

John Graham

Special Minister of State Minister for Roads, Minister for the Arts Minister for Music and the Night-Time Economy, Minister for Jobs and Tourism

**Jenny Aitchison**

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads

Media Release

All aboard the Elvis Express for regional tourism in 2025

Thursday, 9 January 2025

Today over 250 Elvis Presley fans, many dressed in *blue suede shoes*, are climbing aboard the NSW TrainLink Elvis Express embarking on the seven-hour pilgrimage to the annual Parkes Elvis Festival.

During the 365km train service, passengers will engage in *a little less conversation* as they're treated to singalongs and live performances by Elvis tribute artists, and taking in the beautiful scenery through the Blue Mountains and central western NSW farming country.

The Parkes Elvis festival runs from, January 8 – 12 and is the Southern Hemisphere's biggest celebration of The King with over 350 events, many with free entry. Since the first event in 1993 the Parkes Elvis, this regional festival has grown to attract over 11,000 people to the NSW town of Parkes and inject \$11 million into the local economy.

The Minns Labor Government is backing the Parkes Elvis Festival through Destination NSW event funding, the Transport for NSW *Open Streets* program and the NSW TrainLink Elvis Express service.

Events like the Parkes Elvis Festival are a key part of Minns Labor Government's plan to grow the NSW visitor economy by supporting communities to host events that reflect the local character and create authentic experiences that attract visitors and drive expenditure for local businesses.

Tourism Research Australia figures from the year ending September 2024 show regional NSW contributed a record \$26 billion (49%) of the overall NSW visitor economy. A key strategy for continuing growth in regional tourism is supporting events like the Parkes Elvis Festival.

In 2024/2025 Destination NSW is investing in more than 85 regional events, including:

- Tamworth Country Music Festival
- Great Southern Nights
- Bluesfest
- Narooma Oyster Festival
- Mundi Mundi Bash
- Bathurst 1000
- Deni Ute Muster
- Ultra-Trail Kosciuszko

In October the Government released its review into the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 and committed to a new 2035 target of \$91 billion in annual expenditure, a 40% increase on the previous goal. The review projected that regional NSW tourism will account for \$44 billion of that 2035 state-wide target.

For more information about travelling to events in regional NSW with NSW TrainLink go to <https://transportnsw.info/regional> or call 13 22 32.

John Graham, Minister for Jobs and Tourism said:

“This Parkes Elvis Festival is a cracking example of a NSW regional town doing its own thing and creating a multi-decade success story that attracts thousands of visitors from around Australia and the world.

“Regional communities will play a vital role in growing our state’s visitor economy. Of our 2035 \$91 billion growth target, regional NSW will attract a very large proportion of that spending.

“Visitors *Can’t Help Falling In Love* with regional NSW which is why the government is backing towns like Parkes to host events that put their communities on the map and drive expenditure for local businesses.

“The Elvis Express is one of the most scenic and hilarious train journeys in the country. We wish all the *hound dogs* a great trip.”

Jenny Aitchison, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads said:

“The NSW Government is very proud to provide a fun-filled transport option for Elvis fans heading to the festival. The NSW TrainLink Elvis Express offers fans the chance to immerse themselves in Elvis culture from the moment they board.

“This event is a key tourism event in the Central West and it’s great to support it through our regional rail services.

“The festival’s global reach and the enthusiasm it inspires highlight the power of regional tourism to bring people together while supporting local communities and businesses.”

Independent Member for Orange, Phil Donato MP said:

“Now in its 32nd year, the Parkes Elvis Festival has grown beyond founders’ Bob and Anne Steele’s wildest imagination, and it’s now a permanent fixture in our state’s marquee event calendar.

“NSW Trainlink’s *Elvis Express* is unique element of the festival, and this themed travel service enriches the experience for those travelling by rail from Sydney to attend this 5-day event.”

TrainLink Chief Executive, Roger Weeks said:

“Passengers can enjoy the live entertainment all while travelling in comfort, with access to amenities such as air-conditioned carriages, comfortable seating, our buffet car service and onboard toilets.”

Elvis Express Driver, Peter White said:

“The Elvis Express is truly a one-of-a-kind journey because it’s not every day that you’re at the helm of a train filled with hundreds of passengers singing, laughing, and dressed like Elvis.

“The atmosphere is always ‘next level’ especially when you come into Central, and you see everyone from all over the world and from different backgrounds dancing and enjoying themselves.

“I absolutely love this time of year because as someone who was born and raised in Parkes, I really enjoy the atmosphere that both the festival and the train bring to our community.”

Quote attributable to Mayor of Parkes Shire, Council Neil Westcott:

“The Parkes Elvis Festival continues to go from strength to strength, and we are excited to be presenting an action-packed 354 shows throughout the five days.

“There is also a lot of excitement building as thousands head down to Parkes Railway Station to welcome the NSW TrainLink Elvis Express.”