

## **Inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW**

### **Responses to supplementary questions**

#### **Measures to assist Aboriginal people**

##### **Question 1**

Aboriginal people often rely heavily on private transport, yet they face difficulties with obtaining and retaining a driver's licence. Can you provide information about the Driving Change Licensing Support program? Are there plans to expand the program to other regions?

##### **Response**

Driving Change is a community driven program assisting young Aboriginal people to navigate through the licensing system and attain their driver licence. The program has been designed and implemented in partnership with a range of community organisations including Tribal Warrior Redfern, Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association (SACYA), Griffith Aboriginal Lands Council, Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation, Dubbo Aboriginal Lands Council, Taree Indigenous Development and Employment (TIDE), Red Cross Wagga, AB Central Campbelltown, Mallee Family Care Dareton, Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre, Raymond Terrace PCYC and Bourke Justice Reinvestment Program. Youth Workers have been appointed in twelve sites across NSW, while Bobby Porykali and Patricia Cullen from the Injury Division provide central support for the program.

Supported by the AstraZeneca Young Health Programme and the NSW Government with strong community involvement, this innovative program provides assistance for young people through the licensing process with the vision of fostering greater social inclusion and economic independence. TfNSW contributed over \$581,000 to the project.

The Driving Change project is led by the George Institute's Professor Rebecca Ivers from the Injury Division, and also involves Dr Kate Hunter and Associate Professor Lisa Keay. The program has a steering committee with representation from multiple NSW and Australian Government agencies as well as a range of community stakeholders. Additionally, the project will be subject to a robust evaluation that is currently being overseen by a scientific committee.

The program finished in September 2016. Many sites are now covered by the Driver Licensing Access Program (described below). An evaluation is underway.

For more information contact Patricia Cullen [pcullen@georgeinstitute.org](mailto:pcullen@georgeinstitute.org) or Rebecca Ivers [rivers@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:rivers@georgeinstitute.org.au)

#### **Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety's Driver Licensing Access Program (DLAP)**

The Driver Licensing Access Program for disadvantaged and Aboriginal people aims to improve access to the driver licensing system and support them to become safe and legal drivers.

The attainment of a driver licence will also contribute to social and health wellbeing by increasing access to employment, education and health and wellbeing opportunities.

The guiding principles underpinning DLAP include:

- Reduce barriers preventing entry to the licensing system and progress through the GLS.

- Improve road safety among disadvantaged and Aboriginal people by supporting them to meet the GLS requirements, leading to reduced crash and injury rates.
- Build on existing successful community education and mentoring programs to harness program efficiency.
- Build community capacity and leadership to support access to the licensing system by leveraging existing networks of community supports and programs.
- Link and integrate with existing education, employment, health, life skill programs and court diversion programs.
- Ensure a culturally responsive approach to program design and delivery.

In 2015-16, there were eight service providers, with total funding of \$1.2 million. These included:

Ace Community Colleges Limited, Bara Barang Corporation Limited, Birrang Enterprise Development Company, Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association, TAFE Illawarra, TAFE New England, TAFE Western Sydney, Weave Youth and Community Services.

The services provided include:

- Literacy, numeracy and computer skills
- Licensing enrolment support
- Learner driver mentoring and supervision
- Access to roadworthy vehicles
- Debt negotiation and management
- Road safety education and coaching.

In 2016-17, total funding will also be \$1.2 million. There will be thirteen service providers.

All eight providers from 2015-16 will be retained and the following new providers will be funded: Australian Red Cross Society, Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council, Gordon Solutions, Great Lakes Community Resources Incorporated and Salvation Army.

The program has also been re-prioritised to provide more service coverage based on the above service principles.

## **Question 2**

The Committee is aware that transport services for Aboriginal people need to be culturally appropriate.

## **Response**

(a) How do you identify what makes a culturally appropriate service?

- Transport for NSW employs an Aboriginal Service Development Officer (identified Aboriginal worker position) to work with community transport providers across NSW and consult with Aboriginal people.
- Ideally service providers also will have completed Transport for NSW's training program, Aboriginal Cultural Education.
- In addition, the Aboriginal Service Development Officer works with community transport services to assist them to use language that can be easily understood by the client and to communicate appropriately with Aboriginal clients.

(b) How do you engage with local Aboriginal communities about the transport services they require?

- Both the Aboriginal Service Development Officer and community transport services are expected to consult with Aboriginal communities about the service that they

require. The approach that is taken is to consult via face to face meetings, emails, telephone calls.

- Services across NSW are encouraged to attend Koori Interagency and maintain frequent contact with Aboriginal networks to build on identified Aboriginal community needs.
- Community transport providers that offer services for Aboriginal communities are encouraged to develop appropriate fliers and brochures with plain English and appropriate images that will help the customers understand that the information is relevant to them.
- Transport for NSW also engages with Aboriginal communities by providing a significant funding program that enables disadvantaged Aboriginal people to get back to country for funerals, something that is highly culturally significant.
- A number of options are available to facilitate attendance ranging from refunding costs of public transport by 100%, bus hire refunded by 50%, and fuel vouchers. This program is managed by an Aboriginal Service Development Officer who has strong ties with community representatives across NSW.

### **Accessibility**

#### **Question 3.**

The Committee has heard that train replacement services are often not accessible, with part of a train journey replaced by coach services. How are bookings from people with disability handled in these situations?

#### **Response**

NSW Trains has advised that there are four possible scenarios in which this may occur. In all instances a person travelling with a disability can be identified in the booking system by the type of booking made or through comments made in the booking by our sales staff. It is rare that an alternative mode of accessible transport cannot be sourced.

**Scenario 1** – A train terminates mid-service and is replaced by a coach or alternative mode:

- Service locked for further bookings;
- A customer travelling with a disability and/or booked in a wheelchair or accessible seat is identified by NSW TrainLink's Customer Support Group (CSG);
- The Daily Operations Continuity Centre (DOCC) Supervisor arranges an accessible coach to be sourced for the remainder of the journey;
- If an accessible coach is not available, the customer is transported by accessible taxi;
- If no accessible transport mode is available for the remainder of the journey, alternative arrangements are made to accommodate the customer;
- The customer is contacted by NSW TrainLink's Contact Centre to advise them of the arrangements;
- If the customer does not wish to continue travel, their booking is moved back or alternative arrangements made.

**Scenario 2** – Planned trackwork with coaches replacing trains:

- Accessible coaches are sourced to replace trains;
- Timetable changes due to trackwork are altered in the booking system by CSG, who search bookings made in accessible or wheelchair allocated seats;
- Wheelchair and accessible seats are locked for bookings and placed on request – to confirm;
- If a person with a disability is booked, the Contact Centre contacts them and advises of the accessible coach service;

- The customer chooses to either postpone their journey or accept the replacement coach service;
- If an accessible coach is not available to replace the train, process is as per Scenario 1 above.

**Scenario 3** – Supplementary coach for late running service (This is usually a situation on short-notice);

- Coach sourced;
- If a customer travelling with a disability is already booked on the service, CSG notify the DOCC Supervisor who makes all attempts to source an accessible coach;
- Bookings are searched by CSG and the Contact Centre advises the customer of the late running service by SMS;
- The customer has the choice of remaining with the late service or boarding the accessible (if available) supplementary coach;
- If the customer opts to utilise the supplementary coach, and an accessible supplementary coach is not available, another accessible transport mode is sourced (eg: taxi).

**Scenario 4** – Replacement coach for timetabled service:

- Scheduled coach service failure in operation;
- The contracted coach company or driver will advise the DOCC Supervisor;
- CSG will lock wheelchair spaces in the booking system;
- Coach company will make arrangements for wheelchair customers;
- Notification of change to coach / non-compliant coach - coach company will advise if it is unable to provide a wheelchair compliant coach;
- If it cannot, CSG locks wheelchair spaces, and bookings are then 'on request '.
- In all instances the DOCC Supervisor makes a decision on how to best ensure the customer travelling with a disability is able to complete their journey as planned, or if not possible, provide best alternative options in consultation with CSG, and the Contact Centre in contact with the customer.

**Question 4 (a).**

Please provide information about the First Stop travel training program. Will it be made available to people in rural and regional NSW?

**Response**

During 2015, Transport for NSW's Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance Branch made a significant investment in the development of the First Stop Transport online resources that provide a range of information for new or infrequent public transport users living across NSW. The resources were released in December 2015, and are available for free and any organisation or individual to use [firststop.transportnsw.info](http://firststop.transportnsw.info) First Stop Transport provides tips for making public transport trips as easy as possible. It addresses the real and perceived barriers people may have to using public transport. The resources are relevant to anyone in NSW, including people living in rural and regional NSW.

The range of topics includes:

- Getting to and from public transport
- Using timetables and online trip planners
- Types of tickets
- Identifying accessible services
- Being safe throughout the trip
- Where to ask for help

First Stop Transport includes travel training information and resources to help people teach others how to use public transport. Training can be provided to individuals or groups in a range of methods ways such as information sessions, activities, simulations, or real practice using the NSW public transport network.

**Question 4 (b).**

Will it be made available to people in rural and regional NSW?

**Response**

The online tool [firststop.transportnsw.info](http://firststop.transportnsw.info) provides information on how to use public transport that is relevant to anyone living in NSW, including people living in rural and regional areas.

To support these resources TfNSW has committed Community Transport Program (CTP) funds to trial a new program for the delivery of travel training to transport disadvantaged people, including seniors and people with disabilities. From 1 July 2016 funds have been made available for 2 years to train people living in Sydney, the Central Coast and Newcastle, to reflect the availability of public transport in these areas and to test the program. There are funds available for other rural and regional areas based on an unsolicited expression of interest process. Recently funds were allocated to the Northern Rivers area to trial the program in a rural and regional setting.

**Question 5.**

The Committee heard that comprehensive information about the location of accessible transport infrastructure would help passengers plan their journeys. How is information about the accessibility of transport infrastructure publicised?

**Response**

The Accessing Sydney Trains brochure includes information on accessibility of all inter-city stations. The trip planning tools on transportnsw.info and via the 131500 phone line provide information on accessible stations throughout NSW.

Contracted regional bus services are also required to include wheelchair accessible services on their online and printed timetables.

**Question 6 (a)**

The reliability of internet access is an issue in rural and regional NSW. How can people who are not online access information and make travel plans?

**Response**

The trip planning tools on transportnsw.info cover all public transport modes across the whole of NSW. People without online access can telephone 131500 to find out information about the availability of public transport in their area.

**Question 6 (b)**

What impact will unreliable internet access have on the rollout of CTABS in rural and regional NSW?

## **Response**

TfNSW is investing \$8 million over 5 years in the community transport industry with a new technology platform “CTABS” that will enable community transport service providers to increase the number of services they can deliver to meet the growing demand. The roll-out of CTABS commenced in early 2016 and is expected to be completed by mid-2018.

CTABS will assist service providers to deliver efficient and timely transport services to eligible customers. In addition the technology will improve the service offering that may be available through improved data on usage, unmet demand and cost of services.

Longer term the information that CTABS will provide will enable state-wide analysis of service delivery. It will inform decision making on how to become more efficient through increased transparency of vehicle utilisation. Finally it will provide an opportunity to understand the cost of service on a distance based calculation creating more equitable allocation of funding for rural and regional community transport services.

CTABS is a cloud-based technology solution. It requires an internet connection to make and manage trip bookings. Currently all community transport service providers have internet connections in their offices to enable the use of CTABS.

In addition the CTABS solution uses tablets in vehicles to track the delivery of services – the tablets replace paper manifests (run sheets). Drivers interact with the tablet so that despatch in the office knows where they are at any point in time and when clients have been picked up or dropped off.

Trips can be added or removed from the tablet’s manifest based on where the driver is located. Despatch can communicate with the driver without the need to distract them with radio or phone contact. If the internet signal is lost, the tablet continues to record driver interactions and will update automatically once back in signal range – this is known as “store and forward”.

## **Subsidies**

### **Question 7**

Extending the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) was a recommendation of the point to point transport taskforce. The Committee has heard that extending the Scheme would increase transport and create employment opportunities. Will the Scheme be extended to point to point providers such as Uber?

### **Response**

The Government response to the Point to Point Transport Taskforce report accepted the taskforce recommendation to consider changing the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) to a service provider-neutral transport subsidy scheme. It doing so, it agreed to:

- examine the viability of wheelchair accessible services given the higher capital and running costs associated with providing these services and
- the effectiveness and adequacy of passenger subsidies and other incentives for the provision of services to all people with disabilities.

The Review will begin in the coming months.

## Responses to Questions on Notice

### Question on Notice 1

**The CHAIR:** At some stations—not all, because country stations vary in height. There is a submission from Mr Steve Austin about the situation in Armidale. He, along with Peter Bannon, says he will no longer use the train because the length of the ramp is so short and the gradient is so steep from the platform to the train that it is simply unsafe to use it. He will not use it and neither will anyone else in wheelchairs. He said that there were supposed to be some longer ramps installed on those trains. He presented a letter to the Committee that indicated that that would be the case. When will the longer ramps be made available on the Xplorer fleet to resolve the differential height between platforms and trains so that everyone, not just those who are able-bodied, can access the train?

**Mr WING:** Let me start by saying that of course in an ideal world we would be able to have all the trains flush to the platform, but of course we have historic situations—different height platforms and different train sets as well—so in many cases we require a boarding ramp. We provide those so that people using wheelchairs and others can get on and we make sure they are available. We have ramps and we are complying with requirements, of course, but what we always want to do is make the best customer experience we can. We do not have a date for when those new ramps will be rolled out but we are considering how we can respond to those requirements. If some customers are feeling unsafe, that is important to us, simply as a customer experience as much as anything else. While we would say the ramps are safe, we do care about what the customers think and we are responding to that.

**The CHAIR:** There was a suggestion that, given the situation at Armidale and it may be the same for other regional stations, with the platform being so much lower than the train, the length of ramp needed to make it safe would be prohibitive to store on the train—that is, it would be too long. We are talking about it being almost two metres in length, so it cannot be stored on the train. Instead of having the ramp on the train, if we are only talking about a number of stations in country New South Wales, why not store the ramp at the station so that the staff member from the station can put the ramp in rather than have the train carry different sized ramps all the way around the State?

**Mr WING:** We do have some stations where we store ramps. I do not know the specifics of Armidale—I will have to take that one on notice—but I am happy to go and look at that specific case and see whether it is possible.

### Response:

- NSW Trains is aware of the situation in some regional stations where the large height difference between the platform and the train results in an increased ramp incline.
- Options to rectify the situation have been reviewed and the solution adopted is to develop a longer ramp that is stored at the affected stations. It is anticipated the longer ramps will be implemented in the next financial year.
- Where there are station staff in attendance, they will be able to assist. Otherwise on-board crew will need to leave the train, access a locked station box and then assist the customers on or off the train.
- In Armidale there is staff in attendance when trains depart. On arrival, on-board staff have time to manage it since the trains are stabled overnight.

### Question on Notice 2

**Mr LEE-WILLIAMS:** Yes, we are. There are quite a number of fuel card schemes around and we provide quite a few fuel cards through our—I cannot remember the acronym now. I

think it is called the transport access regional partnership grants program. It used to be called the RTC grants program. It is a small fund of \$900,000 per year, and always within a community or local government. It is to fill those gaps that we do not fill through the service provision and there are a lot of fuel cards that go out via that.

**The CHAIR:** Can you take that question on notice and provide some information to the Committee on that particular scheme if it is already there, because we have been asked to consider this scheme. There are obviously a couple of models out there and we would like any information you can provide on that.

**Response:**

The projects under the Transport Access Regional Partnerships (TARP) program consist of the following:

*Buninyong Community Bus Initiative (Buninyong Public School), Central West – 2013-14*

The Elders in the Buninyong community attended community consultation conducted by Cox Inall Ridgeway and articulated their difficulty in having access to reliable transport for access to social, cultural and wellbeing activities in their community. This led to provision of fuel subsidies and driver wages to support Elders accessing activities in the community. This supported Buninyong School in the program "Schools as Community Centres" partner. This program has identified improved outcomes across all levels of community when Elders and families are able to be supported to participate in aspects of youth schooling. Not only is school attendance improved, but parents and Elders are able to support the youth and in return benefit from their social engagement.

*PCYC Wellington Courtesy Bus (PCYC Wellington), Central West – 2015-16*

This purpose of this project was to enable isolated and disadvantaged youth to attend after school, weekend or school holiday activities. The aim is to give young people options to participate in the community and prevent them from engaging in anti-social behaviour. Transport NSW is meeting the cost of the transport through fuel subsidies. Transport was provided by the PCYC using a Community Transport vehicle.

*It Stops in the Far West (It Stops Here – A Safer Pathway), Far West Community Legal Centre Inc. –2014-15*

This project was designed to complement and facilitate the "It Stops here: A Safer Pathway" domestic violence reforms. The project provides a number of transport options to women and children escaping violence. The project operates in conjunction with NSW Police. The project provides transport tailored to the individual clients needs as determined by Police and the Safety Action Meeting (SAM). It can take the form of taxi vouchers, fuel vouchers or public transport tickets.

*Traction Thru Transport (Walgett Shire Council), Western – 2015-16*

This project will assist Walgett Shire Council in facilitating two years of transport specifically related to community-based opportunities. The vehicles are provided by Council and use fuel subsidies. Planned events across the Walgett LGA have a whole-of-community focus with specific activities and opportunities organised across a variety of age and interest groups. Other transport activities will include the development of young people with regarding to transport related skills and capacity.

*All Aboard Louth (Louth Public School), Western – 2015-16*

All Aboard, Louth is a 2 year project that will provide transport to Louth residents via subsidised fuel costs for a number of local privately owned vehicles. The funding will be auspiced by the Louth Public School parents and community association. All community members will have the opportunity to access trips that are subsidised through this project (car pooling) for on average, a little over one trip per month. Primary destinations will include



Bourke, Cobar, Broken Hill and Dubbo as well as one trip to Sydney. It is estimated that between 15 and 21 residents will have access to the transport on each trip.

*Heading West (Tweed Byron Ballina Community Transport), North Coast – 2015-16*

Provided subsidised group transport through two collaborative community transport providers for Aboriginal community members to access the NSW Aboriginal Knockout in Dubbo. TfNSW contributed towards meeting the cost of bus transport, fuel vouchers and public transport tickets. Community transport and the passengers will meet all other costs.

*Move to Safety project*

This project operates across five safe houses in the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett LGAs. It is aimed at women and children escaping violence, and money is reimbursed for only one vehicle at a time.

*Goodooga's 'Let's Go Goodooga' project*

This project uses a fuel subsidy. It is managed through the Brewarrina Shire Council and appears to be going smoothly.