

**Submission
No 118**

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Legislative Assembly Inquiry into Inter- Regional Public Transport

CURRENT SITUATION

Eurobodalla has a current permanent population of approximately 38,000 people extending 110kms between the towns of Central Tilba to the South and Batemans Bay to the North. A large portion of the Shire remains unpopulated due to the extent of land being national park or state forest. The Shire is unusual in that 37% of ratepayers are non-residents. Just over 11% of ratepayers are residents of the ACT. The population is projected to grow by 50,000 by 2024 being double the state growth.

The limited avenues of public transport forces an increase in vehicle usage in the Eurobodalla.

Visitors to the area do have an option to travel by long distance coach or by air but are more likely to travel via private passenger vehicle. This lack of public transport adds to the road safety risk.

A strategic direction is for Council to improve facilities within its transport corridors to achieve a steady increase in public transport usage.

The Eurobodalla continues to be an extremely popular holiday destination with future trends reflecting strong visitation rates for day and overnight trippers. The bulk of overnight visitors reside intrastate including the ACT. Last year, a total of 623,000 trips were made by intrastate visitors compared to 533,000 day trippers. These figures do not include non-resident ratepayers. The significant number of holiday traffic has enormous road safety implications. Weekend and peak seasonal countermeasures require specific attention. Due to the Eurobodalla being a popular holiday destination, the population can swell to 120,000 during peak periods.

Long distance coaches from/to Eurobodalla

Priors Scenic Express Daily services (except Saturday) between Sydney and the Eurobodalla Coast via the Southern Highlands and Kangaroo Valley. Connecting with CityRail and CountryLink services.

Murrays Coaches Daily coach services between Canberra and the Eurobodalla Coast. Daily Coach services Canberra to Sydney

DEPARTS Eurobodalla approx. 2 pm arrives Canberra 5:30pm

RETURNS Canberra 7:30am arrives Eurobodalla approx. 11:00am

This service means that for a 10am appointment in Canberra, the traveller needs to spend 2 nights

V-Line Rail/coach service three times per week between Melbourne and Batemans Bay (Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays)

Premier Motor Service Coaches travel several times daily between Sydney and Melbourne via the Eurobodalla Coast.

CountryLink (excluding the Eurobodalla Shire)

CountryLink operates daily wheelchair accessible rail and coach services across most of NSW. CountryLink train connections are available from Canberra via Goulburn onto Sydney and a combined coach and train service from Canberra to Melbourne via Cootamundra.

CityRail

A CityRail train connection to Sydney via Wollongong is available at Bomaderry (Nowra)

Rixon's Door to Door Bus Services

Rixons are an Owner-operated family business catering for people on the South Coast of NSW between Milton/Ulladulla & Batemans Bay to Narooma wishing to travel to Canberra & Sydney. Rixon's offer a door-to-door same-day-return service to Canberra (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday) for people needing to travel for business, medical appointments, airport or bus connections, conferences or shopping. Fares: approx. \$40.00

Bookings are essential and stops include Braidwood, Bungendore, Queanbeyan, Woden shops and Canberra Airport as well as Jolimont Bus Station for connections. Other stops include Canberra Hospital, Calvary Hospital, John James Hospital and Eye Hospital for medical appointments.

Mon, Wed, Thu, Fri (typical times)

Departs: Batemans Bay 7.30am Arrive: Canberra City 10:15am

Departs: Canberra City 4.30pm Arrive: Batemans Bay 7.00pm

A survey of passengers using Rixon's door to door service indicated that:

3 in 4 people use the service as for its door to door service saving passengers additional transport costs and difficulties in accessing bus and taxi services in Canberra.

28% of customers had mobility problems, 36% have pensioner concessions and 43% are aged over 65 years with a higher percentage being female.

Although most passengers were content to pay the fare for such a door to door service, many highlighted the concessions fares available to neighbouring shires residents who have government contracted services.

It was found that customers mainly use the service to visit family (34%) access medical services (24%) and recreation (17%). These figures confirm a strong link between Eurobodalla residents and Canberra.

Students also make up a high percentage of potential users with needing to travel to campus' outside the Eurobodalla for their tertiary education or Apprenticeships block study releases.

INTER-REGIONAL SPORT TRAVEL:

- Kids who play in the local sporting competitions but also wish to play in a higher standard are required to travel to Canberra on weekends to play. They are required to use private transport. A number of Rep teams in the Shire to play other regional teams and they are often required to travel to Bega, Wollongong, Canberra and Goulbourn.
- Elite athletes do not have access to high level coaches and also need to travel to AIS in Canberra.
- Some local competitions cover two districts i.e. AFL covers the whole of Eurobodalla and Bega and therefore teams are required to travel from one regional centre to another.
- Some sports have removed their junior teams from regional competitions to avoid the travelling. Parents spend 4 hours on the road to attend a 30min game.
- Some sports are not offered all year round such as swimming and therefore people who are required to swim all year round need to travel to Ulladulla in the northern districts.

Council is approached on a regular basis to provide funding to help local athletes cover travel expenses. Parents often comment on the cost of participation of sport not due to uniforms and equipment but due to the time and cost associated with travel.

Inquiry Terms of Reference

That the Committee inquire into how inter-regional transport can better serve the needs of regional NSW.

(a) how CountryLink services can be improved;

- Eurobodalla is not part of the Countrylink network. A big improvement would be to provide a service which would complement current services and initially fill the gaps which currently exist.
- V-link however travels through towards Sydney and stops along the Eurobodalla to which our Narooma VIC is a stop hence sells ticket. The coach also stops in Orient Street Batemans Bay

(b) how network linkages between CountryLink train and coach services can be improved;

- Eurobodalla has no train services hence no coach link so question is N/A.
- However CountryLink surprisingly suggests 'Must See' product that is located in Eurobodalla such as the Mogo Zoo and Central Tilba without any consideration as to the means of transportation.
- Central Tilba is claimed as Sapphire and V-link provide a tour that includes a day visit here
- V-Line has an excellent service linking our region to Victoria via a train/coach network link

(c) the potential for CountryLink services to carry light freight;

- Bus Services would have limited capacity however one would assume that for those regions serviced by rail, capacity would exist to carry light freight. The possibility of VFT (Very Fast Train) in the future would no increase the potential for CountryLink to increase their light freight capability.

(d) how CountryLink can be better utilized to increase tourism in New South Wales;

- Improvement in transportation from Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and other links to regional NSW from Batemans Bay and Narooma can have benefits in tourism.
- Currently almost all arrivals to Eurobodalla are via private vehicles as regional services are very limited and have somewhat diminished over the years with services reduced by some 40% to current levels
- CountryLink can extend the offering of multi day 'extended tours' to include Eurobodalla by using the Kings highway, traversing along the coast road stopping at towns and villages and looping up via Bega returning via Cooma.
 - i) Taking this option would provide CountryLink with more opportunities.
 - ii) Tourism in Eurobodalla with Extended Stays could benefit to the same of greater extent currently offered to Sapphire Coast.
 - iii) Must See experiences such as Mogo Zoo are then a reality

(e) how the amount of inter-regional travel undertaken by public transport can be increased

- As stated in our introduction currently there is limited inter-regional transport to Eurobodalla.
 - i) Premier Motor Services traverse the Princes Highway from Sydney to Melbourne with selected stops on selected days within Eurobodalla
 - ii) VLine also travel the Princes Highway from Sydney to Melbourne again, selected days and stops
 - iii) Murrays traverse the Kings Highway; Canberra to Narooma Daily with selected stops (By departing in the afternoon and arriving in Canberra at 5:30pm, travellers must often plan 2 overnight stays to make it to their appointments.)
 - iv) Priors Scenic Coaches is a local bus company that runs Sunday to Friday from Batemans Bay (and most days from Narooma) to Sydney Western suburbs via Kangaroo Valley at selected stops
- CountryLink could supply services that don't conflict with the services currently provide thus filling the gap for those who wish to travel at opposing times of the day from what is being offered. (e.g. no departure to Sydney in the pm)

(f) the extent to which regional public transport networks are integrated and how they can be better integrated;

- There is no apparent integration in public transport in the region, as public transport is not provided merely localised transport and state to state transport.
- Need to look at integrating public inter-regional services with local transport and the private long haul coach operators to deliver a more practical user-friendly service.

(g) the role local councils can play in improving inter-regional public transportation networks; and

- Conduct community consultation session with various interest groups to assist State govt and other stakeholders to assess and meet community needs.
- Plan for and provide the infrastructure with good access to safe bus shelters

(h) the type of buses and trains that will be required for the provision of regional passenger services in the future

- Air-conditioned modern suitably fitted coaches or mini coaches (30 seater min) that will attract tourism and local patronage
- In the future, buses and trains should comfortably cater to higher percentage of travellers falling in the older demographics and many with limited mobility
- Other design considerations should be given to storage of larger items ie bicycles. Surfboards, mobility devices. Technology could be better integrated for entertainment and information purposes as seen on planes