

Submission to IPART: Fares for Regional and Rural buses

An individual submission from Councillor Geoff Frost (Yass Valley Council)

Introduction

I refer specifically to the bus service provided by Deane's Transit Group between Yass and Canberra which operates as Transborder. This service is provided under a contract issued by the NSW Department of Transport and subsidised by it. The extent of the subsidy is not publicly available, but includes payments for seniors and school children's travel. Commuters pay full fare. The standard contract on the NSW Transport web site shows that a key component is the restriction on other services operating on the route. That is, the buses are operated with state supported monopoly power. The Department sets maximum fares each year based on recommendations from IPART.

Deanes has traditionally charged well under the maximum fare (and presumably made a profit). The fare schedule issued on 9 November 2009 is at **Attachment A**. On 6 August 2012, Deanes increased its fares dramatically. The new fare schedule is at **Attachment B**.

The new fares are now very close to the maximum allowed by IPART. The increase in the Yass to Civic (Canberra) fare was 41% after discounts. Meanwhile, the ordinary cost of providing bus services has risen by less than 6% over three years (according to IPART). In other words the increase is around seven times that of the increase in costs of providing the service. The size of this increase is extraordinary and suggests price gouging by the company using the market power provided by the state government contract.

The service is very much oriented towards commuter travel. In addition to dedicated school services, three buses travel from Yass to Canberra in the early morning (6:40, 7:05 & 8:45). Similarly in the afternoons, four buses return (17:15, 18:05, 18:25 & 18:45). There is only one service each way during the day (14:05 from Canberra, returning at 15:35). There are no weekend services. I understand that the commuter services are very strongly supported and often there is standing room only.

Deanes Bus Lines and Transborder Express was sold to ComfortDelGro Cabcharge for \$53 million on 2 August 2012. I understand that the sale is subject to regulatory approval.

There are several issues that flow from this:

1. The contract under which Deane's operates restricts the entry of new operators thereby giving Deanes substantial market power.
2. The restriction on competition means that the effective downward pressure on bus fares must come either from the IPART determination or the indirect competition provided by private cars.

3. Clearly the IPART determination did not impact on prices charged up until the new fare prices began in August. That is, IPART's maximum prices did not have any effect.
4. If IPART's price controls have any effective now, it is likely to be marginal as the cost of driving a vehicle to and from Canberra is similar to the bus fare – even for a single passenger. This suggests that the cost of car travel would limit the bus fare at around the current levels, even if there was no IPART maximum.
5. Deanes are not providing a comprehensive service, but rather are “picking the eyes” out of the market. It cannot be argued that the commuter service is subsidising less profitable runs.
6. While the ownership of the service is not normally an issue, and it is clear that the value of any future excess profits available to the bus line will have been capitalised into the sale price of the company.

This summary suggests that there is a need for IPART and the NSW Government to act in two ways:

1. Readjust the fare price to better reflect the real costs of providing the service in the light of the 2009 fare schedule and the change in costs over the period – that is, reduce the maximum price substantially;
2. Ensure that new fare levels do not reflect the capitalised costs of windfall gains that may have accrued from IPART's overly generous fare determination in earlier years;
3. Allow new entrants to the market in order to ensure ongoing competition on the route.

Factors to be considered by IPART when making a determination

IPART sets out the following factors as being important in its considerations. I have provided comments against each factor.

The cost of providing the services concerned

IPART has over-estimated the costs of providing this service. This is clear from the fare structure that has been in place before Deanes took advantage of the new determination. Deanes made no attempt to raise prices until early in 2012. If the service was unprofitable, it would have raised prices much earlier.

The protection of consumers from abuses of monopoly power in terms of prices, pricing policies and standards of service

The NSW Department contract provides a degree of market power to the company by preventing the easy entry of competitors. Deane's has adjusted its prices to reflect this power and to claim monopoly profits to the extent that IPART's determinations have allowed. Given the size of the increase and the small changes in operating costs, the company is now reaping significant monopoly profits.

The higher prices have not been accompanied by an upgrade of the number or standards of service. The company continues to provide only one service each way outside of peak commuter times.

The need for greater efficiency in the supply of services so as to reduce costs for the benefit of consumers and taxpayers

Deanes has not, and does not, have sufficient incentive to improve the efficiency of its service for the benefit of consumers. There is limited competition on the route: a single long distance coach service operated by Greyhound Australia and Firefly coaches and a single Countrylink bus service to Queanbeyan (See **Attachment C**, page 30-34). Both these services are unsuitably timed for commuters and pose no competition to Deanes services.

The need to maintain ecologically sustainable development (within the meaning of section 6 of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991) by appropriate pricing policies that take account of all of the feasible options to protect the environment

The fare increase imposed by Deanes will encourage the use of cars with the associated increase in fuel and emissions. In addition, the increase in car use will increase congestion on the Barton Highway which is already crowded and dangerous; especially the peak commuter periods.

The social impact of the determination

There are a number of social impacts. Yass and its associated villages are satellite towns of Canberra. That is, they rely on Canberra for much of their employment, government and retail services. In particular, Canberra supplies higher level health and education services for these towns, as well as the full range of services in these areas for many people in Murrumbateman through to Hall. While access to these services to those with a car is not an issue, younger, older and sicker people do not have easy access and the additional cost impost will make these services more difficult and expensive to access.

Access to training and employment in Canberra will be affected by the price increase, especially for those starting out who are often on low wages. Young people are also disadvantaged by the lack of weekend and evening services that would allow access to Canberra entertainment and sporting venues. In the health area, both patients and carers are disadvantaged by the lack of appropriately timed services and higher prices.

Standards of quality, reliability and safety of the services concerned (whether those standards are specified by legislation, agreement or otherwise) and any suggested or actual changes to those standards

This submission is not concerned with this issue.

Attachment A

Transborder Fare Schedule from Monday, 9th November 2009

Transborder	Adult Fare	Concession Fare	Return	Single DDC	Return DDC	Regional Excursion Daily for NSW Pensioners
Yass to Civic / Woden / Belconnen	\$10.80	\$5.40	\$19.44	\$9.72	\$16.52	\$2.50
Yass to Canberra Airport	\$12.00	\$6.00	\$21.60	\$10.80	\$18.36	\$2.50
Yass to Queanbeyan	\$12.00	\$6.00	\$21.60	\$10.80	\$18.36	\$2.50
Murrumbateman to Civic / Woden / Belconnen	\$9.90	\$4.95	\$17.82	\$8.91	\$15.15	\$2.50
Murrumbateman to Airport	\$10.50	\$5.25	\$18.90	\$9.45	\$16.07	\$2.50
Murrumbateman to Qbn	\$10.50	\$5.25	\$18.90	\$9.45	\$16.07	\$2.50
Hall Region to Civic / Woden / Belconnen	\$7.00	\$3.50	\$12.60	\$6.30	\$10.71	\$2.50
Hall Region to Canberra Airport	\$8.90	\$4.45	\$16.02	\$8.01	\$13.62	\$2.50
Hall Region to Queanbeyan	\$8.90	\$4.45	\$16.02	\$8.01	\$13.62	\$2.50

Fare Discount Options

Deane's Smart Card save 10%*

Return Ticket save 10%*

Use Deane's Smart Card to purchase a return ticket and save up to 20%*

* Discount varies due to rounding

[Download a discount card application form.](#)

For timetables, fares and information please call Deane's Transit Group on 6299 3722

Fares authorised by NSW Transport & Infrastructure

Transborder Fare Schedule Effective Monday 6 August 2012

	ONE WAY		RETURN	
	Full Fare	Concession	Full Fare	Concession
TBX ROUTES				
Yass to Murrumbateman Village	\$4.70	\$2.30	\$8.50	\$4.60
Yass to Hall	\$8.00	\$4.00	\$14.00	\$8.00
Yass to Civic/Woden	\$13.50	\$6.70	\$24.30	\$13.40
Murrumbateman to Civic/Woden	\$10.40	\$5.20	\$18.70	\$10.40
Murrumbateman to QBN	\$15.40	\$7.70	\$27.70	\$15.40
Hall Region to Civic	\$6.90	\$3.40	\$12.40	\$6.80
Hall Region to QBN	\$10.40	\$5.20	\$18.70	\$10.40
DBL & TBX SECTION FARES				
Section 1	\$2.20	\$1.10	\$4.00	\$2.20
Section 2	\$3.20	\$1.60	\$5.80	\$3.20
Section 3	\$4.00	\$2.00	\$7.20	\$4.00
Section 4	\$4.70	\$2.30	\$8.50	\$4.60
Section 5	\$5.30	\$2.60	\$9.50	\$5.20
Section 6	\$5.90	\$2.90	\$10.60	\$5.80
Section 7	\$6.40	\$3.20	\$11.50	\$6.40
Section 8	\$6.90	\$3.40	\$12.40	\$6.80
Section 9	\$7.40	\$3.70	\$13.30	\$7.40
Section 10	\$7.80	\$3.90	\$14.00	\$7.80
Section 11	\$8.00	\$4.00	\$14.40	\$8.00
Section 12	\$8.30	\$4.10	\$14.90	\$8.20
Section 13	\$8.40	\$4.20	\$15.10	\$8.40
Section 14	\$9.00	\$4.50	\$16.20	\$9.00
Section 15	\$9.40	\$4.70	\$16.90	\$9.40
Section 16	\$9.70	\$4.90	\$17.40	\$9.80
Section 17	\$10.10	\$5.00	\$18.20	\$10.00
Section 18	\$10.40	\$5.20	\$18.70	\$10.40
SSTS				
Local - QBN < > Jerra	\$1.50	NOTE: The TBX fares to Civic/Woden also encompass the Belconnen, Dickson, Braddon, Russell, Canberra Hospital and PM & C stops.		
Urban - QBN < > Canberra	\$3.00			
Country	\$5.00			

Deane's Discount Card is an exciting innovation in electronic bus ticketing. The Discount Card is a debit card about the size of a credit card but with a computer chip instead of a magnetic stripe. You do not need a pin number to use a Deane's Discount Card.

There is no limit to how many times you can use the card; you add money to the card according to your own budget.

A refundable fee of \$11.00 (including GST) is all you need to pay to secure hundreds of dollars in savings throughout the year.

Deane's Discount Card (DDC) save 10%* on Return Fares
Regional Excursion Daily Concession Ticket, ask drivers for conditions

Deanes is moving away from the programmed cards, programmed cards will not be issued to the Yass/Murrumbateman public from this point on.

For those that do have a DDC:

Full fare paying passengers will receive a 10% discount on their return tickets;

Your card is transferable between family and friends as no PIN is required for its use;

You no longer have to carry exact change or cash;

You can use your card on any Transborder Express or Deane's Buslines services within the Yass – Canberra – Queanbeyan region;

You top up the card with your friendly bus driver or at our office;

Your card balance will be shown on each ticket you receive for travel, otherwise your bus driver is able to print off a detailed receipt showing your remaining balance; and

Soon Deane's Discount Card holders will be eligible to receive rewards from participating companies. Keep an eye on our website for further details and when this will be launched.

* Discount varies due to rounding

Yass Valley Public and Community Transport Analysis Project

Section 2:

Description of Transport Services

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Background

As part of the Yass Valley Public and Community Transport Analysis Project we describe below the public and community transport services available to residents of the region. The purpose of this section is to collect the data which we can then compare with the results of a range of community consultations which are also being undertaken as part of the project. This will enable us to prepare a “gap report” which will outline real and perceived gaps in the public and community transport network in the Yass Valley.

The services that are currently available range from long distance rail and commuter bus to community transport and taxi services.

Yass Public Transport

The town of Yass is situated 60 kilometres north of Canberra on the junction of the Hume and Barton Highways which connect Sydney, Melbourne and the nation’s capital.

While there is somewhat more public transport in Yass compared to many similar sized country towns, there is by no means a public transport system. Commuter buses run to and from Canberra during peak hours and there are Countrylink and Rail services, although the frequencies are very limited and some services arrive and depart at very unsociable hours. Some longer distance services pass through the region but do not have stops in Yass township and some of the villages have very limited services indeed, and no services at all (even school bus services) in some cases.

There is a small community transport operation which covers the Yass Valley which expends a great deal of its energy transporting residents to medical appointments in Canberra.

Taxi services operate in Yass and Murrumbateman and the Yass service has one wheelchair accessible cab. There are no taxis or hire cars based in the villages.

Most of the villages and some rural areas have a school bus service which is open to the public. However few adults use them as the service timing means staying in Yass all day before being able to return home and they do not operate during school holidays.

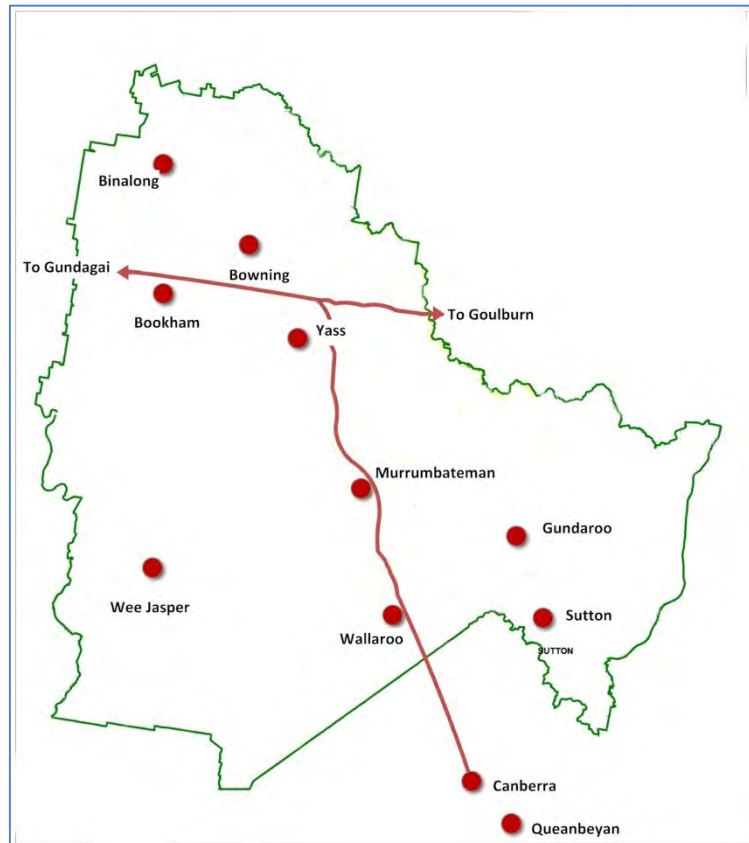
Location of Yass Valley towns and villages in relation to transport hubs

The most isolated places in the Yass Valley, geographically, are Binalong, Bookham and Wee Jasper. Bowning is also isolated but is closest to Yass. The southern villages are relatively close to Canberra and Queanbeyan.

Table 1. Location of Yass Valley towns and villages in relation to transport hubs

Town	Distance to:							Average to hubs
	Harden	Yass	Young	Goulburn	Queanbeyan	Canberra Airport	Nearest Rail	
Binalong	30	36	63	115	118	109	Harden 30	79
Bowing	54	13	88	91	95	86	Yass Junction 12	71
Bookham	48	34	82	113	116	107	Yass Junction 33	83
Gundaroo	117	50	149	77	43	40	Gunning 30	79
M’bateman	87	20	120	92	61	52	Yass Junction 24	72
Sutton	123	57	158	74	23	23	Queanbeyan 23	76
Wallaroo	109	42	143	99	39	25	Queanbeyan 34	76
Wee Jasper	119	53	152	139	94	91	Yass Junction 57	108
Yass	66	0	98	83	81	72	Yass Junction 4	67

Map 1. Yass Valley towns and villages



Binalong is closer to Harden than Yass and the closest village to Young although this is almost twice as far away as Yass. Its closest railway station is in Harden. Binalong is the furthest settlement from the Airport in Canberra and is over 100 kms from Goulburn or Queanbeyan.

Bowning is only 13 km from Yass and 12 km from a railway station. However it is 80-95 km from any other regional towns.

Bookham is somewhat closer to Yass than Harden but a long way (80-100 kms) from regional towns or the airport.

Gundaroo is closer to Canberra and Queanbeyan than it is to Yass and the closest railway is at Gunning which is 30 km away.

Murrumbateman is 20 km from Yass but only 40 km from Canberra. Its nearest railway is at Yass Junction but 60 km from the better served railway at Queanbeyan.

Sutton is also half the distance to Canberra and Queanbeyan in comparison to the distance to Yass. Sutton's nearest railway is at Queanbeyan and it is one of the closest villages to Canberra airport.

Wallaroo is also much closer to Canberra and Queanbeyan than Yass with the railway at Queanbeyan being the closest and Canberra airport only 27 km away.

Wee Jasper is relatively isolated being over 50 km from Yass and over 90 from Canberra and Queanbeyan. There is no railway nearby.

Yass is in the centre of the region and is 60 kms from Canberra and just under 90 kms from Goulburn. It is about 65 kms from Canberra airport. The local railway is only 4 kms away but has limited services.

Long Distance Coach Services

Setting Countrylink apart for the moment, there is one long distance coach service that stops near Yass. This is a codeshare service operated by Greyhound Australia and Firefly Coaches.

There are two services each day to Melbourne via Albury and two to Sydney, one of them via Canberra.

Table 2. Long Distance Coach Service - Yass to Melbourne via Albury

Yass (off Highway at Caltex Service Station)	Albury	Melbourne (Southern Cross)
14:55	19:20	23:00
23:30	03:25	07:00

Table 3. Long Distance Coach Service - Yass to Sydney

Yass (off Highway at Caltex Service Station)	Canberra	Sydney (Pitt Street)
15:35*	17:00	21:25
03:05	..	07:00

*on request only

Fares are as follows:

- Yass – Sydney \$45 - \$50
- Yass – Melbourne \$55 - \$65
- Yass – Canberra \$ 45

Countrylink bus services

There is one daily service on the Queanbeyan – Cootamundra route in each direction. Going in the southern direction the Countrylink 781 service leaves Queanbeyan and calls at Murrumbateman, Yass Junction, Yass, Bowning, and Binalong before proceeding to Harden and Cootamundra where passengers can join the XPT Rail service to Melbourne. This service stops at Yass at 10:47 in the morning. The reverse service take the same route and stops at Yass at 16:30 on the way to Queanbeyan (See Tables 8 and 9 later in this section).

As a number of other Countrylink services complement State Rail services we have included details of their timetables in the Rail section below.

Regional bus services

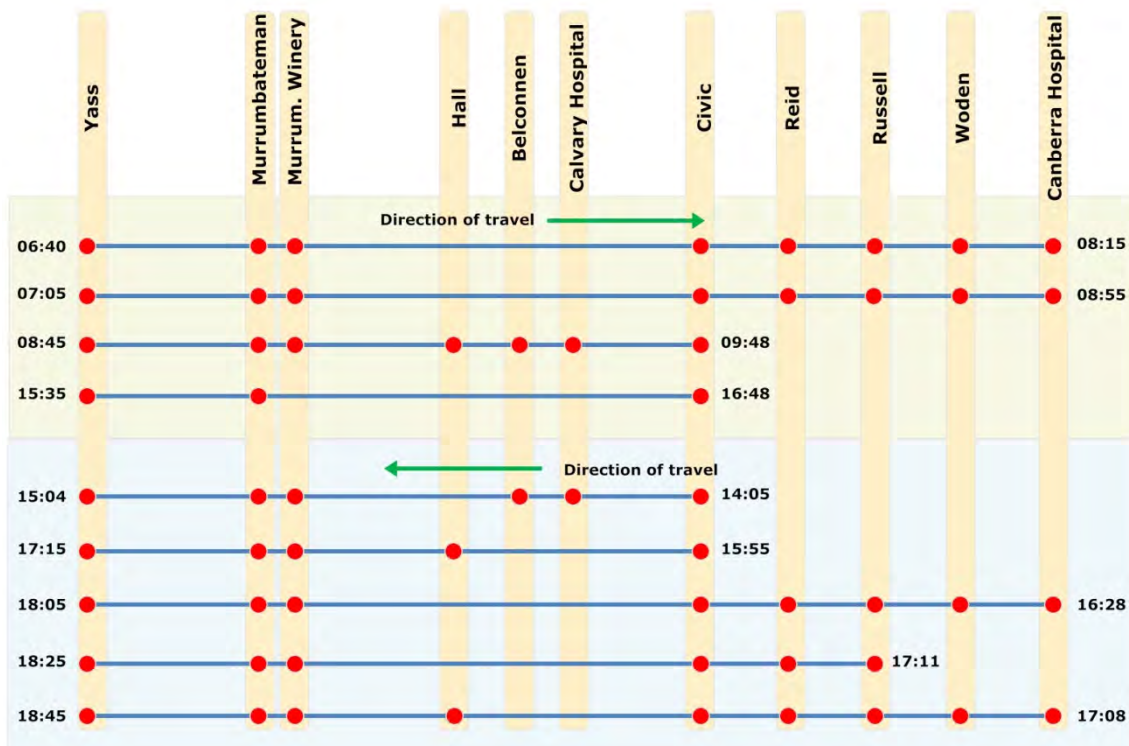
The only regular route timetabled bus services in the Yass Valley are those provided by Transborder between Yass and Canberra. These are provided under Type B contracts issued by the NSW Department of Transport and are subsidised by the NSW Government.

This service operates four times a day in both directions. Outward journeys start at Yass at 06:40 and 07:05 (Orion/Laidlaw Streets) and 8:45 and 15:35 (Yass Depot, Rossi Street).

All of the services go via Murrumbateman Village. The two early services (Route 981) travel via Civic and then run through to Woden and the Canberra Hospital. The later morning service (Route 982) travels via Belconnen and terminates at the Civic Interchange. The afternoon service runs express from Murrumbateman to Civic.

The services operate on weekdays only and do not run on public holidays (including Canberra Day). There is also a restricted service over the Christmas/New Year holiday period.

Figure 1. Commuter bus services between Yass and Canberra



Buses to Canberra connect at Civic with Deane’s Airliner Service to Canberra Airport and Deane’s 830 and 833 services to Queanbeyan.

Regional Excursion Daily (RED) tickets

The Regional Excursion Daily (RED) ticket is an excursion ticket for Pensioners and Seniors in rural and regional areas that allows multiple trips to be taken on the day of purchase on buses within the local service network which, in the Yass Valley, is restricted to the Yass to Canberra service operated by Transborder.

RED tickets are available to people holding Pensioner Concession cards issued by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans Affairs, NSW Seniors cards and NSW War Widow/er Concession cards. For \$2.50, a single RED ticket gives concession card holders the freedom to be out and about in the community all day. They cannot be used on Countrylink services, school bus services or on bus services in the ACT.

Passengers transferring to services in the ACT need to purchase either a MyWay card or pay a cash fare.

School Bus Services

There are 13 school bus services that serve rural areas and the villages in the Yass Valley. All travel into Yass with the exception of the Kangiara service which goes to Boorowa.

School bus services are open to the general public but very few people take advantage of this. They do not operate during public or school holidays.

School bus services in the north of Yass Valley

- Rye Park – Yass
- Kangiara – Yass
- Binalong – Bowning – Yass
- Bookham – Yass

- Wargeila Road – Yass
- Black Range Road - Yass

School bus services in the east of Yass Valley

- Gunning – Yass
- Manton – Yass
- Jerrawa – Yass
- Dalton - Yass

School bus services in the south of Yass Valley

- Narrengullen – Yass
- Dog Trap Road – Yass
- Gundaroo – Yass

Taxi Operators

Yass Taxis services the Yass district with three cars and one wheelchair accessible vehicle which can be used as a Maxi Taxi if booked in advance.

There is also one standard taxi in Murrumbateman. None of the other villages have taxis.

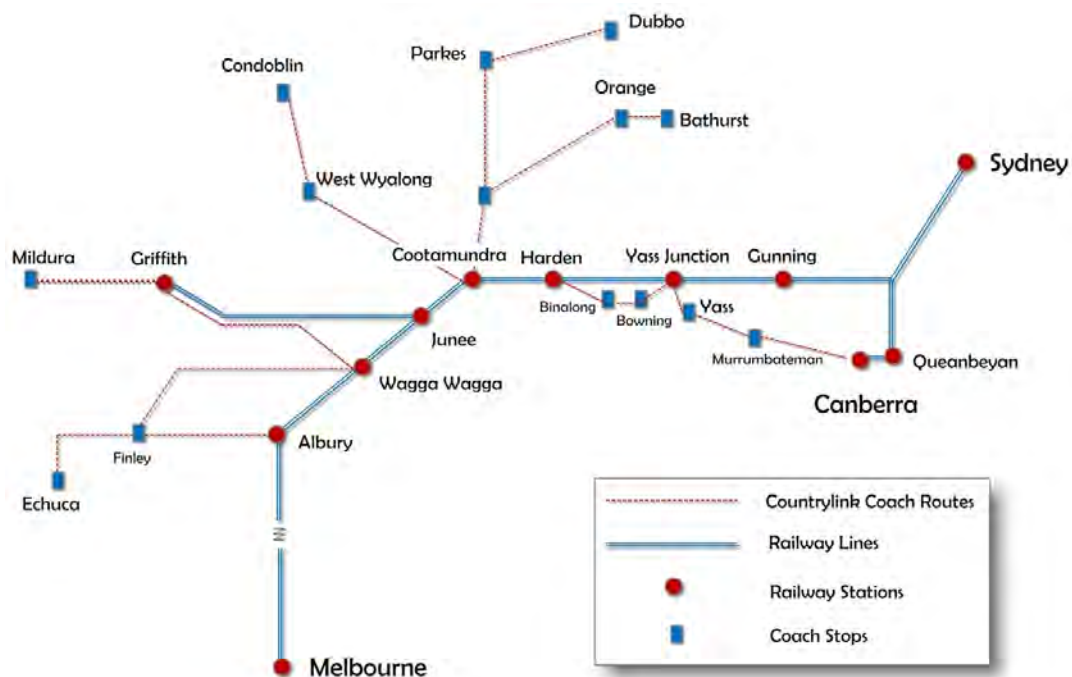
Hire Car Operators

There are no Hire Car operators in the Yass Valley

Rail Services

Overall there appears to be quite a comprehensive network of rail and Countrylink services connecting to the Yass Valley. However it must be noted that the services are of very low frequency, some only one a week, and many of the services stop at Yass Junction in the middle of the night. There are also no formal connecting services from Yass Junction into town.

Figure 2. Rail/Countrylink Network in relation to Yass Valley



One railway line runs through the Yass Valley. The only operating station is at Yass Junction which is about 5 kilometres from the centre of Yass. A station at Bowning was closed in the 1990's.

The closest other stations are at Gunning (about 45 kilometres from Yass) and Harden (65 kilometers from Yass). The former is closer for residents of Gundaroo and the latter is slightly closer for residents of Binalong than Yass Junction.

A Sydney XPT train calls at Yass Junction before leaving for Wagga Wagga, Albury and through to Wangaratta, Benalla and Melbourne daily at 00:21 and 11:31 and in the other direction at 16:01 and 03:08.

Table 4. XPT Rail Service - Yass to Melbourne via Albury

Gunning	Yass Junction	Harden	Albury	Melbourne (Southern Cross)
11:00	11:31	12:18	15:19	18:55
..	00:21	01:07	04:12	07:35

Table 5. XPT Rail Service - Yass to Sydney

Harden	Yass Junction	Gunning	Sydney (Central)
15:13	16:01	16:33	19:54
02:21	03:08	..	06:55

There are coach connections to a number of other rural centres from stations along the way. The main destinations of these services are Dubbo, Orange, Bathurst, Mildura, Griffith, Condoblin and Echuca.

Table 6 . Sydney – Melbourne XPT

Stop	Time (Daily)	Time (Daily)	Note	Connections
Sydney Central	07:42	20:40	Train	
Gunning	11:00	..		
Yass Junction	11:31	00:21	Train Request stop	
Harden	12:18	01:07	Train Request stop	
Cootamundra	12:49	01:39	Train	14:55 Bus to Dubbo -M W Sa 14:55 Bus to Orange and Bathurst - Tu Th F Su 14:55 Bus to Mildura via Griffith - Daily 15:00 Bus to Condoblin - Daily
Wagga Wagga	13:54	02:49	Train	14:15 Bus to Echuca via Lockhart -Mon Wed Fri Sun
Albury	15:19	04:12	Train	15:30 Bus To Echuca via Cobram -Tue Thur Sat
Melbourne (Southern Cross)	18:55	07:35	Train	

Table 7. Melbourne – Sydney XPT

Stop	Time (Daily)		Note	Connections
Melbourne (Southern Cross)	08:30	19:55	Train	
Albury	11:47	← 23:15	Train	11:20 Bus from Echuca via Cobram - Tue Thur Sat
Wagga Wagga	13:09	← 00:31	Train	12:20 Bus from Echuca via Lockhart - Mon Wed Fri Sun
Cootamundra	14:37	← 01:46	Train	12:16 Bus from Mildura and Griffith - Daily 12:20 Bus from Dubbo Su Tu Th 12:20 Bus from Bathurst M W F Sa 12:20 Bus from Condoblin Daily
Harden	15:13	02:21	Train Stop on request	
Yass Junction	16:01	03:08	Train Stop on request	
Gunning	16:33	..		
Sydney Central	19:54	06:55	Train	

A Countrylink bus service from Queanbeyan connects Yass, Yass Junction and three other villages in the Yass Valley to the Sydney-Melbourne XPT rail service.

Table 8. Queanbeyan to Melbourne (Daily) with connections to Echuca

Stop	Time (Daily)	Note	Connections
Queanbeyan	09:15	Bus	
Canberra	09:32	Bus	
Canberra Civic	09:47	Bus	
Murrumbateman	10:30	Bus Pick up only	
Yass	10:47	Bus Pick up only	
Yass Junction	10:56	Bus	
Bowning	11:17	Bus	
Binalong	11:31	Bus	
Harden Town	12:02	Bus	
Cootamundra	12:32	Train leaves 12:49	
Wagga Wagga	13:54	Train	14:15 Bus to Echuca via Lockhart M W F Su
To Albury	15:19	Train	15:30 Bus to Echuca via Cobram Tu Th Sa
Melbourne (Southern Cross)	18:55	Train	

Information from Countrylink Southern Timetable (updated October 2010)

Table 9. Melbourne to Queanbeyan (Daily) with connections from Echuca

Stop	Time (Daily)	Note	Connections
Melbourne (Southern Cross)	08:30	Train	
Albury	11:47	Train	11:20 Bus from Echuca via Cobram - Tu Th Sa
Wagga Wagga	13:09	Train	12:20 Bus from Echuca via Lockhart - M W F Su
Cootamundra	14:37	Bus leaves at 14:50	
Harden Town	15:21	Bus	
Binalong	15:51	Bus	
Bowning	16:05	Bus	
Yass Junction	16:20	Bus	
Yass	16:30	Bus Set down only	
Murrumbateman	16:47	Bus Set down only	
Canberra Civic	17:22	Bus Set down only	
Canberra	17:40	Bus Set down only	
Queanbeyan	17:55	Bus	

At the weekend a train service operates between Sydney to Griffith via Gunning, Yass Junction and Harden. The Gunning and Harden stops are on request only.

Table 10 . Sydney – Cootamundra – Griffith (Saturday only)

Stop	Time (Daily)	Note	Connections
Sydney Central	06:58	Train	
Gunning	10:34	Train Stop on request	
Yass Junction	11:04	Train	
Harden	11:56	Train Stop on request	
Cootamundra	12:28	Train	
Junee	13:07	Train	
Coolamon	13:53	Train	
Narrandera	14:38	Train	
Leeton	15:14	Train	
Griffith	15:57	Train	

Table 11. Griffith - Cootamundra - Sydney (Sunday only)

Stop	Time (Daily)	Note	Connections
Griffith	07:25	Train	
Leeton	08:03	Train	
Narrandera	08:37	Train	
Coolamon	09:22	Train	
Junee	10:05	Train	
Cootamundra	10:56	Train	
Harden	11:32	Train Stop on request	
Yass Junction	12:21	Train	
Gunning	12:52	Train Stop on request	
Sydney Central	16:25	Train	

There are also two morning trains per day between Canberra/Queanbeyan to Sydney and an additional afternoon train four days per week.

Community Transport Services

Yass Valley Home Living Support Service

This agency is part of the Yass Valley Council’s Community Services Unit and provides a community transport service to the residents of the Yass Valley Local Government Area. The service is part of Yass Valley Council’s Corporate and Community Services Division.

It is based in premises on Rossi Street in Yass and operates through a Section 355 Committee of Council – the Yass Valley Home Living Support Services Advisory Committee which provides advice and support to Council regarding operation of the service.

Funding

The service has a variety of funding sources including block funding, fees charged to other government agencies, fees charged to passengers and support from Yass Valley Council.

The main source of funding is the joint Commonwealth/State Home and Community Care program (HACC). This program is aimed at supporting frail elderly people and younger people with disabilities at risk of premature or inappropriate admission into residential care to stay in their own homes.

This funding comes in the form of a block grant paid quarterly. Accountability to the program administrators is through the quarterly lodgment of an electronic report based on the Minimum Data Set (MDS). In terms of transport provided, this is reported either as number of one-way trips

(for projects funded under the HACC transport sub-program) or hours of service (for projects funded as Social Support Services).

In addition, the HLSS also receives a small amount of block funding through Transport NSW's Community Transport Program. The purpose of this program is to address transport disadvantage at the local level primarily by promoting efficient use of transport resources that exist within the community. People who are transport disadvantaged include those:

- whose physical health status renders them with a permanent or temporary mobility disability that leaves them unable to use conventional transport systems;
- who live in villages of less than 500 people that do not have access to conventional transport systems;
- who need to access community facilities and resources, which are not available within the hours when conventional public transport operates; and
- who meet the eligibility criteria and are also eligible for HACC services may be provided with assistance through the CTP if the HACC Program is unable to meet their needs¹.

Funding is also received from the Southern NSW Local Health Network (until recently from the Greater Southern Area Health Service) through the Non-Emergency Health Related Transport (NEHRT) program. This is used mainly to fund the transport of Yass Valley patients to radiation therapy at Canberra Hospital.

HLSS also undertakes work on behalf of the Department of Veterans' Affairs on a fee for service basis.

Resources

The service operates one small minibus and has one paid bus driver. The minibus is a 12 seat Mercedes Sprinter which has been modified to take a wheelchair hoist. It was one of a fleet of buses used at the 2000 Olympics that were made available to community based agencies. It will need to be replaced in the near future.

The driver provides the community bus services including the shopping service. He also provides a personalised service for clients with a disability.

The service also depends heavily on a pool of 30 volunteer drivers who provide transport in their own vehicles. They comprise mainly retired people. The volunteers are reimbursed for their out of pocket expenses including a per-kilometre allowance.

Demand for services

There is a constant demand for trips to Canberra, most often for medical appointments. Where possible passengers are matched and travel together in order to increase the number of people who can be catered for.

There is also a demand for shopping services from people living in the villages where shopping options are limited.

- Binalong has a produce store a rural store, Post Office, small general store and a café (which is closed but is re-opening soon) and a butcher's shop which sells greengroceries.
- Wee Jasper has a Post Office cum general store which is not open at the moment but which is available for lease.
- Gundaroo and Sutton have limited shopping.
- Murrumbateman has recently been upgraded and has a number of shops.

¹ Information from Transport NSW <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/lact/ctp.html> (last accessed 5.4.11)

- Yass, on the other hand, has three supermarkets and a variety of other stores. At least one of the stores provides a home delivery service. There are also general medical practices based in town.

The manager of the HLSS indicated that there is a need for more transport for non-HACC clients including those in Binalong where there are no transport services except school bus services.

Services provided

Shopping services for HACC clients are provided once a fortnight in Wee Jasper, Murrumbateman and Bowning.

A shopping service is provided in Yass township on Mondays and Tuesday every other week. Shopping bags are not permitted on the community bus for health and safety reasons and also because of the space it would take up. However, the service goes to Franklins who provide a home delivery service. Shopping passengers can also have morning tea at a nearby café.

Individual transport is the main activity of the service and demand is constantly growing. The service utilises volunteer drivers for this purpose. Most of this involves trips to Canberra, mainly for medical appointments.

The individual transport service is not provided in Yass township where clients are provided with Taxi Vouchers instead. Eligible clients are issued with up to 26 \$4.00 vouchers per quarter.

Transport is also provided for Activity Days (Centre Based Day Care). In Binalong these are held once a month. Residents are picked up and taken to the Binalong Hotel where the activities take place.

A Social Trip is held once a month going to a variety of destinations. About 10 people travel and the trips last all day from about 9 am to 4 pm. Destinations have included Canberra, Goulburn, Young and shopping at Belconnen or Woden. Sometimes half-day trips are provided for frailer passengers.

Technology

A computerised booking system is used. The system also provides electronic reports for the HACC program based on the Minimum Data Set (MDS).

Volume of trips provided

In the October-December 2010 Quarter the following one-way trips were provided:

Table 12. Number of passenger trips provided by HLSS 2nd Quarter 2010/11

Funding program or subsidy source	Number of passenger trips
HACC	811
CTP	32
NEHRT	52
DVA	28
All programs	923

This equates to 71 passenger trips per week. This indicates that HLSS is one of the smaller funded community transport providers in the State.

Ngunnawal Community Care

Ngunnalwal Community Care (NCC) is part of the Ngunnawal Aboriginal Corporation which supports senior members of the indigenous community to remain in their homes and local communities for as long as they choose. They also support services that encourage inclusiveness and belonging in the community.

NCC staff provide transport as well as home support, respite care and various other home and community care services to indigenous people with a disability and indigenous elders. There are about 250 Aboriginal people who live in the Yass Valley.

The service is based at a building in the grounds of Yass Hospital in Meehan Street in Yass. NCC also operates services in Canberra. Their funding comes mainly from their role as a Community Options provider, a HACC service provider in the ACT and Community Aged Care Packages.

NCC is not specifically funded to provide transport services but does so in order that Aboriginal people can have access to a culturally appropriate service. There is also demand from their clients for transport to regular appointments such as dialysis which can be difficult to arrange with other transport providers.

At the moment they have about 110 clients who use the transport service who undertake about 25 trips per month.

Most transport involves taking clients to medical specialists appointments in Canberra. NCC also transport people to local medical appointments in Yass and occasionally for day surgery in Goulburn or Sydney.

Health related transport accounts for 80-90% of all trips with trips for shopping and social support accounting for the rest. Public bus services are not suitable for many clients as they have to stay in Canberra all day before being able to return.

The driving task falls to the NCC coordinators with office staff filling in occasionally. Sometimes Yass based staff will take people to Canberra and the Canberra staff will bring them back. This avoids staff having to wait, often for hours, for appointments to finish.

The transport service could expand if NCC had access to additional vehicles.

Non-emergency Health Related Transport

Some non-emergency health related transport is contracted by the local Health Network to Yass Valley Home Living Support Service. These services mainly involve taking patients to Canberra for oncology services.

Much of the work of the Community Health service involves providing in-home services. Ninety percent of the work of occupational therapists is in the community which reduces the need for patient transport. However some clients still have to attend the hospital for services such as speech therapy and mental health. Patients may be picked up by staff on occasions and taxis are sometimes used but there is no formal transport service.

Transport for Day Care is provided in a hospital bus but the pick-up area is limited.

The closest patient transport service (operated by the NSW Ambulance Service) is based on the far side of Canberra at Queanbeyan.

Patient transport based at Goulburn operates a Yass to Canberra service for renal dialysis patients, three days a week.

Service coordination

There is some limited service coordination in the form of the taxi voucher scheme operated by the Home Living Support Service and the non-emergency health related transport which is contracted by the Southern Health Network to the HLSS.

There are a number of community based minibuses but to date no attempt appears to have been made to make them more widely available or to coordinate their use. Overall, services appear to be relatively fragmented.

There is no coordination forum of transport service providers such as the one in operation at Young.