabellina Wong.

She believes there will al-

ways be a place for street chaplains in Cairns.

"I see it as a service that will always be needed, no matter what measures are brought into the Safe Night Precinct," she said. "There are always some people who are just going to have a bit too much to drink

or just get separated from their friends. That's one of the main issues we deal with."

Ms Wong and Ms Knight said it was a rewarding role.

"People know that we are there for them ... and we feel honoured and privileged to be able to help," said Ms Wong.

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