

Media Release

Outback bus service secured after Bourke goes wild for Wilba

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Link to images:

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A community bus named Wilba will remain on the streets of Bourke after the NSW Labor Government confirmed funding to extend a trial of the popular public transport service.

Wilba, the Empower bus, has carried out more than 2,000 trips in its first 12 months of operation and enabled hundreds of local residents to access safe and reliable transport at an affordable price in a town with no other public transport options.

The pre-booked 12-seater bus service offers residents the opportunity to more easily get around Bourke and attend appointments, access health care, maintain employment and purchase essential products or services.

Wilba also provides a vital link to other major regional and metropolitan service centres by giving residents easier access to Bourke Airport and NSW TrainLink coaches.

Demand for Wilba has exceeded expectations since a trial of service started in February 2023, with residents from all age groups embracing the service.

The positive community demand and response to Wilba has led the NSW Government to expand the trial service for another two years, with funding now secured until February 2026.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

“Bourke residents love the Wilba service; it’s been a real success.

“Wilba has had a huge impact on this town and the stories I’ve heard about the significant difference the service has made demonstrate exactly what public transport should be all about.

“Services like Wilba are critical in isolated communities challenged by a lack of transport options and I am so glad that despite the budget challenges this government inherited, we have been able to keep this service going for residents in the Far West.”

Bourke Shire Council General Manager Leonie Brown said:

“Wilba has provided fantastic opportunities for our community which had been without public and community transport for a long time.

“Wilba has been a wonderful help for many people who hadn’t been able to leave their homes due to a lack of transport and they really appreciate the independence it gives them.

“People who were previously housebound or left to rely on the goodwill of others can now get out and about to the pharmacy, shops, medical and health appointments, and to social and recreational events.”

Bourke resident and Wilba user Carissa Edwards said:

"I use it every day to go to do shopping, sometimes go to the doctor, sometimes the hospital and even to go and see family.

"We have no taxis in Bourke and it can be very hard because my family doesn't have a car so Wilba gets us from A to B.

"Before Wilba started we had to ring people or ask people to take us to do shopping or give us a lift somewhere so Wilba has made the biggest difference to my life and my family's lives.

"I've heard elderly people on the bus say they used to get people come and do their shopping so they hadn't left their homes for years before Wilba began.

"One thing I would like to see, though, is some shading at the bus stop where they pick us up. It can be very hot waiting there with all our groceries, especially in 40-degree heat."

MEDIA:

Ryan Young | Minister Aitchison | 0477 608 886