

Media release

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FEEDBACK SOUGHT ON LOCAL BUS SERVICE PRICES

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is calling for feedback from residents of the Hunter, Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions about rural and regional bus services.

IPART is investigating how fares should best be set for the services provided, how these fares and the costs of providing them relate to those for similar services in metropolitan areas, and how services might be improved to better meet passenger demands.

The review will also consider ways to address using bus services across borders including concession fares and different eligibility criteria between states.

IPART Chair Dr Peter Boxall said there are around 95 different operators providing bus services in the Hunter, Mid North Coast and Northern Rivers regions of NSW including Coffs Harbour, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads.

“Most trips in regional and rural NSW are made by private vehicles, but buses and other forms of public transport provide a valuable service for those unable to drive or without access to a vehicle,” Dr Boxall said.

“Just 2.4% of bus trips are undertaken by full-fare paying adult passengers, which means that rural and regional bus services are almost entirely funded by taxpayers.”

The costs of providing these services will be a key factor for IPART’s review, along with an assessment of how bus fares for journeys of different distances should vary.

IPART is also looking at whether ‘on demand’ services, which have more flexible departure times, pick-up and drop-off points and routes, could be used to reduce costs or better meet community needs.

Local residents, community groups and transport providers have until 29 June to make submissions to IPART on the proposed approach to the Review of rural and regional bus fares from 1 January 2018.

An online survey is available at <http://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/Home/Rural-Regional-Bus-Survey> so people can have their say about the options under consideration in the Issues Paper. The survey will also be open until 29 June.

There will be a further opportunity for submissions once a draft report is released in September 2017.

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More information is available at ipart.nsw.gov.au