

**Submission  
No 15**

**ACCESS TO TRANSPORT FOR SENIORS AND  
DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE IN RURAL AND  
REGIONAL NSW**

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## Submission 15: Delegate Progress Association

Delegate is a small community near the NSW/Victorian border.

The town of 350 residents does not have any form of public transport or any type of taxi service.

The population of Delegate is stable but ageing.

Delegate has limited access to medical facilities, it has an MPS but no emergency facility due to the lack of doctor in the town.

Residents have to travel 38km to the nearest larger centre of Bombala. Bombala has an MPS with slightly more facilities than Delegate. Pathology and Xray services are only provided on one day per week. There is one full time and two part time doctors and no specialist services. Consequently any specialist medical services have to be sourced in Canberra or Sydney. Any serious illnesses or injuries have to be sent on from Bombala to Canberra, Bega or Cooma.

Many of the Delegate residents have lived in the town most of their lives, their homes are here, they own their homes and do not wish to move to other areas where they would be less financially stable and would lose their community support.

Older residents become less able to drive long distances but because of the decline in health services to rural areas this has become a necessity. To maintain connection to family the older residents need to be able to travel far afield.

There is a Trainlink service to Canberra Kingston Station. This service was changed to a very arduous timetable when the State Govt in a cost cutting measure included Jindabyne in the bus route from Bombala to Cooma. Despite protests from the local people and assurances that their concerns would be considered this is still the timetable followed.

This bus service is the only viable option for people who need to travel to Sydney as it connects with the Sydney train, both coming and going. The Bombala bus leaves at 6.50am and arrives in Canberra 4 1/2 hrs later. The Jindabyne people have a direct service to Canberra but Bombala and Delegate residents are forced to endure a long and at times risky bus trip from Bombala to Jindabyne especially in winter when there could be snowy and icy conditions. If a traveller is going to Canberra or Cooma for a medical appointment a long tedious, bus trip is not going to enhance their medical condition. Because of the increased travel time the bus schedule is too tight for an appointment on that day in Canberra and then a return trip so now an overnight stay in Canberra is necessary, adding considerably to the financial burden of a pensioner. Residents travelling from Delegate have to depend upon the goodwill of neighbours or family to take them into Bombala at 6am and to collect them from the bus at 4pm. This becomes particularly onerous in winter.

Residents who are able to drive to Bombala but wish to take public transport to Canberra or Sydney, and are not returning for a longer period of time, have no secure place in Bombala to leave their car during their absence.

As an alternative to the current situation can we suggest the following 1) Numbers of passengers joining the service in Bombala are relatively small, so why can't a small bus be provided which leaves Delegate at 7.30am, picks up in Bombala at 8am and then connects with the Bega/Canberra trainlink service at Nimmitabel? 2) This small bus could meet the Canberra/Bega trainlink bus in the afternoon. There are more options with time for this scenario. 3) A different bus service would run from Jindabyne through Dalgety, Berridale and back to Cooma. In season there are many bus services to Jindabyne why should Delegate and Bombala be held hostage to their demands? 4) The small bus could also function as a transport opportunity for residents who just want to travel to Bombala for the day. 5) The small bus could also provide links to V-Line services on the days when the Train link service does not currently operate, although by meeting up with the Nimmitabel Trainlink service there is a 7day a week opportunity.

We hear that the Sydney metro service will be 'world class' perhaps we should publicise that the metro service might be fantastic but the isolated country services are even worse than third world, in that they don't even exist!

It is time for the urban centred policy makers to start to consider the reality of small isolated communities. Older people cannot drive long distances, they do not like to rely on the goodwill of others, they should not have to leave their lifelong homes - remembering that real estate prices in the larger centres and the cost of retirement homes is way beyond any price they might get for their modest country homes- and they do not like feeling that they are some kind of burden on the city centred administration.

Livability is a much used buzz word but the winding down of services in the rural areas is making a mockery of the word. Accessible, affordable public transport is a keystone of livability and yet it is denied the country residents. Australia prides itself on the rural tradition, what a shame that the reality of country living especially for the ageing, proves this a disgraceful lie.