

**Submission
No 54**

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

Organisation:

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Position:

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Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional NSW

by Glen Aspinall

After many decades of government neglect, it is about time that the **Northern Rivers Region of NSW** was provided with a functional Public Transport System!

The Northern Rivers has been historically the most closely settled region in Australia and it is now one of the fastest growing regions in the country. In fact, it is the third most visited region in Australia outside of Sydney and Melbourne! It does not make sense that we no longer have a train service along our railway line, which runs through the heart of this rapidly developing region.

In addition to local train services, the Northern Rivers needs regular train services to Brisbane (the nearest capital city) in civilised daylight hours - not at the ridiculous early morning hours of the current XPT service, when there is no public transport operating in Brisbane to connect with. Travel within and to and from the Northern Rivers is very difficult for tourists, the elderly and disadvantaged people without cars.

From my own personal experience, the CountryLink road bus services are woeful and not suitable for elderly or unwell people to use. They are only suited to fit and healthy people under the age of 40 years.

My own experience 4 years ago involved travelling from Lismore to Brisbane to connect with a flight to Darwin as part of a holiday. I have not had a holiday since! It took me from 9am to 4pm just to reach Brisbane using 3 buses and one train:

- Goonellabah to Lismore - local bus service
- Lismore to Tweed Heads - CountryLink bus
- Tweed Heads to Varsity Lakes - Qld Transport local bus service operated by Surfside Buslines
- Varsity Lakes to Roma Street, Brisbane - Qld Rail Gold Coast train service

The 2 hours which I spent on the CountryLink bus was a horrible experience. The bus had no suspension system, so I felt every small and large bump in the road from Lismore to Tweed Heads. The roads in the Northern Rivers are dangerous, rough and full of potholes and broken edges.

I had to go without food and drink for the whole 2 hour nightmare on that bus, as passengers are not allowed to consume any food or drink. Using the toilet on the bus was another unpleasant experience, as the bus lurched around corners and roundabouts. By the time I reached Tweed Heads, I was feeling quite sick and unwell but I managed to recover after having something to eat and drink and then continue my journey.

I will NEVER AGAIN travel on a long-distance bus service.

Why do we have to endure this THIRD-WORLD TRANSPORT SYSTEM, when people in the Sydney region have all the luxuries of trains to go just about anywhere?

In view of the recent announcement by the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, that the Federal Government will again be funding Urban and Regional Public Transport, we ask that you urgently evaluate the options for our region, with a view to having a much needed train service returned, including both local services and a regional train connection from Lismore to Brisbane via Casino and Kyogle as outlined below.

The tables below outline the options for a train service from Lismore to Brisbane. It gives a journey time of only 3 hours and 10 minutes, offering passengers the option of a return trip to Brisbane in one day for business purposes or medical appointments, as well as providing a world-class scenic travel option for visitors and tourists from Queensland to the Northern Rivers.

LISMORE to BRISBANE			BRISBANE to LISMORE		
	am	pm		pm	pm
LISMORE....dep	7:30	2:00	BRISBANE...dep	12:00	6:00
CASINO.....dep	8:10	2:40	KYOGLE.....dep	2:15	8:15
KYOGLE.....dep	8:25	2:55	CASINO.....dep	2:30	8:30
BRISBANE....arr	10:40	5:10	LISMORE....arr	3:10	9:10