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# Family bus companies win a fare go

FAMILY-owned bus firms have claimed victory in their war with the Andrews Government over new contracts.

Labor had been demanding smaller-scale operators sign up to new contracts that would see some or all of their assets acquired by the government.

The operators had held protests, including taking buses off

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the roads during rail-line shutdowns, and were considering a wider campaign ahead of the November state election.

But the government backed down and has now created another contract option.

Bus Association Victoria executive director Chris Lowe

confirmed the government would “offer incumbent operators a contract which does not oblige them to transfer any of their assets to government”.

“Those family business bus operators will now be able to continue providing the very high standard of community service that they have done for generations,” Dr Lowe said.

Opposition public transport spokesman David Davis said the climbdown was “embarrassing”, adding: “Victorians don’t want local bus companies run by Big Brother.”

The government had argued new contracts would provide more flexibility to improve and expand services “where they are needed most”.