



Social Futures  
Northern Rivers Social Development Council



## RESPONSE: IPART Rural and Regional Bus services fare review

Submission by: Northern Rivers Transport Development Project

[socialfutures.org.au](http://socialfutures.org.au)

## Introduction:

Social Futures welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to IPART's review of rural and regional bus fares and commend efforts to develop more equitable transport for communities in regional and rural NSW.

Transport is a critical determinant of the social and economic participation of rural and regional residents, and vital for the health and sustainability of those communities.

The Northern Rivers region is the north eastern region of NSW. It is bordered by the New England and Mid North Coast regions with the Queensland border the most northern point. The Northern Rivers region has a population of over 299,000<sup>1</sup> and is experiencing large growth focused around the Tweed area.

The Northern Rivers region has an above average level of social disadvantage compared to the NSW median. The smaller regional centres of Richmond Valley and Kyogle are the most disadvantaged areas, while the larger coastal centres of Byron and Ballina are the least disadvantaged.

Levels of transport across the region vary<sup>2</sup> with the Tweed Heads area having the highest level of service. Across the region, public transport service levels generally provide basic cover during school periods. However, large gaps exist during school holiday periods due to the reliance on school bus services for many communities. These gaps increase over weekend where the majority of towns have no services. Most areas also have no services available after 6pm.

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of ensuring transport pricing is equitable, this alone will not solve the transport disadvantage faced by regional and rural communities such as those in the Northern Rivers. We recommend that it be part of a broader suite of measures to encourage greater use of public transport.

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1. Regional Development Australia Northern Rivers NSW *Our Region* <http://rdanorthernrivers.org.au/our-region/>
  2. Social Futures *Northern Rivers Transport Mapping Project* analyses transport service levels for areas in the Northern Rivers <http://bit.ly/2sZug1X>.

### Recommendations:

After considering IPART's issues document, Social Futures recommends:

- IPART set both daily and weekly bus fare caps to give greater certainty to regional and rural bus users
- fare determination be set for five years and aligned to bus service contracts
- regional and rural fare prices be brought closer to metropolitan fares, with service providers to be compensated to ensure the viability of services
- the RED Ticket be extended to other low-socioeconomic groups i.e students and other welfare recipients.
- mutual recognition of concession cards for those travelling in and out of cross-border areas
- on-demand transport services be used to supplement and complement existing bus services and fill gaps where existing services do not currently meet community needs
- current public transport use trends are not used to assess demand for on-demand services
- environmental, social and health benefits of access to transport should be considered in setting fares

## RESPONSE TO AREAS OF FOCUS:

### **Do you agree with our proposed assessment criteria for the review? Which ones do you think are most important and why?**

The criteria proposed appears adequate to assess pricing of public transport. Due to the level of transport disadvantage faced by regional and rural areas such as the Northern Rivers, 'providing the right amount of the right type of services' is something very relevant to our region. We recommend this point be extended to include 'at the right times'.

### **Do you agree we should determine fares for a five-year period? If not, what is the appropriate length of the fare determination?**

Yes. Five years provides certainty to both consumers and operators on pricing.

### **Are there benefits of aligning the fare determination with the term of bus contracts?**

Yes, this will provide greater certainty to bus operators going into their new contracts.

### **Do you agree with our proposed approach for estimating the total efficient costs of providing rural and regional bus services? Are there other approaches or issues we should consider?**

Fares for regional services need to balance the lowest cost to the consumer with the need for service providers to remain financially sustainable. With the majority of trips currently taken by private vehicle, especially in peak commuting times, we commend any strategies that reduce reliance on private transport.

### **What types of external benefits do you consider relevant in setting rural and regional bus fares?**

External benefits are important to consider in the review of rural and regional bus fares.

We agree that social inclusion benefits are important in considering concession policy and the level of service provision/service coverage in rural and regional areas. However, we disagree that individual access to resources such as education, employment, and health has no benefit external to the user.

A recent evaluation of the Ability Links NSW program conducted by Urbis<sup>3</sup> revealed the economic benefits associated with social inclusion. While social inclusion benefits the individual, the report also highlights the greater economic benefits to the entire community. Therefore, we would encourage the consideration of the benefits of social inclusion to the greater community in determining regional and rural bus fares.

Other external benefits to consider include the environmental and physical health benefits of using public transport.

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1. Urbis *Ability Links NSW Social Cost Benefit Analysis* <http://bit.ly/2tj86dV>

**Do you agree that the fare structure should be simplified? If so, how many sections do you think are appropriate and why?**

Yes. Fare structures should be simplified with an equitable cap applied for both country town and regional routes between towns and cities.

**Do you think there should be a different fare structure (or number of sections) for country town and regional routes between towns and cities?**

Fare structures should be put in place that incentivise travel using public transport. Due to the large distances associated with inter-town travel in regional areas, it is appropriate that fare structures differ. However, a consistent daily cap should still be applied for all non-coach services.

**Do you think there should be daily or weekly caps for travel on rural and regional bus services? Should IPART determine these caps or are operators better placed to understand where these may encourage more efficient use of bus services?**

We believe that both daily and weekly caps for travel should be introduced for rural and regional bus services that are comparable with our metropolitan counterparts.

Some buslines in the Northern Rivers region have independently implemented fare caps, however, this is not applied consistently across the region. We believe IPART are best positioned to determine price caps with the flexibility for service providers to provide lower prices if deemed locally appropriate. Consistent application of fare caps will provide greater incentive for use of bus services and more equitable costs for regional communities.

It is important that bus service providers are adequately subsidised to provide fare caps to ensure services remain viable.

**Should fares be more equitable between Sydney metropolitan area and rural and regional areas of NSW?**

The current distance-based fare structure unfairly impacts regional and rural services when compared to metropolitan services. Currently, single trip metropolitan Opal fares are capped at \$4.50 and \$15 daily limit, while a common rural/regional trip of 44km can cost regional users up to \$14.60.

Due to regional areas higher levels of disadvantage, we recommend that prices be comparable with metropolitan services. Furthermore, we believe that pricing should be capped for daily and weekly travel in order to incentivise bus travel over private car use.

**Do you consider that eligibility for RED ticket targets the people with the greatest need for concession fares?**

The RED ticket is a large drawcard for users of public transport. Currently, the RED ticket concession targets some members of the community, however, we recommend consideration be given to extending this concession to other low-income groups including students, and other welfare recipients.

**What do you consider are the biggest barriers to seamless bus travel in cross-border areas? To what extent do differences in fare structure between NSW and other states prevent travel across borders?**

Cross-border issues are an important consideration for public transport use in the Northern Rivers with particular relevance for people in the Tweed Shire.

The differences in fare structures and payment methods between states undoubtedly adds to the confusion for passengers and is a potential barrier for communities in the Northern Rivers. Furthermore, the difference in eligibility for concession rates can make travel north of the border unaffordable for sections of the community.

While consistency in fares and eligibility for concessions for cross-border services will make conditions more conducive for public transport travel, it is important to note that a broader suite of strategies aimed at increasing public transport patronage is needed.

**Should there be a mutual recognition of some or all concession cards across state borders for those living in cross-border areas?**

Yes, all.

**Do you agree that social inclusion should be considered in the context of service provision and service coverage when planning for public transport services in regional areas?**

Yes (as outlined previously).

**In your regional area, which groups of people are most likely to use on-demand services, and how could this change over time?**

Students and concession card holders are likely to continue to be the biggest users of public transport services in the Northern Rivers.

If on-demand service can offer timely commuting services to and from work between towns in the Northern Rivers they are likely to contribute to greater uptake of public transport services. However, it is important that any changes don't reduce access for existing users.

### **Which factors do you consider are most important when assessing the need for on demand services in your regional area?**

In assessing the need for on demand services in the Northern Rivers, we believe the factors outlined in table 5.1 of IPARTs Issue Paper are adequate considerations.

It is not recommended that current use trends of public transport services be used to assess the need for on demand services as there are a range of underlying factors including pricing that can contribute to low service use in regional and rural areas.

### **What types of delivery models for on-demand services could be used to meet the needs in your regional areas and who could provide them?**

Each community which is serviced by an on-demand service would need to be fully consulted to ensure the service meets the needs of the community.

Generally, we view services with a mix of fixed and flexible route as having the most potential for both intra-regional and inter-regional travel. However, it is recommended that the time of arrival times remain consistent so that users have the confidence to use the service for appointments.

### **In the context of the recent point-to-point transport reforms, who could provide more on demand services in your regional area?**

Should appropriate funding be provided, bus, taxi and Community Transport organisations, as well as not-for-profit organisations with existing transport infrastructure could be ideally placed to deliver more on demand services.

### **What incentives could be developed to facilitate the provision of more on-demand services?**

Incentives to facilitate the provision of more on-demand services include:

- Extending concession rates to on demand services
- Extending subsidies to on demand service providers
- Providing a technological booking/payment system for on-demand providers

### **Are there any constraints that could prevent the development of on-demand services in regional areas?**

Whilst we welcome any additional services to rural and regional areas, it is important that these services are designed in consultation with the community. Barriers to effective implementation of on-demand services include:

- Large distances between key transport points
- Community perception of public transport i.e longer travel times, awareness of services





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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respect to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.





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# Northern Rivers Transport Mapping Report

Report by: Northern Rivers Transport Development Project

[socialfutures.org.au](http://socialfutures.org.au)

## Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
About the Transport Development Project.....	4
Method.....	5
Northern Region Analysis .....	6
Medical: .....	6
Education: .....	6
Major Shopping: .....	6
Social Services: .....	6
Commuting: .....	6
Recreation: .....	6
Other:.....	7
Alternate Services.....	7
Northern Region Weekdays .....	9
Northern Region Weekends .....	10
Central Region Analysis .....	11
Medical: .....	11
Education: .....	11
Major Shopping: .....	11
Social Services: .....	12
Commuting: .....	12
Recreation: .....	12
Other:.....	13
Alternate Services.....	13
Central Region Weekdays.....	14
Central Region Weekends.....	15
Southern Region Analysis .....	16
Medical: .....	16
Education: .....	16
Major Shopping: .....	16
Social Services: .....	16
Commuting: .....	17
Recreation: .....	17
Other:.....	17
Alternate Services.....	17
Southern Region Weekdays.....	19
Southern Region Weekends.....	20
Conclusion.....	21

Social Futures acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout NSW where our programs are delivered. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respects to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future. This report is an activity of the Northern Rivers Transport Development Project (NRTDP). The NRTDP is funded by Transport for New South Wales (TfNSW) and administered by Social Futures.

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## Executive Summary:

The Northern Rivers Public Transport Mapping Project (NRPTMP) was undertaken as part of the Social Futures Transport Development Project. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of public transport services across the Northern Rivers and developing a better insight into how services align with community expectations.

The NRPTMP was developed in consultation with transport working groups across the Northern Rivers. It draws on results of the Sustain Northern Rivers Transport Survey 2013 to identify the destinations and trips analysed by this report.

Across the region, this report finds that the existing public transport service level generally provides basic cover during school periods. However, large gaps exist during school holiday periods, with these gaps increasing over weekends. Towns predominately reliant on school bus services face the most disadvantage, with no public transport during school holidays. There are also very few services across the region available after 6pm.

This report also finds that a number of region-wide opportunities exist to enhance the effectiveness of existing public transport across the region. These include:

- Listing school bus services on TfNSW trip planner tool with appropriate measures put in place to ensure the safety of all users
- Ensuring communities know about and how to use TfNSW trip planner tool
- Better route planning – ensuring the first inter-town service arrives before 9am and the last leaves after 5pm
- Allowing public transport users with a school travel pass to travel free of charge on existing bus services to and from TAFE
- Allowing bookings for short journeys on TrainLink services
- Developing an effective, well-promoted Carpool system for the region that incentivises ride-sharing and provides accurate data on how the platform is utilised
- Utilising existing bus infrastructure during school holiday periods
- Investigating if and how taxis can supplement and complement existing services through providing more on demand services

This report analyses if trips can be undertaken in a 24 hour period. It does not explore nor claim to represent the community's expectations around number of trips available.

Further research is needed to explore community expectations around frequency of public transport and the conditions under which the community would make better use of existing transport services. This could inform planning for appropriate service levels for towns across the region.

## About the Transport Development Project

Social Futures' Transport Development Project is a regional initiative funded by Transport for NSW that is focused on reducing transport disadvantage and improving access to affordable transport options for residents of the Northern Rivers.

The Transport Development Project Officer works with transport providers, community organisations, interest groups and local government to develop regionally appropriate transport solutions.

Key project activities include:

- Coordinating transport working groups in each of the seven Northern Rivers local government areas
- Coordinating transport information days
- Promoting existing transport options
- Managing the Going Places transport website
- Identifying transport service gaps and linkage issues
- Developing proposals for new transport services
- Developing submissions for state and federal inquiries
- Assisting local government in the identification of transport infrastructure needs i.e new bus stops
- Reviewing local government plans to identify potential transport opportunities

## Method

The NRPTMP was developed in consultation with transport working groups across the Northern Rivers. It draws on results of the Sustain Northern Rivers Transport Survey 2013<sup>1</sup> to identify destinations and trips analysed in this research.

The following principles and definitions were applied to the research to ensure results reflected community expectations of transport. These include:

- Minimum stay, general - All return trips must have a minimum stay of one hour
- Minimum stay, education - All trips to education points must arrive prior to 9am and return after 4pm
- Minimum stay, commuting - All commuting trips must arrive prior to 9am and return after 5pm
- Major shopping centre – A shopping centre with access to groceries and a close proximity to a pharmacy
- Walking Distance – Distances are measured from the nearest bus stop to best ensure accessibility of the stop. An acceptable walking distance for bus stop is defined as no more than 400 metres

The NRPTMP has grouped locations in three regions. The three regions were drawn from transport data from the Sustain Northern Rivers Regional Transport Plan 2013. Data was gathered using existing timetables (current as of 24/01/2017) and through direct consultation with service providers. Each location is mapped against the destination points for Monday to Friday services across non-school holidays and school holidays, as well as Saturday and Sunday services.

Destination points listed with a 2 = return trip is possible, destination points with a 1 = trip is possible one way during the 24 hour period, and destination points listed with a 0 = no trip is possible.



1. Regional Development Australia – Northern Rivers *Sustain Northern Rivers Transport Survey*, 2014

## Northern Region Analysis

The Northern Region has the highest level of service across the Northern Rivers and is generally well connected on school days. The reduction of early services during school holiday periods considerably reduces access to education and commuting hubs for towns outside of Tweed Heads. However, it does not greatly impact access to shopping, recreation, and social services for townships that do not rely on school buses for transport. Furthermore, the lack of information regarding school services on the TfNSW Trip Planner tool limits access to transport information – potentially reducing patronage of the service and opportunity for the individual.

The major findings for this region are:

### Medical:

- Emergency medical facilities are well serviced across the region on school days, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During school holiday periods, access to emergency medical facilities is not available for Byrrill Creek, Cobaki, Duranbah, Nobbys Creek and Stokers Siding.

### Education:

- No weekday or school holiday access to universities for Bilambil Heights, Murwillumbah, Pottsville, Burringbar, Byrrill Creek, Cabarita, Chinderah, Cobaki, Condong, Duranbah, Hastings Point, Nobbys Creek, Stokers Siding, Tumbulgum.
- No return services to TAFE for Burringbar, Byrrill Creek, Cobaki, Duranbah, Nobbys Creek, Stokers Siding, Tyalgum, Uki on weekdays both in school holidays and non-school holidays.
- No bus service to Gold Coast campus of the Southern Cross University. There is currently a 400+ meter walk from the nearest drop-off point to the University facilities. This can be a significant barrier for people with a physical disability.

### Major Shopping:

- Major shopping centres are well serviced across the region during non-school holiday periods, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During weekday school holiday periods, access to major shopping centres is not available for Byrrill Creek, Cobaki, Duranbah, Nobbys Creek and Stokers Siding. On weekends, access to shopping centres is also not possible for Burringbar and Uki.

### Social Services:

- Same as 'Major Shopping'.

### Commuting:

- 'T1' and 'T2' towns are generally well serviced for commuting for both school days and holidays with only Bilambil Heights not serviced.



- There are no weekday commuting services to major towns for Burringbar, Byrrill Creek, Cobaki, Duranbah, Nobbys Creek, Stokers Siding, Tyalgum and Uki.

#### Recreation:

- Recreation activities are well serviced across the region with return journeys available for most towns listed during non-school holiday periods. During school holiday periods and weekends, areas reliant on school services cannot access recreation activities via public transport.

#### Other:

- Access to Gold Coast airport is not possible via public transport on weekends for Burringbar, Byrrill Creek, Cobaki, Duranbah, Nobbys Creek, Stokers Siding, Tyalgum and Uki.

### Alternate Services

There are a range of alternate services across the region that run in parallel to bus services. These services can fill gaps in the bus network in some instances. The cost of these services can be prohibitive if concession rates are not applied.

#### Coach Services

Towns in the northern region have access to TrainLink and Premiere coach services.

Premiere services the townships of Mooball, Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads twice a day north and south and could be used to fill gaps over weekends.

Similarly, TrainLink offers four services each day north and south through Mooball, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads, Pottsville, Kingscliff, South Tweed Heads. However, short trips (Murwillumbah to Tweed Heads) are not available for online booking. There is also no physical access to booking facilities in many of the towns in this region which reduces access for potential users.

While both coach services open up inter-regional travel, on average they take twice as long as private transport and leave outside of peak travel times.

#### Community Transport

Tweed Ballina Byron Community Transport (TBBCT) operates across the Northern Region with a range of services that currently fill some of the gaps. However, eligibility criteria apply for accessing this service. Currently, TBBCT provides:

- Individual transport for medical and other appointments (eligibility requirements: based on need, typically over 65-years-old)
- Social outings (eligibility requirements: 65-years-old +)
- Shopping centre trips (eligibility requirements: 65-years-old +)
- Bus hire for community groups & organisations
- Group transport for young people (eligibility requirements: 12 – 25 years old, minimum of eight passengers, \$10-15 per person)

### **Carpool Services**

Carpool services, Northern Rivers Carpool and Miler, are available in all towns throughout the Northern Region. Currently, these services have limited uptake and therefore limited capacity to supplement public transport services.

Currently, Uber only operates on the east coast of the region with fees more comparable to taxi services than carpool services such as Miler. This can be cost prohibitive for some people.

### **Taxi Services**

Taxi services are available in the major towns but not in many smaller towns. While there are some concessions for using taxi services – the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme and Community Transport Taxi Voucher Scheme – costs can be prohibitive for many people. Taxi services are important for existing users. However, availability and cost limit their impact on alleviating transport disadvantage across the region.

## Northern Region Weekdays

[illegible]

## Northern Region Weekends

[illegible]

## Central Region Analysis

The Central Region has varying levels of service across the region, especially during school holiday periods. The lack of information regarding school services on the TfNSW Trip Planner tool limits access to transport information – potentially reducing patronage of the service and opportunity for the individual.

Transport to and from education facilities is limited across the region, with no services to Southern Cross University between 7:20am and 8:55am from the Lismore Transit Centre (the major exchange point). This restricts access to education via public transport for many towns. There are also greatly reduced services across the weekend with very few services available on Sundays.

The major findings for this region are:

### Medical:

- Return access to a major medical service is available for all towns on school days via public transport.
- There is no access to a major medical service via public transport during school holidays and weekends for Caniaba, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville, and Wyrallah.

### Education:

- Many towns are unable to access Southern Cross University before 9am via public transport due to alternate routes of 661 during this time. These towns include Byron Bay, Casino, Kyogle, Mullumbimby, Ocean Shores, Suffolk Park, Bangalow, Bexhill, Bonalbo, Brunswick Heads, Caniaba, Clunes, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Eltham, Ewingsdale, Federal, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville and Wyrallah. This is extended to include Nimbin during school holidays.
- No services travelling north of Ocean Shores result in no access to Kingscliff TAFE.
- There is no access to any TAFE campuses via public transport for Kyogle, Ocean Shores, Bangalow, Bexhill, Bonalbo, Brunswick Heads, Caniaba, Clunes, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Eltham, Ewingsdale, Federal, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville and Wyrallah. This is extended to include Nimbin during school holidays.

### Major Shopping:

- The region has good access to major shopping centres via public transport during non-school holiday periods, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During school holiday periods, access to major shopping centres via public transport is not available for Bonalbo, Caniaba, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville, Wyrallah. This is extended to Bangalow, Bexhill, Clunes, Coraki, Eltham, Evans Head, Federal, Woodburn on Saturdays.

### Social Services:

- Access to social services via public transport is good across the region during non-school holiday periods, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During school holiday periods, access to social services is not available via public transport for Bonalbo, Caniaba, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville, Wyrallah.

### Commuting:

- Weekday commuting via public transport is available between Lismore, Goonellabah, Alstonville, Wollongbar and Ballina; from Evans Head, Woodburn and Coraki to Lismore; and between Ballina, Lennox Head, Byron Bay, Suffolk Park and Mullumbimby. Commuting to Byron Bay from Bangalow is also achievable.

### Recreation:

- After hours services are limited to around Lismore/Goonellabah and around Byron Bay on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Access to the beach and library via public transport is good across the region on weekdays, however, largely not possible on Saturday and Sundays.

### Other:

- Service NSW in Ballina is inaccessible via public transport due to not being on a bus route and being outside the 400m walking distance.
- Return journeys to Service NSW in Lismore via public transport is not possible for Coorabell and is extended to Bonalbo, Caniaba, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville, Wyrallah during school holidays.
- Return journeys to a regional airport via public transport is available for all towns listed on school days. During school holidays, regional airports are inaccessible via public transport for Bonalbo, Caniaba, Coorabell, Corndale, Dunoon, Rosebank, Tabulam, The Channon, Urbenville, Wyrallah during school holidays.

## Alternate Services

There are a range of alternate services across the region that run in parallel to bus services. These services can fill gaps in the bus network in some instances.

### Coach Services

Towns in the central region have access to TrainLink and Premiere coach services.

Premiere services the townships of Lismore, Alstonville, Ballina, Lennox Head, Byron Bay, Brunswick Heads and Woodburn twice a day north and south and could be used to fill gaps over weekends.

Similarly, TrainLink offers multiple services each day north and south through Ocean Shores, Brunswick Heads, Mullumbimby, Byron Bay, Lismore, Bexhill, Clunes, Bangalow, Suffolk Park, Lennox Head, Ballina, Wardell, Goonellabah, Wollongbar, Alstonville, Evans Head,



Casino and Woodburn. However, short trips (Lismore to Clunes) are not available for online booking. There is also no access to face-to-face booking facilities in many of the towns in this region which reduces access for potential users. Both coach services open up inter-regional travel.

### **Community Transport**

Tweed Ballina Byron Community Transport (TBBCT) and HART Services operate across the Central Region with a range of services that currently fill some of the gaps. However, eligibility criteria apply for accessing these services.

Currently, TBBCT and HART provide:

- Individual transport for medical and other appointments (eligibility requirements: based on need, typically over 65)
- Social outings (eligibility requirements: 65-years-old +)
- Shopping centre trips (eligibility requirements: 65-years-old +)
- Bus hire for community groups & organisations
- Group transport for young people (eligibility requirements and price depends on service)

### **Carpool Services**

Carpool services, Northern Rivers Carpool and Miler, are available in all towns throughout the Central Region. Currently, these services have limited uptake and therefore limited capacity to supplement public transport services.

Currently, Uber only operates for Lismore, Byron and Ballina with fees more comparable to taxi services than carpool services such as Miler. This can be cost prohibitive for some people.

### **Taxi Services**

Taxi services are available in the major towns but not in many smaller towns. While there are some concessions for using taxi services – the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme and Community Transport Taxi Voucher Scheme – costs can be prohibitive for many people. Taxi services are important for existing users. However, availability and cost limit their impact on alleviating transport disadvantage across the region.

## Central Region Weekdays

[illegible]

## Central Region Weekends

[illegible]

## Southern Region Analysis

Levels of service vary across the southern region with considerable gaps for some towns, especially during school holiday periods. The lack of information regarding school services on the TfNSW Trip Planner tool limits access to transport information – potentially reducing patronage of the service and opportunity for the individual. Transport to and from both Lismore and Coffs Harbour's Southern Cross University campuses is not possible for the region, with limited access to Grafton, Coffs Harbour and Maclean TAFEs. There are greatly reduced services across the weekend for T2 and T3 towns. The major findings for this region are:

### Medical:

- Access to a major medical service is available for all towns on weekdays during non-school holiday periods.
- There is no access to a major medical service via public transport during school holidays for Ashby, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli. This is extended to Waterview Heights, Seelands, Lawrence, Jackadgery, Eatonsville and Copmanhurst on weekends.

### Education:

- No return journeys to Southern Cross University in Lismore or Coffs Harbour across the region.
- No return journeys to TAFE for Ashby, Brooms Head, Copmanhurst, Coutts Crossing, Eatonsville, Jackadgery, Lawrence, Seelands, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli. This is extended to Woombah and Iluka during school holidays.

### Major Shopping:

- Major shopping centres are well serviced across the region during non-school holiday periods, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During school holiday periods, access to major shopping centres is not available for Ashby, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli and extends to Copmanshurst, Eatonsville, Jackadgery, Lawrence, Seelands and Waterview Heights during Weekends.

### Social Services:

- Access to social services included in this study via public transport is good across the region during non-school holiday periods, with return journeys available for all towns listed.
- During school holiday periods, access social services is not available for Ashby, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli and extends to Copmanshurst, Eatonsville, Jackadgery, Lawrence, Seelands and Waterview Heights during Weekends.

### Commuting:

- Weekday commuting is available between Grafton, Maclean and Yamba. Commuting to a major centre is available for Cowper, Harwood, Palmers Island, Tyndale, Ulmarra, Wooloweyah and Woombah.

### Recreation:

- There are no after-hours services in Grafton.
- Recreation activities (Beach, Library, Community Centre) are not accessible via public transport for Ashby, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli

### Other:

- There are no public transport services to Grafton Airport. While there are services to Grafton Train Station, there is 250m between the nearest bus stop and train station. This can be a barrier for some people.
- There are no school holiday return services to Grafton Service Centre from Ashby, Brooms Head, Coutts Crossing, Townsend, Whiteman Creek, and Wooli.

## Alternate Services

There are a range of alternate services across the region that run in parallel to bus services. These services can fill gaps in the bus network in some instances.

### Coach Services

Towns in the southern region have access to TrainLink and Premiere coach services.

Premiere services the townships of Woolgoolga, South Grafton, Maclean, and Iluka once a day north and south and could be used to fill gaps over weekends.

Similarly, TrainLink offers two services each day north and south through Iluka, Woombah, Chatsworth Island, Maclean, Tyndale, Cowper, Ulmarra and Grafton. However, short trips (Grafton to Tyndale) are not available for online booking. There is also no access to face-to-face booking facilities in many of the towns in this region which reduces access for potential users. Both coach services open up inter-regional travel.

### Community Transport

Clarence Community Transport (CCT) operates across the southern region with a range of services that currently fill some of the gaps. However, eligibility criteria apply for accessing this service.

Currently, CCT provide:

- Individual transport for medical and other appointments
- Social outings
- Shopping centre trips
- Bus hire for community groups & organisations
- Group transport for young people

### **Carpool Services**

Carpool services, Northern Rivers Carpool and Miler, are available in all towns throughout the Southern Region. Currently, these services have limited uptake and therefore limited capacity to supplement public transport services.

Currently, Uber does not operate in the region.

### **Taxi Services**

Taxi services are available in the major towns but not in many smaller towns. While there are some concessions for using taxi services – the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme and Community Transport Taxi Voucher Scheme – costs can be prohibitive for many people. Taxi services are important for existing users. However, availability and cost limit their impact on alleviating transport disadvantage across the region.

### **Ferry Services**

Ferry Services from Iluka to Yamba generally do not meet connecting land services and make travel difficult especially for those with disability or seniors.



## Southern Region - Weekdays

	Monday - Friday																			Monday - Friday (School Holidays)																	
	Medical	Education 9-4			Major St Social Services				Commuting		Recreation				Other		Medical	Education 9-4			Major St Social Services				Commuting		Recreation			Other							
Town	Grafton Base Hospital Macleay District Hospital Yamba Medical Centre Southern Cross University - Lismore Southern Cross University - Coffs Harbour North Coast TAFE - Grafton North Coast TAFE - Maclean North Coast TAFE - Coffs Harbour Grafton Shopping World South Grafton Supermarket Grafton Service Centre - Centrelink and Medicare Macleay Access Point - Yamba Service Centre - Centrelink Iluka Access Point - Access Point Grafton Coffs Harbour Yamba Beach Library Grafton Neighbourhood Centre Sporting Facilities Grafton Airport Grafton Train Station Grafton Service Centre - RMS																																				
T1 (10000 +)																																					
Grafton	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	
T2 (2000-10000)																																					
Macleay	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2		
South Grafton	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2		
Yamba	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2		
T3 (300-2000)																																					
Ashby	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Brooms Head	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Copmanhurst	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2		
Coutts Crossing	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Cowper	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2		
Eatonville	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	
Harwood	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2		
Iluka	2	2	2	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	
Jackadgery	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	
Junction Hill	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	2	
Lawrence	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	2	
Palmer Island	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	
Seelands	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	2	2
Townsend	2	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Tyndale	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2		
Whiteman Creek	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Ulmarra	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	0	2	2
Waterview Heights	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2
Wooli	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Wooloweyah	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	
Woombah	2	2	2	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	

## Southern Region - Weekends

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## Conclusions:

This report finds that the existing public transport service level across the Northern Rivers provides basic cover during school periods. However, large gaps exist during school holiday periods, with these gaps increasing over weekends. Towns predominately reliant on school buses face the most disadvantage, with no public transport during school holidays. There are also very few services across the region available after 6pm.

This report also finds that a number of region-wide opportunities exist to enhance the effectiveness of existing public transport across the region. These include:

- Listing school bus services on TfNSW trip planner tool with appropriate measures put in place to ensure the safety of all users of the bus
- Ensuring communities know about and how to use TfNSW trip planner tool
- Better route planning – ensuring the first inter-town service arrives before 9am and the last leaves after 5pm
- Allowing public transport users with a school travel pass to travel free of charge on existing bus services to and from TAFE
- Allowing bookings for short journeys on TrainLink services
- Developing an effective, well-promoted Carpool/Rideshare system for the region that incentivises ride-sharing and provides accurate data on how the platform is used
- Utilising existing bus infrastructure during school holiday periods
- Investigating if and how taxis can supplement and complement existing services through providing more on demand services

This report has shown that across the region there are a number of issues unique to individual towns. Many of these issues will not be possible to rectify without additional funding.

Further research is needed to explore community expectations around frequency of public transport and the conditions under which the community would make better use of the existing transport. This could inform planning for appropriate service levels for towns across the region.



# Social Futures

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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land where we live and work and their continuing connection to land, water, sea and community. We pay respect to Australia's First Peoples, to their unique and diverse cultures, and to Elders past, present and future.