

**Submission
No 46**

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

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Date Received: 21 July 2016

The Chair
Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

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

This submission is specific to the Eurobodalla Shire

Snap shot of Eurobodalla Shire

Eurobodalla has an older population, pockets of significant socioeconomic disadvantage and a high number of long term unemployed people.

46.1% of our population is aged over 55, the biggest growth over the last 15 years has been in this age group.

26.7% of population receives a disability, carer allowance (Australian average 15.5%)

72.8% of people over 65 are on the Aged pension (Australian average 67.6 %)

29.1% of Eurobodalla residents are low income earners (Australian average 25.9%)

6.2% of the population live in private dwellings with no vehicle.

Our region is not wealthy and this is reflected in the low weekly incomes and high long term unemployment.

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

A great number of people retire to our beautiful area, they buy or build their dream home and access services and activities using their own cars.

As they age their licences may be restricted or illness and frailty prevents them from driving all together. This is often a difficult time, loss of independence and freedom to go when and where they want. To remain healthy and living in their own home, relationships with family friends and community are important, access to transport enables this.

It is not only the elderly who suffer from transport disadvantage, young people find it difficult to access vocational training, work placement or any place of study (such as TAFE) not on a School bus run. The socioeconomic disadvantage also means that some people cannot afford to have a car or pay for the petrol.

Many of our residents do not live near a bus stop and we have many hamlets, villages without public bus services at all.

There is a real need to travel out of area for tertiary level care and some surgical medical procedures, to centres like Canberra, Nowra, Bega, Wollongong and Sydney.

Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW

Our geography makes it difficult to service small dispersed population areas.

The local public transport, services only the main towns of Batemans Bay, Moruya and Narooma. Dalmeny and Narooma as well as Batemans Bay are serviced by Symons and Priors Bus Services respectively with approximately 6 services per day. Both companies offer accessible buses if pre booked.

Tuross Head with a population of 2150 with 45.2% of people aged 60 or over, however has no local public transport at all.

Access to public transport is very limited outside of Narooma, Moruya and Batemans Bay. Public Transport between the towns is limited to using the long distance services such as Murrays and Premiers.

The only public transport from Narooma to Batemans Bay is Premiers (the Eden to Sydney service) or Murrays (on the Canberra run) . Scheduling is not frequent enough to meet demand.

We have one government supported public bus service Murrays that travels from the coast to Canberra daily. It leaves the south coast in the afternoon and arrives in Canberra at 6.00pm, the return trip, Canberra to South Coast service leaves Canberra at 7.30 am and arrives on the coast mid morning. This means that anyone who has an appointment at 11am in Canberra needs to stay for 2 nights.

Murrays offers the Red ticket to pensioners, but only if they present at the bus stop on the day, they do not take bookings for it in advance.

There is a private operator Rixons who, travels to Canberra daily, but due to not being subsidized charges commercial rates. They also provide door to door service at an extra cost.

Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and time tabling generally

In rural and regional areas the approach should be to provide flexible transport options, by:

- Supporting, promoting and ongoing funding for local Community Transport to continue providing door to door transport to our Seniors and people with disability.
- Supporting and promoting local Community based Carers groups, such as Cancer Council and Tuross Carers Group.
- It would be great to have a fleet of smaller/energy efficient buses to service the out laying villages several days per week and transport people to their nearest centre for shopping, medical and social access.
- Allow school buses to accept fare paying passengers if they have spare capacity and operate public bus runs outside of school hours.
- Subsidizing smaller local operators such as Rixons, who provide greater flexibility and are more customer focused.
- Tapping into the spare capacity of existing buses such as those operated by Clubs, private schools, nursing homes.
- Having a transport regional coordinator monitoring the time tabling of subsidized services, to provide for better connections and timing of routes.

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

- Encouraging and promoting ride sharing and car pooling via websites such as “time banking” and print media.
- A transport allowance (like the mobility allowance for people with disability) for people on a pension and students attending courses/ work placement outside the normal school settings.

Sources:

2011 Census <http://profile.id.com.au/eurobodalla/what-do-we-do?WebID=130>

Symons Bus Company <http://symonsbus.com.au/>

Premiers Bus Company <https://www.premierms.com.au>

Murrays Bus Company www.batemansbayholiday.com.au/murrays-bus-batemans-bay-to-canberra

Rixons Buses <http://www.rixonsbus.com.au/>

Eurobodalla Shire and drivers of economic growth , Report compiled by National Institute of Economic and Industry Research, May 2016

Health and community care services- In what ways can contribute to economic development and economic growth in Eurobodalla ? Report compiled by Joanne Walker 2016

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