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Minister for Families and Communities
Minister for Disability Inclusion

**Jenny Aitchison**

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Liesl Tesch

Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion

Media Release**Sunflower program driving inclusion on regional NSW buses**

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The Minns Labor Government is supporting the expansion of the internationally recognised Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program to buses in regional NSW, further improving access to public transport.

The program gives people with non-visible disabilities like autism, dementia, chronic pain and anxiety a distinctive green and yellow sunflower-themed lanyard they can wear to signal their need for assistance while using public transport.

The first regional and outer metropolitan bus operators to be Sunflower-friendly are:

- Dions Bus Service in the Illawarra
- Port Stephens Coaches
- Keolis Downer Hunter (Newcastle Transport); and
- selected CDC NSW services on the Far North Coast and Coffs Harbour regions.

Drivers for these operators have been trained to recognise the Sunflower lanyard and provide appropriate support, such as helping passengers in boarding and disembarking or navigating stressful situations.

The government's support for expansion of the program comes as part of a range of measures that have improved access to public transport in regional areas including:

- The \$800 million Safe Accessible Transport Program,
- The Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme; and
- The Transport Access Regional Partnerships Grant Program.

Many other bus operators across the state have enrolled in the program and are at various stages of training staff, so timelines vary for when each operator will offer Sunflower-friendly bus services.

Free Sunflower lanyards can be obtained from Transport for NSW by emailing sunflower@transport.nsw.gov.au or by picking one up at any of 35 selected train stations. For more information, visit transportnsw.info/news/2023/extra-support-for-hidden-disabilities.

The Sunflower is solely distributed in Australia by Bayley House, a not-for-profit organisation.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads, Jenny Aitchison, said:

“The NSW Labor Government is proudly making public transport in the regions more accessible for people with non-visible disabilities by supporting the Sunflower program onto regional buses.

“I congratulate the bus drivers and operators who have already embraced this initiative and I look forward to seeing the Sunflower bloom even further across the state into the future.”

Minister for Disability Inclusion, Kate Washington, said:

“Creating a welcoming and supportive public transport system means recognising and addressing the diverse needs of all passengers, including those with hidden disabilities.

“With one in five people having a disability and 80 percent of those having hidden disabilities, the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program is a crucial step towards making public transport more inclusive and supportive for all.”

Parliamentary Secretary for Disability Inclusion, Liesl Tesch, said:

“For those with hidden disabilities, public transport can be full of unseen challenges, which are often invisible for those without lived experience of disability. Public transport provides freedom for so many in our community and the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower program goes a long way to support that freedom.

“Making accommodations and support accessible is crucial for ensuring our daily mobility and inclusion, and the rollout of the Sunflower Program addresses these needs effectively – a little help can go a long way.”