

Media Release

NSW Government releases Bus Taskforce Second Report

22 February 2024

Vision of Zero Emissions Buses and other bus related footage available to download [here](#).

A bold new blueprint that will deliver the biggest improvements to NSW bus services in a generation has been outlined in the Bus Industry Taskforce's second report released today.

The Taskforce, established in May 2023 and chaired by John Lee, has handed down further recommendations to deliver better bus services, improving reliability and equity across the state.

The Second Report outlines a plan to fix the deterioration of bus services that carry 40 per cent of all public transport passengers but receive only 2 per cent of capital expenditure in transport.

This includes:

- Immediately addressing more than a decade of neglect of investment in school and local bus services and additional frequent and local services to areas with no or very poor service levels
- Providing a long-term vision for rapid bus services to be rolled out on key Sydney corridors.
- Calling out the continued challenges with bus drivers and operational staff to ensure the growth can be matched with appropriately trained and available workforce.
- A renewed focus within Transport for NSW on better asset management, risk management and safety outcomes, and,
- A practical plan for the roll out of electric and zero emission buses

The report notes expected population growth has not been catered for in funding for new bus services, leaving growing communities disconnected from essential services.

The 204-page report calls for modern, fit for purpose bus contracts in the regions. The outdated contract model has meant bus services in rural and regional NSW have not been given the same degree of attention as services in Sydney.

Local Government also plays a critical role in how bus services are delivered which can be improved by identifying funding options and streamlining delegations to speed up decisions that improve local roads and footpaths for bus users, pedestrians, and cyclists.

The report makes clear more work needs to be done to better plan and manage essential transport infrastructure, including depots, facilities, bus stops and supporting technology.

The Taskforce has consulted extensively with the community and stakeholders in developing the report, with the Parliamentary Secretary hosting bus passenger forums around the state, forums with councils and industry and around 8,000 submissions received to date.

The NSW Government has asked Transport for NSW to put plans in place for how to best move forward with the recommendations, including:

- Transport for NSW is developing a proposal for a State-wide Medium Term Bus Plan, short-term improvements to local services to catch up to population growth.
- Exploring changes to the roll out of Zero Emissions Buses including looking at options for more ZEBs and supporting infrastructure in Western Sydney. Improvements to rural and regional contracting to be in place by 2026 with a detailed plan outlined in the Final Report.
- Working closer with councils and across government to look at strengthening the ability of Councils to enhance public transport infrastructure on local roads.
- Reviewing aspects of Bus Operator Accreditation Scheme and replace out of date guidelines with a risk-based approach for better safety outcomes.
- Work is already underway to address some of these issues and recommendations handed down in the First Report, including technology enhancements to help eliminate 'ghost buses' appearing on planning apps and more transparent service performance data provided to customers.

Howard Collins has already been appointed as the Coordinator General, reporting directly to the Secretary of Transport for NSW, centralising responsibility for bus operations within one area.

Safety of bus services remains a top priority of the Taskforce, with a multi-year campaign to promote seatbelt use on buses already underway.

Work is also continuing on options for safety improvements for standing passengers on buses, including consideration of whether an 80km/h rule for dedicated school bus services could be rolled out to all services.

Bus driver recruitment initiatives continue, with a recent recruitment campaign lifting Bus Driver Authority applications by nine per cent over two months, and free Opal cards for drivers set to be rolled out.

The Taskforce will provide the NSW Government with its Final Report and recommendations by 1 May 2024.

The Second Report can be found [here](#).

Quotes attributable to Transport Minister Jo Haylen:

"The Second Bus Taskforce report will deliver the biggest improvement to bus services that NSW has seen in a generation."

"For too long bus services have been the forgotten mode of Transport in NSW. They carry more than 40 per cent of passengers but are lucky to get more than 2 per cent of capital investment. This must change. Tens of thousands of passengers rely on the bus network and we need to do better."

"Too many growing communities were neglected because the former government had no plan for what their future bus services would look like. We now have plan to make sure those communities get the bus services they need."

Quotes attributable to Transport for NSW Coordinator-General Howard Collins:

"We know the community is calling for better bus services and I would like to thank the Bus Industry Taskforce for their work in producing this latest detailed report."

"We recognise the important role of buses in our integrated transport system. Investing in buses means less traffic congestion on the road, less pollution in the air, greater accessibility for the community, and more jobs in the industry."

"We are focused on delivering a medium-term bus plan that sets us up for success, and gives clear, equitable improvements to services across NSW communities."

"Transport will continue to work with operators, drivers, unions and the wider community as key changes are implemented. We believe we can deliver immediate improvements then build on the findings of these reports for many years to come."

Quotes attributable to Chair of the Bus Industry Taskforce John Lee:

"The lack of investment in bus services or the forgotten mode of public transport is shameful."

"Buses are the largest public transport mode in the State and it needs well thought through plans to be implemented to fix this neglect."

"We have recommended a strong, detailed and scalable plan for the Government to consider."

"That means more money for services, bus stops, road priority and smart people delivering the plan."

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