

## **COUNTRYLINK PENSIONER BOOKING FEE ABOLISHED**

June 10 2009

**NSW Premier Nathan Rees today announced the NSW Government would abolish the booking fee on the Countrylink Pensioner Excursion Ticket in this year's budget.**

**In addition the \$1 fare deal for children travelling with adults will become a year-round offer.**

Mr Rees was joined by Transport Minister David Campbell and Member for Bathurst Gerard Martin to make the announcement at Bathurst Railway Station.

"From July 1 there will be no more \$10 booking fee for pensioners on Countrylink Services," Mr Rees said.

**"That means that pensioners will be able to use regular economy class Countrylink services free of charge up to four times a year.**

"Pensioners from all over NSW have told me that the booking fee can make the difference between them taking a Countrylink trip or not.

"Combined with the \$1 fare for children, this should see more people travelling on Countrylink and that's a great boost to rural and regional towns.

"I want to make travel as easy as possible for pensioners and families, and this will give them a helping hand to take a holiday during these tough economic times."

Pensioners receive four free CountryLink trips a year but had to pay a \$10 or 15% booking fee.

The fee will be removed from July 1 and anyone who had already paid it for a trip to be taken on or after that date will be able to get a refund.

Pensioners choosing to use their free vouchers for first class tickets will still pay the booking fee in the form of a surcharge as it is a premium service.

Country Labor MPs, including Gerard Martin, led a campaign to have the booking fee abolished.

"Gerard Martin and his Country Labor colleagues told me how important this was for rural and regional NSW," Mr Rees said.

"They were persistent and made an effective case, and I'm pleased to be here today to deliver the change they asked for on behalf of their communities."

Minister for Transport David Campbell said the \$1 kids' fares would also prove popular.

"In previous years a child has been able to travel for just \$1 with a full-fare paying adult during the Christmas and Easter holidays," Mr Campbell said.

"This offer has been so popular with families that it will now be available all year.

"This is an offer families will embrace at the time they need it most."

Mr Martin welcomed the news and said it was a great win for country communities.

"This is a fantastic boost for pensioners and families and will prove a shot in the arm for country economies," Mr Martin said.

"This proves the NSW Government listens and delivers."