

Jenny Aitchison

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

**Jodie Harrison**

Minister for Women

Minister for Seniors

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

Media Release**Community Transport a valuable lifeline for older Australians****Thursday, 28 September 2023**

Ahead of International Day of Older Persons on October 1, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Jenny Aitchison, and Minister for Seniors, Jodie Harrison, have highlighted the value of community transport in helping boost independence and combat loneliness.

Ms Aitchison today visited Bathurst Community Transport to see firsthand how community transport is not only a way to get from A to B, but also crucial for clients to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle. This follows from a meeting earlier in the week in Dubbo with another provider, Live Better.

Bathurst Community Transport is one of 68 providers contracted by Transport for NSW to provide an essential service to 60,000 clients each year.

The NSW and Australian Governments provide funding to community transport operators to provide transport services for eligible seniors, pensioners and those with limited access to public transport.

In NSW, around 1.13 million community transport trips are made each year, around 60 percent of them in rural, regional, and remote NSW.

Statewide, there are more than 900 community transport vehicles and upwards of 2,700 volunteers who give up their time.

Community transport plays a vital role in combating a growing phenomenon of loneliness in Australia and is important not only for the clients but also for volunteers such as drivers, who can experience significant mental health benefits.

More about community transport and local providers is available [here](#).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison:

“Community Transport plays a vital role in reducing social isolation and making a real difference to the lives of so many people.

“The ability to access transport is a social determinant of health and quality of life. Community transport offers those at risk of social exclusion an accessible and affordable way to stay connected and delivers significant value to wider society.

“I thank the thousands of dedicated community transport staff across NSW, such as the drivers who take their time greeting their clients at their front door and making sure they get to the vehicle, and their destination, safely.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Seniors Jodie Harrison:

“The community transport service is a fantastic program, especially for older Australians in the regions with no other way to get around.

“Being able to get out and about easily and safely is crucial for seniors - not only for routine things but also to meet with friends and family to maintain important social connections and avoid loneliness.

“Volunteers are really the beating heart of our communities. And their involvement in community transport as drivers makes them the vital link between people. Thank you for giving your time to make our communities stronger.”

Quotes attributable to Bathurst Community Transport Chief Executive Officer Kathryn Akre:

“Community transport places the human experience at the centre of transport. We believe that having access to equitable transport that is safe, inclusive and affordable provides people with dignity, independence and self determination about how they live their lives.

“Many people take access to safe transport for granted can but it be incredibly debilitating for a person to experience transport insecurity and there are many reasons why a person might - affordability, disability, frailty and age among them.

“In Rural NSW distance is a major factor inhibiting how people move around and a person’s freedom to move. Community transport provides the solution for many who experience transport insecurity.

“A large portion of what we do is health related.

“Access to transport is often identified as a barrier to accessing preventative health. Early health intervention can increase a person’s wellbeing, support them to remain living independently and ultimately prevent them from moving to residential aged care.

“If a person is not able to access the functions of daily life they are not able to live independently.

“Community transport is a quality-of-life service – it is hard to put a price on that!”

Quotes attributable to Bathurst Community Transport client Connie Bennett:

“I started using the service around 10 years ago when I had to have some medical work done in Sydney. They took me down and each time I went they have been a marvellous service.

“I am getting a bit older and they are great because they get you from your door and they pick you up and they bring you back. It's a great service.

“The drivers are always the right people for the job. They always keep the vehicles nice and clean. Sometimes I use the service that’s around Bathurst for shopping trips.”

Quotes attributable to Bathurst Community Transport driver Phillip Murray:

“I have been with Bathurst Community Transport for just over six years now after 40 years in the retail industry. I became a volunteer because I have always enjoyed being of service to my community.

“Some of my fondest time was during the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s when I had the same group of clients for an extended period, and I would take them for radiotherapy. I was part of their journey and got to really know them as they went through treatment.

“I love being a volunteer community transport driver and that feeling is shared with the people I work with. Some have said to me that even if they win the million-dollar lottery, they will still do this. This is why this is special.”