

**Submission
No 27**

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

Organisation: BusNSW
Name: Mr Darryl Mellish
Position: Executive Director
Date Received: 19 July 2016



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

Submission by BusNSW - 19/7/2016

BusNSW members provide bus and coach transport in NSW. Services are provided under various contractual and or regulatory environments and include transport in Rural and Regional (RR) NSW for students, adults, seniors and people that are transport disadvantaged, including those with disabilities.

There appears to be a number of schemes/programs in place for transporting seniors and disadvantaged people in RR NSW, in addition to regular passenger services provided by various modes (rail, bus, coach, other).

BusNSW recommends a matrix is prepared identifying the eligibility applicable to each service, and the service procurement and funding mechanisms that apply under the various schemes/programs. This would form the basis for establishing overlaps and gaps, and could be used to improve services for seniors and disadvantaged people in RR NSW.

Current reforms to Community Transport Contracts, NDIS and the Assisted School Travel (AST) program need to be taken into account, as does proposed changes to the country rail and trainlink coach services. How the point to point industry can better service this demographic in RR NSW should also be considered.

There appears to be an absence of an overall plan covering the NSW Government's commitment to providing transport services for seniors and disadvantaged people in RR NSW. There are a number of initiatives underway to support improved mobility options for seniors and people with disabilities including travel training, community transport on line booking systems, the legalisation of point to point transport, and wheel chair accessible taxi subsidies. These seem to currently operate in isolation of each other.

In response to the points raised in the Terms of Reference BusNSW offers the following comments.

1. Specific issues relating to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW;

- There needs to be a single point of reference for seniors and people with a disability or other transport disadvantage to find out the transport options available to them and how to access them.
- When travelling longer distances are involved it is important to limit the number of interchanges required.

2. Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW;

- The Transport Standards under the Disability and Discrimination Act apply in NSW. The committee should refer to the current 5-year review of these standards including the submissions made by the bus industry. Consideration should be given to reviewing the standards applying to services that primarily carry school children with a view to seeing if more of these service could be made more accessible, with support from the NSW Government (I.e. above the National standards).

3. Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and timetabling generally;

- In many areas of RR NSW, the bus stop infrastructure is an impediment for seniors and people with disability.
- Consideration should be given to better aligning safety standards (accreditation requirements) relating to operators, drivers and vehicles.
- The NSW Government should consider where improvements to the frequency and coverage of regular passenger services under Transport for NSW contracts could provide mobility and social inclusion benefits to the community.

4. Support that can be provided to seniors and disadvantaged people to assist with the costs of private transport where public transport is either unavailable or unable to meet the needs of these groups;

- A review of the current funding sources (as well as eligibility criteria) and assets which cover multiple jurisdictions (federal and state) may identify savings that can be applied to assist with costs. An example of this may be utilising buses funded to provide school services to provide community transport services during the day.

5. Any other related matters.

- It is important that the committee give proper consideration to the importance of reducing social exclusion and ensuring seniors and disadvantaged people have access to services in a comparable way to those living in major urban areas. Transport services provided by buses and coaches needs to play a major role.

Regards



Darryl Mellish
Executive Director, BusNSW

