

**Submission  
No 80**

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

**Organisation:** NSW Government  
**Name:** The Hon Andrew Constance MP  
**Position:** Minister for Transport and Infrastructure  
**Date Received:** 22 August 2016



**The Hon Andrew Constance MP**  
Minister for Transport and Infrastructure

BN16/00707

Mr Adam Marshall MP  
Committee Chair  
Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services  
Parliament of New South Wales  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Marshall

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services Inquiry into Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional NSW (the Inquiry).

Please find enclosed the NSW Government submission to the Inquiry. Transport for NSW has coordinated this submission, with cross-agency input from the Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Health, Department of Education (Aboriginal Affairs).

If you require further information on this matter, Mr Anthony Wing, Executive Director Transport Policy at Transport for NSW would be pleased to take your call on [REDACTED]

I look forward to reviewing the findings of the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
THE HON ANDREW CONSTANCE MP

# **Submission to the NSW Parliamentary inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW**

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## **Background**

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On 2 June 2016 the NSW Deputy Premier, the Hon Troy Grant MP, requested that the NSW Legislative Assembly Community Services Committee conduct an inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW (the Inquiry).

The Inquiry will consider specific issues related to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people and the accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW. The Committee will give particular regard to the situation of seniors, Aboriginal persons, persons with disability, and social housing tenants.

The Committee will also investigate possible strategies to improve access and support that can be provided to assist with the costs of private transport if public transport is unavailable or unable to meet the needs of these groups. The Committee will report by 30 November 2016.

The Minister for Transport and Infrastructure was invited by the Chair of the Community Services Committee to make a submission to the Inquiry.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW) has prepared this coordinated submission on behalf of the NSW Government with input from the Departments of Family and Community Services (FaCS), NSW Health and NSW Department of Education and Communities (Aboriginal Affairs NSW), in response to the Terms of Reference.

## **Terms of Reference**

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That the Committee on Community Services inquire into and report on access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people (including but not limited to Aboriginal persons, persons with disability, and social housing tenants) in rural and regional NSW.

Matters to be considered include:

- (a) Specific issues relating to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW;
- (b) Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW;
- (c) Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and timetabling generally;
- (d) 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; and
- (e) Any other related matters.

## Introduction

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In rural and regional areas access to transport can be more difficult than in metropolitan areas. These difficulties are not unique to NSW. As noted in the *2015 National Remote and Regional Transport Strategy*<sup>1</sup>, rural and regional areas differ from the major cities because they have smaller populations, often dispersed in small towns and villages that have limited or no services locally available and located at vast distances from major towns and cities.

The NSW Government is committed to making NSW a better place to live, work and visit. Improving access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW aligns with three state priorities of building infrastructure; protecting the vulnerable; and improving government services.

This submission outlines some specific issues for seniors and disadvantaged groups in accessing transport in rural and regional areas and explains some of the key initiatives that the NSW Government is implementing to improve transport access and service delivery.

### **Access to transport is an important concern for people in rural and regional areas**

In NSW, for the purposes of transport, the rural and regional areas include all areas other than the Sydney metropolitan area and the outer metropolitan areas, which include Newcastle, Wollongong, the Hunter region and Blue Mountains.

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<sup>1</sup> Transport Infrastructure Council, 2015 *National Remote and Regional Transport Strategy*, available from [http://transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National\\_Remote\\_and\\_Regional\\_Transport\\_Strategy\\_2015.pdf](http://transportinfrastructurecouncil.gov.au/publications/files/National_Remote_and_Regional_Transport_Strategy_2015.pdf)

Access to transport is an important determinant of individual health and wellbeing. Transport enables people to access the goods and services they need for daily life, to connect with family and friends, to participate in various social and recreational activities and to contribute to the economic and social life of their communities.

For seniors, that is, people aged 60 years and over, access to transport enables them to continue to live active and fulfilling lives. As people become older and physically restricted, access to transport can mean the difference between being able to access the health and community services necessary to remain living independently and having to move into residential aged care.

People who are socially disadvantaged refers to people living on low incomes that are typically more likely to:

- have limited education and skills;
- be unemployed or not in the labour force;
- be living in social housing and/or in more remote areas;
- have a disability or chronic health problem.

For these people, access to transport is essential for connecting to support services and programs and potential vocational training and employment opportunities.

A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are socially disadvantaged compared to non-Indigenous people and make up a larger proportion of the populations of remote areas of NSW. About 21% of older Aboriginal people live in remote or very remote areas, whereas 2% of older non Indigenous people live in these areas<sup>2</sup>. Access to transport for Aboriginal people is essential to help close the gap in Indigenous health and welfare.

For both seniors and disadvantaged people, including Aboriginal people, access to transport allows them to remain connected to their communities and reduces the risk of depression and anxiety and other mental health problems associated with social isolation.

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<sup>2</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2015. *The health and welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2015*. Available from <http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous-observatory/reports/health-and-welfare-2015/indigenous-population/>

## **(a) Specific issues relating to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW**

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The NSW Government recognises there are specific transport needs and priorities for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW and is committed to improving transport outcomes to ensure local communities have access to affordable, reliable and safe transport services.

Many of the issues of transport needs in rural and regional areas have been raised with the Government previously over past five years. The NSW Government accepted the majority of recommendations from the 2012 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Inter-regional public transport and since this time has been working progressively to improve accessibility in rural and regional areas. The Committee looked at how transport could better serve the needs of regional NSW. The issue of transport disadvantage amongst vulnerable groups such as older people, people with disabilities, people on low incomes and people with a mental illness was considered by this Committee. Its final report, released in March 2014, highlighted the importance of access to transport for people rural and regional communities. It was noted in the Committee's report that *'...a lack of adequate inter-regional public transport restricted residents' quality of life, constrained regions' potential for economic and social growth, and resulted in geographic and social isolation for vulnerable groups'*<sup>3</sup>.

**This section provides an overview of relevant NSW Government policies and programs that seek to address the specific transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW.**

### **The NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan**

A key objective of TfNSW's Long Term Transport Master Plan (LTTMP) is to reduce social disadvantage by improving access to goods, services and employment and education opportunities for people across all parts of the state. Social disadvantage arises often as a result of complex and interrelated factors which may include disability, cultural or language barriers, low income, geographic location or a combination of these factors. Lack of access to transport may compound the disadvantage as without transport, people can become further isolated.

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<sup>3</sup> State and Regional Development Committee (2014) *Report on the inquiry into inter-regional public transport*, NSW Parliament Legislative Assembly State and Regional Development Committee, Sydney, N.S.W. Report no. 1/55 (p viii) available from <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=1680>

TfNSW released the LTTMP in 2012 which identified the following major transport challenges for regional NSW:

- Improving accessibility to jobs and essential services through a better mix of transport options available across regional NSW;
- Providing convenient, reliable and safe travel in regional areas by modernising and making best use of our transport networks; and
- Facilitating access to vital services for an ageing regional population with increasing rates of disability.

In areas where populations are declining there is a need to ensure customers continue to have access to the services, resources and opportunities they need. The LTTMP provides for the review of the transport planning actions every 5 years. This is being undertaken by TfNSW with the refresh of the long term strategic planning framework (to be known as the NSW Government Strategic Transport Planning Framework) which seeks to better align land use plans, infrastructure plans and transport strategies in new ways and create a consistent pipeline for transport planning products.

Ten (10) *Regional Transport Plans* released as part of the LTTMP in 2013 and 2014 identified the following challenges for regional NSW:

- **Ageing population** – greater demand to travel for healthcare, medical and recreation reasons and less demand for travel to/from work and within peak periods; need for more specialised transport services to cater for limited mobility and to reduce social isolation;
- **Social disadvantage** – limited public transport increases the level of isolation and disadvantage; high proportion of socially and economically disadvantaged people who do not own a car or hold driver licences are further disadvantaged by a lack of public transport options; higher public transport fares in rural and regional NSW can reduce ability to access jobs and services;
- **Significant population dispersed in many small settlements/isolated region** – dispersed trip patterns that work against public transport; need to provide adequate transport services for travel within the region;
- **Decline in population** – public transport operations become less financially viable; reduced services further isolates the population; and
- **Public transport serves limited destinations** – need to provide services that better match customer needs.

## **Transport needs of seniors**

Many active seniors drive and have access to their own vehicles as their preferred way to get around. This was confirmed by the recent NSW Consumer Survey undertaken by the Council on the Ageing (COTA) that identified that in non-metropolitan locations more than 90% of respondents nominated driving as their preferred way to get around.

Population ageing is more pronounced in many rural and remote communities than in metropolitan areas. Overall 73% of local government areas (LGAs) in regional NSW are projected to have more than a quarter of the population aged 60 years and older by 2031 compared to the state average of 20%. Several LGAs are projected to have an aged population of 40% or more by 2031 (Eurobodalla, Great Lakes and Gloucester). This is often related to the movement of young people to the cities and larger regional centres for educational and employment opportunities. In coastal areas, the growing proportion of older people is being magnified by older people moving into the area (Eurobodalla and Great Lakes).

In addition to population ageing, there are specific issues around transport needs to older people that live with a disability and/or chronic health problem. With age comes an increasing likelihood of acquiring some form of impairment, disability or chronic health problem. In 2015 in NSW, around half of all older people (more than 260,000 people) reported living with disability. Disability can impact a person's access to transport services and participation in social or community activities.

When older people experience increasing health problems and physical impairment they may no longer be able to drive as far or at all. Their mobility becomes dependent on alternative modes of transport. Depending on where they live, older people in rural and regional areas may have few alternative transport options at a time when their need to travel to access health services increases. Smaller or more remote communities are more likely to not have public transport or taxi services available. In some places, school buses may be the only option for transport and these are confined to school hours. In some areas older people may be able to access community transport services. However, the majority must usually rely on family and friends for their travel.

Even where public transport services are available, mainly in the larger regional towns, conditions of chronic illness and the physical limitations and frailty of age can make the use of some forms of transport less accessible or suitable. For example, people requiring renal dialysis generally need transport three times per week over many years. People living with other types of chronic illness (e.g. cancer patients) who require ongoing travel for treatment and appointments may also have difficulties accessing suitable transport.

### *Seniors in residential aged care facilities*

There is no obligation for residential aged care facilities (RACF) to provide transport funding assistance for residents in their care. Seniors face challenges and individual



costs with coordinating transport to and from medical and dental appointments. Where community transport or families are unavailable to provide travel, taxis are often used to transport seniors living in RACFs which can be a costly option paid for by the individual.

### **Transport needs of disadvantaged people**

Access to affordable transport is a significant issue for disadvantaged people. For people on low incomes including social housing tenants, social disadvantage can be further exacerbated through either a lack of access to private transport or transport options that are too expensive. Infrequent transport services, as well as lack of connecting services and the need to travel further to transport hubs also represent significant challenges.

Seniors and disadvantaged people may not be able to afford the high cost of travelling by taxi for long distance journeys if this is the only mode of transport available or when bus or train schedules are limited in their area. In rural and regional areas there can also be a limited supply of wheelchair accessible taxis.

Transport costs may also be prohibitive in instances where an individual needs to change trains or buses several times in order to reach their destination. If they are unable to access appointments and return home in the one day overnight accommodation may need to be arranged.

For people with disability, the barriers to accessing transport are not just limited to the design and nature of transport infrastructure, although infrastructure is an important aspect in facilitating access. TfNSW's Disability Inclusion Action Plan acknowledges that achieving an accessible transport system is also about ensuring access to information, improving the journey experience, staff training and customer services and engaging with people with disability.

Literacy issues and access to technology may also impact on the ability of seniors and disadvantaged people to access transport. For example, ability to access service information such as timetables and online booking forms may affect people's ability to use public transport. These issues also contribute to a more general lack of awareness of transport service availability.

### **Transport needs of Aboriginal people**

As noted above, people living in many rural and remote areas are 'transport disadvantaged', with limited inflexible public transport services, predominant reliance on private motor vehicles, and unmet transport infrastructure needs. There are also other barriers to accessing transport in rural and remote areas – financial (personal income), legal (driver licence) and practical (internet access).

These issues present specific challenges for Aboriginal people in remote areas of NSW who have to travel long distances to access the services they need such as health, education and employment.

The demographic profiles of regional areas, especially their Aboriginal populations, illustrates the growing demand for transport for education and employment, as well as the challenges and opportunities for regional transport. Two snapshots from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2011 Census data are included in **Appendix 1**, including Murdi Paaki in Far Western NSW and Many Rivers on the North Coast NSW.

In both regions, the Aboriginal populations are young and growing, but have lower financial and personal capacity for transport choice and also suffer from significant transport disadvantage. For instance, Aboriginal people in the Many Rivers area reported transport disadvantage as being isolation, inflexible or culturally inappropriate services, discrimination, poor access to services and affordability. There could be many opportunities such as in the community transport sector, Aboriginal employment in the transport sector, and improvements in transport infrastructure within Aboriginal communities.

Access to transport is especially important issue for older Aboriginal people as they have poorer health and higher rates of disability than other Australians in the same age group. Older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are almost 3 times as likely as non-Indigenous people to need help with self-care, mobility or communication tasks. There are limited public transport options available in these areas and family and friends tend to be less able to assist with travel as car ownership (as indicated by lower licensing rates among Aboriginal communities).

### **Accessibility of transport services for Aboriginal people**

Some Aboriginal Affairs' NSW regional offices identified a number of barriers to Aboriginal people accessing public transport, including:

- poor literacy and numeracy makes comprehension of timetables difficult;
- access to suitable transport options for people with a disability;
- relatively high cost;
- lack of public transport coverage (geographic range and frequency of services);  
and
- lack of flexibility for community events, such as NAIDOC.

## Driver Licensing

With private motor vehicles continuing to be the primary mode of transport, issues with obtaining a drivers licence can significantly affect the ability of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW to travel.

The barriers to obtaining a driver licence include lack of supervising drivers for the 120 hours of supervised driving, access to driver knowledge test facilities, cost, lack of identity documentation, literacy and numeracy barriers, and cultural and historical factors (NSW Auditor General, Performance Audit, *Improving legal and safe driving among Aboriginal people*, 2013).

This issue particularly affects Aboriginal adults who make up 2% of the NSW population but only 0.4% of licence holders. In addition, 36% of Aboriginal people have never had a licence; 46% currently hold a licence compared to 88% for the rest of the population.

Retaining driver licences represents a challenge, with Aboriginal people three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to have their licence suspended for fine defaults. Driving while disqualified has major impacts on Aboriginal people, accounting for 15% of imprisonments between 2001–2008, and the Habitual Offenders scheme has resulted in decades-long driver disqualifications. Aboriginal people in some rural and regional areas without the capacity to safely and lawfully drive are effectively unable to access key services.

## Barriers to transport access

Specific barriers to transport include:

- *Absence of or limited public transport within and between small or remote communities:* Small or remote communities within rural and regional areas are more likely to not have public transport or taxi services available. In some instances, school buses may be the only option for transport and this is confined to school hours.
- *Limited services and routes:* Buses may also run to a limited timetable and route in rural and regional areas, possibly only covering school runs, resulting in lack of service during the rest of the day. Inter-town rail services can be very limited, with express trains that run once a day with no or limited option for return travel on the same day. Further, those who present to an Emergency Department via an ambulance may have limited options to return home, particularly after hours, as taxi or transport services may not be available. This then places pressure on health services, families or volunteers to manage transport arrangements with limited options.

- *Non-emergency health related transport:* Some NSW Health Local Health Districts (LHDs) have indicated that the absence of public transport presents significant challenges returning patients to their home community particularly if they are transferred at short notice and do not have an opportunity to make alternative arrangements for accommodation or transport to their residence. This typically occurs when residents in remote communities are transferred by the Royal Flying Doctor Service or an ambulance to another major town centre for care or diagnostics and subsequently discharged.

## **Role of NSW Health in provision of health-related transport**

Lack of viable and affordable transport options is recognised to contribute to poorer health outcomes for at risk populations, such as the elderly, Aboriginal people and people with disabilities.

NSW Health is responsible for the management of non-emergency patient transport (NEPT) which requires clinical oversight and support during transit. NEPT has been undergoing significant reform to: establish it as a separate service from the urgent, emergency service provided by NSW Ambulance; implement a centralised booking system to manage all NEPT transport requests; and also engage a range of providers including community, existing Ambulance Green Fleet, LHDs transport services and private providers to deliver existing and future NEPT services. The *NSW Health Non-Emergency Patient Transport Strategy Framework 2015-18* outlines the vision going forward.

NSW Health also administers the Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) which provides financial assistance for eligible people who are required to travel at least 100 kilometres one way or 200 kilometres cumulative during a week to attend specialist medical appointments. IPTAAS relies on eligible people already having access to public or private transport to reach their appointments - it does not coordinate travel for them.

- NSW Health notes that Far West LHD has advised that the removal of economy fares from the Indian Pacific has meant that rail transport from Broken Hill to Adelaide is likely to be beyond the reach of many seniors and disadvantaged people. Although IPTAAS covers costs where travel is related to accessing specialist health services, the need for overnight accommodation and difficulties accessing bus services represents a broader problem for residents seeking to travel to Adelaide, the nearest capital city.

## **Role of community transport**

Community transport provides flexible, responsive and integrated public transport in regional communities but broader access remains a barrier. For instance, the transport service may have a primary responsibility to provide travel for school or

specialist health appointments, but travel for other purposes such as employment, shopping, sport or social reasons is not accommodated.

The community transport sector has gone through reforms to improve its viability, efficiency and effectiveness, and flexibility. For Aboriginal communities in rural and remote areas, community transport remains a vital source of mobility. TfNSW also has a program for Aboriginal people to obtain licences and qualifications to drive buses, creating Aboriginal employment opportunities in the community and public transport sector.

Section (b) below provides further information on TfNSW programs that support the delivery of community transport services to enable the frail aged, people with disabilities and other transport disadvantaged people to meet the needs of daily living.

### **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)**

The rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) throughout NSW from 1 July 2016 will also deliver a new way of providing support for people living with disability. The NDIS provides people with a flexible, whole-of-life approach to access the support they need to pursue their goals and aspirations and to participate in daily life.

The NDIS provides funding directly to customers, enabling them to purchase services of their choice. Funding for transport is included in the NDIS and participants will be able to make their own decisions about their transport requirements. Further information about the scheme can be obtained on the NSW Government NDIS website at [www.ndis.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ndis.nsw.gov.au)

## **(b) Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW**

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### **Role of TfNSW in the provision of accessible transport services**

TfNSW is responsible for the co-ordinated delivery of transport services across all modes with a strong focus on high quality service planning and delivery for customers, including those in rural and regional areas.

TfNSW is also responsible for the provision of public transport services across all of NSW, managing an annual multi-billion dollar transport budget and in partnership with transport operating agencies including Roads and Maritime Services (RMS), Sydney Trains, NSW Trains and State Transit Authority, more than \$114 billion in assets. Funding is provided for public bus, rail, roads, ferry and community transport services and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup>

The scale of the transport task is particularly evident in the management of the state's extensive road network. The NSW road network consists of 18,028 km of state roads (including 4,269 km of National Road Network, for which the Australian Government provides a funding contribution, and 163 km of privately-funded toll roads) and 2,946 km of regional and local roads in the unincorporated area of NSW. The NSW government also provides financial assistance to local councils to manage 18,474 km of regional roads and also provides some funding and support to the 144,750 km of council-managed local access roads.

Roads and Maritime delivers initiatives to support access to public transport solutions such as buses, taxis, walking and cycling. Roads and Maritime also works to ensure our infrastructure meets the needs of customers, such as providing suitable access for mobility impaired travellers.

Providing equitable access to public transport services is a key Government objective.

A core role of Government transport agencies is to provide access to transport services for all sections of the community including people with a disability, older persons, children, students and commuters.

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<sup>4</sup> TfNSW Annual Report 2014-15. Available from [www.transport.nsw.gov.au/annual-reports](http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/annual-reports)

## **NSW Government investment in rural and regional transport: 2016-17 Budget**

The 2016-17 State Budget committed \$9.7 billion for roads, maritime and freight in order to improve road infrastructure and reliability in NSW.

Over Labor's ten years leading up to 2011, the average annual spend on roads, maritime, and freight infrastructure in regional New South Wales was \$2.4 billion.

In contrast - since 2011, the average annual spend under a Liberal-Nationals Government has been \$4 billion per annum. That is a massive 67 per cent increase in average annual funding for country New South Wales compared with the funding that Labor provided.

Projects being funded under the NSW Boating Now program seek to improve the condition of existing access facilities to improve the safety and usability of waterway infrastructure. A significant proportion of the funded projects include modernising public jetties and pontoons to enhance access opportunities for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW.

The NSW Government has also invested a record \$10.5 billion for public transport, including \$1.4 billion for bus services throughout NSW, which includes rural and regional bus services in country areas and financing 218 buses to replace older vehicles and provide capacity for growth services. It also includes an allocation of \$1.3 billion to renew and maintain the Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink networks to continue to improve safety and reliability for train customers.

In addition, \$16 million has been allocated each year to help ensure wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) continue to be available for those in the community who crucially rely on them. The Budget also provides \$84 million for community transport and home and community care services for people who cannot drive or catch public transport.

The challenge of improving public transport accessibility continues to be addressed in the 2016-17 Budget with \$280 million to fund easy access upgrades at train stations, extra car parking across the entire public transport network and improved safety and security.

## **Public Transport Service Planning Guidelines for Rural and Regional NSW**

The Public Transport Service Planning Guidelines for Rural and Regional NSW (2015) aim to guide the implementation of improvements to bus, coach and train services in rural and regional NSW over the next ten years.

The guidelines reflect the focus on improving accessibility through a better mix of transport options available across regional NSW, incorporating multi-modal considerations, implementation aligned with strategic directions and being responsive to customer need.

The guidelines incorporate common elements of all modes. These include aspects such as service coverage guidelines, recognising the unique characteristics of inter-regional, intra-regional and travel in major centres and towns and factors for consideration in conducting a needs assessment.

The guidelines incorporate defined service periods and coverage guidelines for travel within the 12 'major regional centres' to improve the service offerings for key population centres in regional NSW and to reflect the planning approach for the Sydney Metropolitan area.

The guidelines introduced a needs assessment to better target resources for travel with 'major towns' and 'towns' and for travel between villages, towns, major towns and/or major regional centres.

Factors for consideration in a needs assessment are set out in the guidelines. In addition, the guidelines also promote consideration of alternative service delivery approaches, such as demand responsive services, where this will improve transport access and provide value for money within the contractual framework.

The guidelines are available on the [Transport for NSW website](#).



## **Service Delivery & Performance**

### ***Establishment of the Rural and Regional Service Delivery & Performance Branch in TfNSW***

The Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance (RRSDP) branch of TfNSW was established in 2016 and is responsible for managing the efficient and effective delivery of bus services to people in rural and regional NSW as well community transport for services to eligible customers across the whole state.

The RRSDP branch has been undergoing a transformation program to build the capacity of contracted providers to enable them to remain competitive in a contestable market whilst continuing to offer quality services. The transformation program aims to facilitate more services on the ground for the same funds, through the development of systems and processes that best support a customer-focused, service delivery model. RRSDP aims to:

- Improve opportunities to travel;
- Deliver value for money;
- Satisfy customer needs; and
- Provide safe and secure services.

The RRSDP branch is based in Parramatta, with offices in Newcastle and Wollongong to manage service procurement and contracting arrangements in the rural and regional areas. In addition, 5 newly created Senior Regional Officer roles supported by 5 Regional Officers will be embedded in large regional centres (Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Dubbo, Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga). These positions will strengthen relations with service providers, explore alternative transport arrangements, and operate as the conduit between TfNSW and the community.

The RRSDP branch has also created a Performance and Programs team to innovate and develop new systems and procedures to ensure the efficient and effective service delivery to transport customers. This is the first time a specific branch has been established to ensure that TfNSW focus on the transport needs of the country areas with a view to improving services from a customer perspective.

The RRSDP branch also manages the delivery of scheduled bus services to meet local travel needs of people in rural and regional NSW. Across rural and regional NSW, there are over 600 bus operators delivering services to customers to meet frequency, quality, cost and accessibility requirements.

## **Accessible transport stations and stops**

The existing public transport network continues to be upgraded through the Transport Access Program and other infrastructure programs to improve accessibility and provide modern, secure and integrated transport services.

Announced in 2012, the Transport Access Program (TAP) has provided more than \$770 million over four years to improve accessibility to transport facilities. In June 2015, the Government announced a significant boost to the Program with a further \$890 million to be invested over the following four years.

Since the launch of the program, more than 450 projects are underway or have been completed, including in the Illawarra, Hunter Valley, Western NSW, South East NSW and the North Coast. These include upgrades to train stations which provide lift access for the first time, new accessible toilets, 'kiss and ride' zones and parking spaces for people with disability. Ferry wharves and bus interchanges are also being progressively upgraded to provide better access for customers with disability.

## ***Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS)***

The Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme (CPTIGS) provides subsidies to support the construction or upgrade of bus stop infrastructure generally owned and maintained by local councils across country NSW thereby improving the accessibility and quality of kerb side, passenger transport infrastructure in rural and regional areas.

The focus for this scheme is to support both the upgrade of the existing kerbside asset base whilst also continuing to support the construction of new infrastructure, including in support of reforms to rural and regional passenger transport service delivery.

The scheme has been in place since 1990 and has recently been reviewed and simplified to enable a streamlined process for applicants and reducing government red-tape.

CPTIGS is administered by the RRSDP branch and \$3.252 million in funding is available biennially, commencing July 2016. The introduction of the *Disability Standards for Accessible Passenger Transport (2002)* sees the scheme's main priority as supporting councils (and others) to meet the required standards deadline of 90% by December 2017 and 100% by 2022.

## **Accessible transport services**

### **Bus services**

A total of 647 new Rural & Regional Bus contracts became effective in 2016. The new eight year contracts cover all public buses serving NSW communities outside of the Sydney and Outer Sydney Metropolitan area. These contracts will ensure a consistently high level of service for the 4 million customers who use around 3,300 regional and rural buses each year.

All NSW TrainLink coach services are accessible. NSW TrainLink requires that coach suppliers comply with the legislative and regulatory requirements of the Federal Government's *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, and must provide:

- Two wheelchair spaces for coaches with a minimum of 41 seats; and
- One wheelchair space for coaches with a minimum of 18 seats

The larger TrainLink coaches are equipped with a "kneeling" device which reduces the height people need to step up onto the coach and enable easier access for mobility-challenged customers. To assist sight-impaired customers, yellow handrails and yellow edge markings on coach steps are appropriately painted.

### **NSW Trains**

As at February 2016, 43 NSW TrainLink stations are accessible with four stations in progress. In addition, all Oscar, Endeavour, XPT and XPLOERER trains are accessible and portable boarding ramps are carried on all NSW TrainLink diesel trains (XPT, Endeavour, Explorer) and available at all Intercity stations.

Staff assistance on-board regional trains (with luggage, meals, finding seats) can also be arranged prior to travel. NSW TrainLink also supports pensioners and seniors by providing a range of sales channels for services including:

- A Contact Centre which is open every day from 6:30am-10pm and can set up profiles for pensioner/seniors card holders over the phone, take credit card payments and have tickets emailed to customers, or placed on board the service to be collected upon arrival. The Contact Centre can also organise for customers without a credit card to purchase their pre-made bookings in person or on-board trains and coaches. A nominated representative can book a trip on a customer's behalf with their concession card;
- A website that is now enabled with Live Chat to help talk people through using the online booking system or make bookings on their behalf. Further improvements are planned over the next 12 months;

- Staffed stations across the network with hours now better aligned to timetabled services and customers' needs;
- The ability to pay for regional tickets at any Australia Post outlet; and
- A network of accredited sales agents that provide face-to-face ticket sales.

### **Community transport**

TfNSW administers three key funding programs to deliver community transport services to enable the frail aged, people with disabilities and other transport disadvantaged people to meet the needs of daily living:

- *Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP)* – formerly Home and Community Care (HACC) program. This provides support for frail aged people 65 years and over (for Aboriginal people, 50 years and over);
- *Community Transport Program (CTP)* – expands the range of options available for people who have no access to mainstream public transport services due to location, time of travel, personal circumstances, or affordability to meet the needs of daily living ; and
- *Community Care Support Program (CCSP)* – for younger people with disability currently transitioning to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Community transport assists those transport-disadvantaged members of the community who have limited or no access to private transport and difficulty accessing conventional public transport.

The customer base for community transport includes the frail aged, people with disability and people considered transport disadvantaged due to their social characteristics or geographic location. Community transport services provide these people with the opportunity to travel to medical appointments, undertake shopping, recreation or social outings and attend other essential events. These services are mostly delivered by not-for-profit community transport service providers (CTSPs).

There are a range of reforms currently impacting CTSPs that have the potential to affect the services customers receive. For example, RRSDP has been supporting CTSPs to prepare for the rescinding of CCSP funding in preparation for the transition to NDIS.

The ageing nature of Australia's population, and the growing need for transport services, means community transport services are increasingly in demand. The NSW Government has increased funding to the sector over recent years to cater to

this demand better, with \$3 million per year from 2011 to 2015. The Australian Government provided a further \$12 million in recurrent funding from January 2014.

Where scheduled public transport services are not sustainable due to low population levels and densities, TfNSW provides funding through the CTP to people considered transport disadvantaged. TfNSW is also commencing trials of flexible transport services.

### **Accessible information**

Customer satisfaction research shows that 88% of NSW Trains customers usually plan their trip ahead of time and that public transport customers value access to timetable information and that it contributes to their overall satisfaction. To assist people with trip planning the transportnsw.info website has been enhanced to incorporate regional data, extending its trip planning capability to regional and rural NSW and beyond.

The addition of all NSW TrainLink train and coach services, plus over 475 other regional bus and ferry services, means all our customers can now plan a trip to and from anywhere in NSW, all on one website.

Regional customers can now access information about local regional public transport services, create end to end trip plans, use the Next departures tool, do a timetable search or create a route map using the new map-lookup tool.

As part of an ongoing program to improve the delivery of digital information to customers, the current release of transportnsw.info also includes:

- integration of wayfinding icons, line colours and network names, to align the digital with the built environment
- improvements to maps, including a new 'map lookup' tool that lets you search for a route to display an interactive map
- better layout of trip planner and next departure results
- mobile website enhancements.

Regional data has been made available in the Opal Travel app and will be made available to our third party app developers and Google Transit.

## **Upgrading transport infrastructure in Aboriginal communities**

Unfortunately Aboriginal people are overrepresented in road trauma. That is why a key commitment under the NSW Road Safety Strategy is to improve Aboriginal Road Safety through a range of actions that will reduce the risk and severity of crashes faced by Aboriginal people on NSW roads.

To meet the travelling needs of people with a disability, transport agencies are developing infrastructure, transport services and access to information that is fully accessible.

The NSW Road Safety Strategy 2012-21 aims to reduce the fatality rate to 4.3 per 100,000 population by 2016. It also aims to cut fatalities and serious injuries by at least 30 per cent by the end of 2021.

- The Safer Drivers Course, which gives learner drivers the opportunity to become safer drivers and help them to meet the learner driver log book hours has been completed by at least 106 young Aboriginal drivers since it started in July 2013.
- The Listen & Learn resource was delivered to help Aboriginal people with lower literacy skills and lack of internet access to prepare for driver knowledge tests.
- The Get Legal, Get Licensed, Get Work program was developed by Roads and Maritime Services and TAFE NSW. It improves literacy, numeracy and computer skills and knowledge of road law and road safety. To date, TAFE NSW has delivered 24 programs across NSW since 2011, assisting more than 207 Aboriginal people obtain a learner driver licence.
- The 'Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers' workshops provided education on laws and conditions for parents and supervising drivers in Aboriginal communities.
- The Keeping Aboriginal Youth Safe program provided driver education and training to Aboriginal youth in Blacktown.
- The educational DVD, 'Yarnbusters: No Gammin' highlights what to consider when buying a second-hand car. It is used to support school and TAFE driver education programs, as well as the 'Helping Learner Drivers Become Safer Drivers' workshops targeting Aboriginal communities.

Roads and Maritime Services' (RMS) Safer Roads Program implements road safety improvements for Aboriginal community roads such as sealing and widening of roads, constructing shared (walking and cycling) paths, installation of speed management devices and signage. By June 2016, road safety improvements had been delivered in 14 Aboriginal communities (12 in Western NSW).

The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) is working with whole-of-Government to create improvements for planning and infrastructure in Aboriginal communities through the Aboriginal Community Land and Infrastructure Project (ACLIP).

## **(c) Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and timetabling generally**

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### **Transport planning strategies**

The 10 *Regional Transport Plans* (2012) address the unique transport needs and priorities of rural and regional NSW.

TfNSW is working to implement a number of transport planning actions from the *Regional Transport Plans* to provide better transport services, ensure effective regulation and improve transport infrastructure for regional customers travelling to and from a region, within a region and in major regional centres and towns.

Key transport planning actions to improve accessibility for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW include the following:

- **Improve cross-border connectivity:** TfNSW will continue to work with the Cross-Border Commissioner, the ACT Government, the QLD Government and the Victorian Government to make travel easier and more convenient for regional communities in close proximity to essential services across borders.
- **Improve NSW TrainLink and coach services:** TfNSW will develop a future NSW TrainLink servicing plan for the regions and will incorporate this into a long term plan for regional rail. The plan will be aligned with coach services operating in the regions. TfNSW will also invest in improvements to the NSW TrainLink fleet to improve service levels and customer experience. Fleet replacement will help boost flexibility in the design of services and offer greater passenger comfort.
- **Support ongoing access to Sydney Airport:** TfNSW will support maintenance of the 20 percent of flight slots allocated to regional NSW services and will seek a greater allocation in the peak periods.
- **Improve regional bus services:** TfNSW will work in partnership with local bus operators to introduce a more robust contractual framework for local and regional buses; we will work with bus operators to develop routes and timetables which improve services for customers.
- **Integrate NSW TrainLink coach services with regional bus services:** TfNSW will review timetables and service levels for train and coach services as part of the long term plan for regional rail. This will identify opportunities to incorporate improved intra-regional connectivity in addition to long distance train connections.

- **Improve public transport interchanges:** TfNSW will ensure major transport interchange points are assessed and benchmarked against interchange standards; improving wayfinding, signage, and physical cues people use to find their way around interchanges; ensure major interchanges are clean, well lit, with comfortable seating and shelter for passengers.
- **Investigate flexible and demand responsive transport:** TfNSW will investigate a range of delivery models for flexible transport and we will work with local bus operators, taxi operators and community transport providers to make the best use of available transport resources, and to provide the most appropriate mode and delivery model for different needs, and for different times of the day and week.
- **Ensure adequate community transport services are provided:** TfNSW will continue to work with community transport providers to ensure that future demand for community transport can be met.
- **Improve the integration of community transport into the passenger transport system:** to ensure an alternative to private car use is identified and provided to all residents, including people who experience transport disadvantage and have limited access to services in more isolated areas.
- **Develop a sustainable model for community transport service provision:** TfNSW will work with the local organisations, councils and the Australian Government to ensure the long term viability of the community transport sector.
- **Improve transport services in towns:** TfNSW will review bus service contracts across regional NSW and work with local operators to ensure services meet the unique characteristics of each of the towns.
- **Develop and implement regional transport servicing principles to respond to growth and changes in transport demand:** the principles will inform ongoing improvements to services and service plans, putting the needs of the customer first.
- **Support the ongoing delivery of wheelchair accessible vehicles and the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS).**

## The Passenger Transport Act 2014

The *Passenger Transport Act 2014* ('the Act') sets out a legislative framework that support customer focused, responsive and integrated transport services.



Prior to 2014, passenger transport legislation was complex and mode focused. Changes to contracting arrangements from 1 March 2016 created a single, simplified contract regime with flexibility for the NSW Government to contract for services that best meet customer needs, regardless of the transport mode or model of service delivery.

These service contracting provisions give the NSW Government more flexibility about what kinds of services it procures on behalf of the community. For example, TfNSW is able to contract with a local taxi operator to deliver a shared, booked service in a country town where this delivers a better, more cost effective service option than running a timetabled bus service.

The Act also provides exemption powers for operating without a contract, to allow innovative services and entrepreneurs who can see new service opportunities to give customers more choice about their transport options.

### **Point to Point transport reforms**

The Government's point to point transport reforms will reshape the taxi and hire car industry and ensure that regional communities benefit from the opportunities of the new transport economy.

The industry plays a key role in rural communities, with demand for services in every town and regional centre, particularly with limited or no alternative public transport options.

The reforms implement the recommendations of the Point to Point Transport Taskforce ('the Taskforce'), which made a number of recommendations relevant to rural and regional NSW. An initial tranche of reforms were made in December 2015 to make it easier for point to point transport businesses, and to improve services for customers, including:

- the immediate repeal of more than 50 prescriptive taxi and hire car regulations to free up businesses to decide how they can best provide services to their customers, removing \$30 million in red tape for industry each year and;
- permitting taxis and hire cars to provide booked services anywhere in NSW, rather than restricting the provision of services to a particular town or region, allowing more services in high demand times and at major regional events.

Further reforms are included in the *Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016*, which passed Parliament in June 2016, such as:

- the introduction of annual taxi licences outside of Sydney, making it easier for customers in country towns to get a taxi when they want one; and

- changes to the regulation of fares, which includes the deregulation of fares for all booked services, including booked taxi services to allow competition on price. Maximum rank and hail fares will continue to be set by the Government, but taxi companies will be able to set fares below the regulated maximum.

Measures to ensure customer protection are included in the legislation, including a requirement that booking service providers provide a fare estimate before a customer accepts the booking. This could be a sticker with fare structure or an in app estimate. The estimate must be expressed in Australian dollars.

Once the new laws commence, following consultation with stakeholders, other changes recommended by the Taskforce will come into effect which will help regionally based service providers improve their viability.

Representatives of customer groups told the Taskforce that it was common that customers experienced difficulties in getting taxis in country areas when they needed them, and that the level of customer service was not always up to their expectations.

Some measures – such as universal service obligations – have been in place for a number of years which are aimed at minimising these outcomes for customers. The Taskforce found that these universal service obligations, such as a requirement that a taxi network provide coverage for the entire licensed area of operation for taxis 24 hours per day, 7 days a week; or the obligation on a taxi driver to accept all fares, have not achieved their intended outcomes.

The Taskforce found that in many cases, the 24/7 coverage requirement in country areas has been detrimental to service providers, who are forced to provide services when there is little, if any demand. This has reduced the ability of businesses to tailor their products to the needs of customers.

It also identified that the requirement to constantly service a large geographical area was making it difficult for new networks to start providing niche services and by its very nature favours larger networks. This has negative consequences for competition, as smaller networks are in a weaker position to entice operators, and operators have less freedom to shop around to get a good deal on the services provided by networks. The NSW Government accepted its recommendation to remove this requirement. .

The Taskforce also recommended removing the requirement that a taxi driver accept all hirings when offered, as the existing rule is impossible to enforce and is ineffective. The Taskforce heard that people with disability in particular experienced problems.

However, the Government decided that it would not change these rules pending a review of subsidies and incentives for services for people with disability. The review will examine moving to a provider-neutral scheme to better target subsidies and incentives for services for people with disability. It will also examine the viability of

the provision of wheelchair accessible services with a view to ensuring sustainability of this important sector of point to point transport services.

In the meantime, the Government has already announced a \$250 million industry assistance scheme which includes:

- \$98 million for transitional assistance of \$20,000 per ordinary transferable licence, for up to two licences, for taxi licensees who obtained a licence before 1 July 2015, to help them adjust to a more competitive market (licensees must not transfer the licence to another person before payment of the transitional fund is finalised);
- \$142 million for taxi licensees facing hardship as a result of the changes; and
- Up to \$10 million for a buy-back scheme for perpetual hire car licensees.

The NSW Government is also providing \$3 million for the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) to provide a range of business advisory services to the taxi and hire car industry, to help industry participants adjust to the new operating environment and make the most of new opportunities.

### **Wheelchair Accessible Taxis and the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS)**

Taxis play a critical role in providing transport for people with disability and wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) are essential transport for customers who require wheelchairs. TfNSW administers or provides a number of specialist transport services for people with disability including administration of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) which provides a fare subsidy for NSW residents who are unable to use public transport because of a qualifying severe and permanent disability and the provision of incentives to the taxi industry to increase the supply of WATs, such as the WAT driver incentive payment and the WAT interest-free loan scheme.

As part of the point to point reforms, the Government also announced an additional \$15.5 million a year to support wheelchair accessible services. From 1 July, the TTSS cap increased from \$30 to \$60 for each journey and the WAT driver incentive payment rose to \$15 (excluding GST). The interest free loans scheme for wheelchair accessible taxis has also been expanded from \$1 million to \$5 million to help get more wheelchair accessible taxis on the road.

Then point to point reforms will open up more choice for regional customers with new types of booked services. There will be fewer restrictions on the types of services that can be provided, which will also encourage innovative new services that better meet regional customers' needs.

## **Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)**

The \$110 million Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) was announced by the NSW Government in 2014/15 Budget and supports the development and growth of regional tourism by investing in critical visitor economy infrastructure, including regional airports.

The NSW Government has committed to 27 upgrade projects at regional airports that will boost their capacity and safety and increase their ability to attract visitors to regional NSW. The projects include passenger terminal upgrades, improved lighting to support airport expansion, and expanding runways or aircraft parking to accommodate larger planes.

Confirmed regional airport infrastructure projects:

- Stage 1: Albury, Armidale, Ballina Byron Gateway, Bourke, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Griffith, Lightning Ridge, Lismore, Lord Howe Island, Merimbula, Moree, Narrandera, Newcastle, Tamworth, Taree, and Wagga Wagga.
- Stage 2: Armidale, Ballina Byron Gateway, Merimbula, Moruya, Mudgee, Orange, Port Macquarie, Snowy Mountains, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga.

Infrastructure improvements made at each of these regional airports will support greater accessibility to essential services and tourism opportunities, by air, for communities in regional NSW.

## **Service Delivery and Performance**

### ***New models of Accessible vehicles***

Two projects are underway to improve accessibility of bus services in rural and regional areas:

- “Coach of the Future” project is about designing truly accessible coaches, rather than retro-fitting existing vehicles. These vehicles will be low-floor, with ramp access and accessible toilets; and
- Procuring accessible buses to replace school bus fleets, creating opportunities for a greater utilisation of fleets for scheduled route services outside school hours.

These projects are complemented by trials underway with accessible low-floor community transport vehicles.

### ***Flexible transport trials***

The RRSDP branch is investigating flexible transport as a way of providing more customer-focused public transport services to transport disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW.

Approval has been granted to trial this concept and is expected to demonstrate improved value for money of existing funds by reducing duplication of funded service kilometres and maximising fleet utilisation. Flexible transport services are not mode-specific and involve re-purposing existing services to provide comprehensive, community appropriate transport networks at the lowest cost over the greatest area.

### ***New technology & resources***

TfNSW is investing in a significant new technology, known as the Centralised Trip Allocation & Booking Scheme (CTABS) that will enable contracted service providers to increase the number of services they can deliver to meet the growing demand.

TfNSW is investing \$8 million over 5 years in the community transport industry with the new CTABS platform which will not only increase services but will also mean that the community transport providers will be in a stronger position to compete against other transport providers such as taxis and rideshare operators.

In addition, the technology will improve the service offering that may be available through improved data on usage, unmet demand and cost of services.

In the longer term, the information that CTABS provides will enable state-wide analysis of service delivery and inform decision making on how more efficient services can be provided. It will provide better management of resources via increased transparency and enable distance-based calculation of costs which had not been previously possible. It will also create a more equitable allocation of funding for rural and regional community transport. CTABS has the potential to support flexible transport operations where they can be identified to provide new access opportunities for customers.

The roll-out of CTABS commenced in early 2016 and is expected to be completed by mid-2018.

TfNSW has also developed an 'Unmet Needs Model' that can be used to drill down to local levels to understand public transport accessibility by time of day. This tool provides the basics to understand where and when services are in operation, overlaid against different socio-demographic concentrations to help identify how to build accurate servicing.

### ***Travel training resources***

Travel training resources and funding are available to support new and infrequent public transport customers to access services.

Travel training services are aimed at increasing access to the existing transport network wherever possible for those people that are physically and cognitively capable. It aims to support people whose personal circumstances, such as lacking confidence or information about services, prohibits them from accessing public transport. At the same time, the increasing accessibility of the transport network means that many people who may have had difficulties in the past accessing public transport can now use it.

The resources known as First Stop Transport are available through the [transportnsw.info](http://transportnsw.info) website and funding has been allocated to selected community transport service providers to train individuals and groups on how to use public transport.

TfNSW also supports travel training as an important way of increasing the uptake of public transport by transport disadvantaged people. During 2015, TfNSW made a significant investment in the development of the First Stop Transport travel training resources. The resources were released in December 2015, and are available for free and for any community transport service provider (CTSP), organisation or individual to use at [firststop.transportnsw.info](http://firststop.transportnsw.info).

To support the roll-out of these resources, TfNSW has committed CTP funds to the delivery of travel training to support transport disadvantage people, including seniors and people with disability. From 1 July 2016, funds have been made available to train people living in Sydney, the Central Coast, Newcastle and the Northern Rivers area. Towards the end of 2016, additional funds will be made available to train people living in the rest of NSW to use public transport where it is available.

### **Customer Value Proposition**

TfNSW recently conducted a Customer Value Proposition to understand what service features and attributes were are important to existing and potential community transport customers in rural, remote, outer regional and metropolitan areas. The key findings will be used to improve the service offerings to community transport customers and develop service delivery models that better support customer needs.

Overall satisfaction with community transport is very high (99%), substantially higher than with other modes of transport such as taxis, buses and trains. The most important service attributes to customers, applicable across geographic regions and different customer sub-groups were:

- Availability – customers are able to secure a booking on every occasion, and transport is available for when and when they want it.

- Driver service – door to door assistance is offered on every occasion, and the driver is polite and friendly.
- Reliability – a specific pick up time is advised and the vehicle turns up when expected.

These findings will be incorporated into future Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for community transport service providers to ensure that services meet the needs of customers.

### ***Rural and regional bus services***

TfNSW manages the delivery of scheduled bus services to meet local travel needs of people in rural and regional NSW. Across rural and regional NSW, there are over 600 bus operators delivering services to customers to meet frequency, cost and accessibility requirements.

New rural and regional bus contracts have been finalised and implemented as of June 2016. These contracts all have KPIs to guide and measure efforts of service providers to deliver quality services.

### ***NSW Trains services***

NSW TrainLink has several activities and plans underway to improve the customer journey and experience for 2016/17 including:

- Undertaking preparations for the New Intercity Fleet (NIF) – continuing to support the TfNSW project to deliver new, accessible intercity fleet cars to replace the intercity V-sets (2019–24);
- Support the rural and regional interchange upgrade/package (delivered by Sydney Trains) including improvements such as ramp upgrades, accessible toilets, coach bay pedestrian access, new seating to platform and external areas and upgrades to car parks;
- Support the Broadmeadow and Victoria Street access upgrades in Maitland (delivered by TfNSW); and
- Using smart technology to improve customer safety and improve access to information to better plan and manage customer journeys across the train and coach network.
- Commencement of replacement of NSW Trains' 30 year old XPT fleet - NSW Government's 2016-17 Budget allocated \$35 million over four years to continue planning for replacement of the XPT rail fleet. A new diesel fleet will

enable more modern, accessible and attractive services for regional customers.

NSW Trains also has several initiatives underway which have been implemented to address anti-social behaviour on regional trains and stations. Anti-social behaviour has been identified by seniors in particular as an issue which impacts on their feelings of safety and security when travelling on the regional rail network.

NSW Trains is trialling personal safety cameras on selected NSW TrainLink services to help improve safety on regional trains. NSW TrainLink staff wear the devices that can then record anti-social and dangerous behaviour. Recordings of passenger disruptions can then be provided to police in order to further boost the safety of passenger journeys.

Additionally, in early 2016, the Government awarded a \$2 million contract to rollout 200 extra high definition CCTV cameras at public transport locations across regional NSW, and 22 train stations and coach stops will be upgraded over the next year with high definition CCTV. The additional CCTV cameras will also be accompanied by new Customer Help Points which will also be installed as part of the work. These measures will continue to ensure customer safety and assist police with investigations when necessary.

NSW Trains patronage information for seniors and pensioners is provided at **Appendix 2**.

## **Strategies to support Aboriginal people and their communities**

### ***Local involvement in transport planning***

The NSW Government supports greater local government involvement in public transport planning. This was a recommendation of the 2014 NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Inter-Regional Public Transport. Local involvement in transport planning is consistent with the *OCHRE*<sup>5</sup> principle that local communities know their service needs best.

Local Decision Making Regional Alliances should similarly be involved in regional transport planning, where there is interest and capacity. While Regional Alliances have not formally identified transport as a priority issue, their identified priorities are

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<sup>5</sup> OCHRE is the NSW Government plan for Aboriginal affairs. It stands for opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, empowerment and is symbolic of Aboriginal communities' deep connection with Country.



contingent on good quality, reliable and affordable transport services. Regional tourism opportunities, for example, are entirely dependant on transport.

Wellington in Central West NSW provides a good example of how community pressure can improve the transport outcomes for smaller regional centres. Wellington is 54 kilometres from the regional centre of Dubbo. Retail stores have, over time, closed because of the relative proximity of Dubbo (45 minutes in a car). While there is a daily train service (XPT) between Wellington and Dubbo, local community members rallied for a bus service between Dubbo and Wellington. The bus service is used for shopping, education and employment, is affordable and accessible with several pick-up locations and frequent services. Other Central West communities (such as Gilgandra) are also building up a groundswell of support for better bus services.

### ***Driver licensing support initiatives***

The Aboriginal Road Safety Action Plan 2014-2017 includes a Driver Licensing Access Program that provides support services from pre-learner to the unrestricted driver licensing stage. Additionally, the Driving Change Licensing Support Program, a joint private sector and government initiative, increases the number of young Aboriginal drivers by providing practical help such as mentors and supervisors for learner drivers.

The State Debt Recovery Office has outreach programs and schemes such as Work and Development Orders to support Aboriginal people struggling to manage their fine debts.

A NSW Aboriginal Driver Licensing Interagency Committee is developing further strategies to increase the number of Aboriginal people with a driver licence. All of this work, along with the proportion of young people and better identification, has seen a 125% rate of growth of Aboriginal driver licence holders compared with 35% growth for non-Aboriginal licence holders (in the 10 years to 2013).

### **Transport for health related strategies**

The NSW Government acknowledges the integral role of telehealth to support the delivery of patient-centred care, and has committed funds for the establishment of over 1,000 telehealth sites in rural and regional areas.

Telehealth offers significant benefits for patients, their carers, healthcare workers and the health system, particularly in addressing challenges of distance for rural and remote communities. It complements face-to-face consultation, reduces travel time and improves access to specialists and advice.

The *NSW Health Telehealth Framework and Implementation Strategy 2016-2021* outline actions, timeframes and responsibilities to embed telehealth in core business in NSW Health by 2021.

## **(d) 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**

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There are a range of subsidies, concessions and other funding assistance available for seniors and disadvantaged people to assist with the costs of transport services not provided through the public transport system.

### **Service Delivery and Performance**

TfNSW provides funding to community transport service providers to enable them to deliver a range of subsidised transport services to seniors and transport disadvantaged people who have limited or no access to private transport and difficulty accessing conventional public transport.

NSW Health allocated \$733,540 for community transport in 2015-16 to non-government organisations (NGOs), specifically to assist patients accessing health services. In addition to NGO grant funding, some local health districts (LHDs) may use funding from their NSW Health 'Transport for Health' budget to contract community transport services to help people access health services.

### **Aboriginal Funeral Transport**

Aboriginal Funeral Transport is a funding program that provides assistance with transport for isolated and disadvantaged Aboriginal communities to get back to country for funerals.

A number of options are available to facilitate attendance ranging from reimbursing 100% of public transport costs, reimbursing 50% of bus hire costs and fuel vouchers.

The program is currently administered by Chandler Macleod Managed Training Services (MTS) and the Aboriginal Service Development Officer within the RRSDP branch who has oversight of the program, as the Officer has strong ties with community representatives throughout NSW.

### **Fares and public transport concessions**

Transport concessions on public transport services are available for eligible seniors, pensioners, people with disability and other customers in rural and regional areas. These include:

### **NSW TrainLink fares and concessions**

- The \$2.50 Country Pensioner Excursion (CPE) fare on booked NSW TrainLink Regional services for eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/ers;
- Half fare concessions on NSW TrainLink Regional services for pensioners and seniors;
- Pensioner travel vouchers – eligible pensioners and war widows/ers are entitled to a total of two return or four single free journeys on NSW TrainLink regional services within NSW each calendar year;
- Free travel for World War One veterans and their wives/widows and eligible ex-members of the Defence Forces with service-related disabilities (the latter are entitled to a combined total of three return or six single journeys on NSW TrainLink services each calendar year if they reside outside the Sydney and Newcastle areas);
- Free travel for assistants of Companion Card holders and assistance animals accompanying a person with disability. Holders of a Vision Impaired Person's (VIP) Pass are entitled to half the adult fare on NSW TrainLink regional services and one return or two single free economy class trips on all intrastate NSW TrainLink journeys each calendar year. Assistants of VIP pass holders may also travel free; and
- Free travel for authorised carers and Royal Far West support for regional customers travelling for medical care.

### **Rural and regional bus concessions**

- The \$2.50 Regional Excursion Daily (RED) ticket which provides for all-day travel on rural and regional bus services. This is available to eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/ers;

In addition, eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/ers are entitled to the Opal Gold Card which provides unlimited all-day travel for \$2.50 in Sydney, Newcastle, the Hunter, Central Coast and Blue Mountains on all public transport modes on the Opal network, including NSW TrainLink Intercity train services.

### **Support for access to education – Private Vehicle Conveyance (PVC) subsidy**

In rural or regional areas where there is no public transport (government or private operators) available to transport a student for all or part of the journey to school, the Private Vehicle Conveyance (PVC) subsidy may be paid to offset the cost of using a private vehicle to drive the student. It complements the School Student Transport

Scheme (SSTS) which provides free public transport for eligible children between home and school. It is intended to help families in areas where there is no public transport – mainly rural and regional areas – with the cost of driving their children to and from school (or the nearest public transport pick up point) in their own cars. The PVC subsidy is also available to eligible TAFE students in these areas.

The PVC subsidy is not intended to cover all of the costs of these trips, but assists with mitigating some of the travel costs. It is calculated on a daily attendance basis and paid after the end of Term 2 and Term 4 once the attendance has been audited and confirmed by the school or TAFE college.

### **Vehicle registration and driver licensing concessions**

NSW continues to offer a generous concession scheme for vehicle registration and driver licences. All pensioners who hold a current pension concession card issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) receive free registration for one vehicle used principally by the pensioner. Some recipients of DVA pensions may also be eligible for exemptions from transfer fees and stamp duty.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) also administers pensioner concessions exempting eligible pensioners from fees for the following driver licensing products:

- driver licences;
- most driving tests (fee is payable for computer driving tests);
- riding skill test at a motor registry;
- riding skill test with training contractor;
- heavy vehicle competency based assessment log book and guide;
- replacement learner driver log book; and
- NSW Photo Cards.

### **Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS)**

NSW Health oversees the IPTAAS, which provides financial assistance for eligible people who are required to travel more than 100 kilometres to attend specialist medical appointments. All expenses claimed must be incurred for medical reasons and certified by a medical practitioner. Some patients may be required to make a contribution towards the cost of their travel. Patients who hold a current pension or healthcare card are not required to make a financial contribution. IPTAAS is a subsidy, rather than a full reimbursement scheme.

IPTAAS is a viable transport solution in instances where eligible people are able to access transport or use their own to travel and then be subsidised. The focus of IPTAAS is not on acquiring or coordinating transport for members of the community.

Funding by NSW Health to the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector is not specifically allocated for transport. As a result, transport is covered as required within existing budgets reducing the availability of funding for specific health needs.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is expected to provide a minimum transport subsidy of \$1574.40 per year for all eligible people with disability. When using wheelchair accessible taxis as a primary method of transport, this NDIS subsidy will work in partnership with the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS).

## Summary

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TfNSW is committed to continuing to work on ways to collaborate, enhance and better coordinate access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW. TfNSW supports the Committee's investigation of this issue and the delivery of recommendations that will further guide and strengthen a government-wide approach to provision of transport which continues to place customer needs throughout rural and regional areas at the forefront of service delivery.

## Appendix 1

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### Regional Aboriginal community snapshots

#### *Murdi Paaki (Western NSW)*

- In the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census, 17% of the 48,115 residents in Murdi Paaki were Aboriginal, a 3% rise from 2006, whereas the total population of the region had fallen 4%. About 11% of Aboriginal residents were under 5 (compared with 5% of the total population) and 40% were under 18. Only 5% of Aboriginal residents were over 65 years, compared with 19% in the total population. The median age of Aboriginal residents was 23 years compared to 38 years in the non-Aboriginal population.

- Aboriginal households were 48% larger than non-Aboriginal households. 60% of Aboriginal households rented their residences. Only 44% of Aboriginal adults were in the labour force, and their median income was 27% less than all adults. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal adults was 21% compared with 5% of the non-Aboriginal adults.
- About 30% of Aboriginal people were attending an educational institution, and Year 12 completion rates had risen 36% from 2006.
- 5% of Aboriginal residents reported that they had a severe or profound disability. 43% of Aboriginal households had an internet connection.

#### *Many Rivers (North Coast NSW)*

- In the 2011 ABS Census, 4.6% of the 529,111 residents in the Many Rivers region were Aboriginal. A 24% rise from 2006, whereas the total population of the region had risen 4%. About 13% of Aboriginal residents were under 5 (compared with 5% of the total population) and 46% were under 18. Only 4% of Aboriginal residents were over 65 years, compared with 21% in the total population. The median age of Aboriginal residents was 20 years compared to 38 years in the non-Aboriginal population.
- Aboriginal households were 4% larger than non-Aboriginal households. 59% of Aboriginal households rented their residences. 46% of Aboriginal adults were in the labour force, and their median income was 22% less than all adults. The unemployment rate for Aboriginal adults was 22% compared with 8% of the non-Aboriginal adult population.
- About 40% of Aboriginal people were attending an educational institution, and Year 12 completion rates had risen 50% from 2006.
- 7% of Aboriginal residents reported that they had a severe or profound disability and 15% were carers of a person with a disability. 63% of Aboriginal households had an internet connection.

## Appendix 2

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### NSW Trainlink patronage

**Figure 1:** Numbers and proportion of senior and pensioner passengers by destination for FY 2016

Origin/Destination Pairs	Number of journeys taken FY16  (% of Origin/Destination Pairs)
(a) Departing from Regional areas to other Regional areas	247,363 (45%)
(b) Departing from Regional areas to Sydney	143,162 (39%)
(c) Departing from Sydney to Regional areas	143,172 (39%)

Figure 1 is sourced from estimates based on 2015/16 Regional patronage data with the following disclaimer:

- Age is not recorded in the Regional booking system; however, NSW Trains has details of trips and the fare paid for each trip;
- Pensioner and senior fare journeys are combined in the system which cannot be broken down by type;
- Regional areas are defined as all NSW TrainLink Regional locations outside the Sydney Trains and Intercity network (boundaries are Newcastle/Scone/Dungog in the North, Bathurst in the West and Goulbourn/Bomaderry in the South – these locations are not included)
- Included in the pensioner and senior fares are:
  - Country Pension Excursion (CPE) tickets (\$2.50);
  - Free Pensioner Travel Vouchers (NSW Pension Card holders); and
  - Half-fare Pension/Senior tickets (available for anyone with a Australian Pension or Seniors Card)

**Figure 2:** Estimated percentage of customer journeys for people aged 60 years and over, Q4 2014

Origin	Customer Journeys	Customer Journeys	60+ yo
	<60 yo	60+ yo	
Regional - Regional	66	59	47%
Regional - Sydney	233	245	51%
Sydney - Regional	297	268	47%

- The information in Figure 2 is based on a small sample of customers who completed the TfNSW Regional Customer Satisfaction Index survey in Q4, 2014.