



2019

NSW State Election



**Moving People NSW –
Measures to Shape
Our Communities**



Bus and Coach Services and the 2019 NSW State Election

Executive Summary

BusNSW is the peak body for the NSW private bus and coach industry. BusNSW's mission is to foster the efficient and sustainable growth of public transport and in doing so, to promote the benefits of bus and coach transport in NSW.

Buses play a vital role in delivering public transport in NSW and each year carry around 332 million passengers, including almost 580,000 students travelling to and from school each day. More passengers are carried by bus in NSW than by any other mode including rail.

Bus and coach transport is a vital part of an integrated mobility solution for NSW. The flexibility offered by buses, their ability to operate at short notice along a myriad of routes and with a minimum of infrastructure spending,

and their capacity to carry a variable passenger load (from small buses to high capacity buses) make them an ideal solution to meet a range of transport needs.

The bus and coach industry recognise the improvements made to public transport by the Government in NSW, however some additional measures could reduce congestion and create more desirable places to live and work. The industry believes that these strategies provide a platform for further and substantial improvements to public transport over the next term of Government in NSW.

These measures, outlined below, have been divided into those for the Greater Sydney metropolitan area, Regional NSW, Tourist and Charter sector, and Other strategies.

Greater Sydney

1. Establish a transparent process to renew Transport for NSW bus service contracts with bus operators based on performance and value for money.
2. Implement high frequency bus services in targeted areas, particularly in congested parts of Sydney, via Bus Rapid Transit, “branded” and “turn up and go” services.
3. Review Key Performance Indicators in Metropolitan and Outer Metropolitan Bus Service Contracts and consider incentives for operators.
4. Identify and invest in bus priority infrastructure and technology.
5. Reduce the maximum age of Transport for NSW contracted buses to improve safety and accessibility, reduce emissions and increase customer satisfaction.
6. Introduce a congestion management and road allocation strategy for Sydney, in which buses are prioritised, and feeder bus services are integrated with the rail network.

Regional NSW

7. Utilise “idle” contracted buses in rural and regional NSW to meet other transport needs during the off-peak, including community and on-demand services.
8. Improve the process that allows existing school and regular passenger services to be varied to meet changing community needs.
9. Increase the frequency and span of hours for regular passenger services in regional towns.
10. Implement a targeted upgrade of the rural road network in consultation with local communities and regional councils.
11. Implement the Opal ticketing system for regular passenger services in regional NSW, commencing with NSW TrainLink services.

Tourist and Charter

12. Plan and build a modern Sydney Coach Interchange near Central Railway with efficient coach access and layover areas for tourist and charter vehicles.
13. Prioritise the construction of world class transport interchange facilities within the redevelopment at Sydney Airport to allow the efficient movement of tourist and charter services.
14. Incorporate the marketing of land transport options within the NSW Tourism strategy, to promote bus and coach travel.
15. Expedite the digital mapping and expansion of a Controlled Access Bus network in NSW.

Other

16. Support the recruitment and retention of bus and coach drivers through subsidised training and safe workplaces.
17. Support the removal of school transport for children with disabilities from the Federal NDIS charter.
18. Appoint an industry liaison officer to support industry consultation with the Transport Cluster and other NSW Government Departments and Agencies.
19. Review the NSW Government bus procurement strategy, to support manufacturing and a skilled workforce via the strategic planning of orders for new contract buses.
20. Work with BusNSW and bus operators to identify how buses can play a role in future transport models including “Mobility as a Service” initiatives.

These measures are explained in more detail on the following pages.



Greater Sydney

1. Bus Service Contract Renewal Program

There is a need for a transparent program to renew metropolitan and outer-metropolitan bus service contracts with operators, based on performance and value for money. Existing bus contracts provide *Transport for NSW (TfNSW)* with data for some 23 key performance indicators (KPIs) which allows government to readily assess an operator's performance. Following a round of tendering of metropolitan contracts and negotiating extensions to outer-metropolitan contracts, TfNSW has financial benchmarks to confirm value for money and ensure that contracts are sustainable. BusNSW supports a transparent renewal program that is based on consultation with industry and that provides incumbent operators with an opportunity to continue servicing their communities and achieve efficiencies from long term investments.

2. Implement High Frequency Bus Services

BusNSW supports the concept, outlined in the NSW Government's *Future Transport Strategy*, of a "three city metropolis" for Greater Sydney, where residents live 30 minutes by public transport from work,

education and services. BusNSW considers that the recently introduced Northern Beaches "B-line" demonstrates the value of a branded high frequency bus service in achieving the "30-minute city". However, BusNSW sees a missed opportunity for *Bus Rapid Transit* (BRT), where dedicated lanes and corridors are created for bus transport. BRT, which is sometimes referred to as "trackless trams" can be introduced as an alternative to Light Rail, for a fraction of the cost.

BusNSW recommends that the next NSW Government consider the implementation of BRT in high demand areas, particularly in congested parts of Sydney without access to heavy rail. Possible areas for BRT implementation could include:

- **North West Sydney:** Glenorie to the CBD.
- **South West Sydney:** Badgerys Creek Airport to Penrith, Liverpool, Blacktown and Campbelltown-Macarthur.
- **Western Sydney:** Parramatta to Sydney (via Victoria Road and Parramatta Road); and Penrith to Parramatta (via the Great Western Highway).
- **Eastern Sydney:** Green Square to La Perouse via Eastgardens; Randwick to Sydney University to the Bays Precinct; and Maroubra Junction to Marrickville via Sydney Airport.

To evaluate opportunities for BRT, a multi-modal implementation steering group including BusNSW, should be formed. The role of this steering group would be to facilitate a more thorough consideration of all modes, to identify priorities and to plan and implement projects.

There is also a need to increase service frequency in other parts of Greater Sydney. BusNSW welcomes the recent announcement of “turn up and go” services on the Bondi to CBD bus route and recommends similar programs on other corridors. Such corridors include:

- Parramatta to Hurstville/Kogarah via Bankstown.
- Baulkham Hills/Northmead to Merrylands/Auburn via Parramatta.
- Linking the Liverpool-Parramatta T-way with the Northwest T-way via Westmead.
- Chatswood to Northern Beaches and Mona Vale to Macquarie Park via the A3 corridor.

Services on high frequency corridors should use a punctuality KPI based on “Excess Waiting Time” (headway regularity) rather than “on time running”. There is also a need to expand pre-pay only bus services in Greater Sydney, including the option for passengers to use credit or debit cards in addition to Opal.

3. Review KPIs in Metro and Outer Metro Contracts

Sydney Metropolitan and Outer-metropolitan bus operators are required to meet Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) introduced with their contracts. BusNSW Members have raised issues with the interpretation and implementation of some of these KPIs; for example, on-time running KPIs which do not reflect the reality of congestion and infrastructure projects that can lead to delays for bus services.

BusNSW supports a KPI regime that improves the customer’s experience and grows the public transport mode share.

A fundamental plank of the KPI regime is to correctly assess what is under the operator’s control, and to ensure that when excusable performance incidents arise they are reviewed both consistently and equitably.

BusNSW calls for TfNSW to review the current KPIs in consultation with industry via BusNSW, to ensure that the performance being measured is genuinely directed at better customer outcomes. The review should consider incentives for bus operators based on meeting targets and achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

4. Public Transport Infrastructure

In order to make the “30 Minute City” a reality, the measures outlined above must be complemented by appropriate infrastructure. To this effect, BusNSW recommends that Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and TfNSW work with BusNSW, bus operators and local councils to identify and invest in bus priority infrastructure. An infrastructure upgrade program should be a recurring budget item linked to an agreed enhancement strategy for the bus network. Infrastructure upgrades should include:

- Permanent and peak period Bus Lanes.
- Bus priority technology (e.g. PTIPS) at traffic lights.
- Bus queue jump lanes at intersections.
- Parking restrictions and clearways during peak periods.
- Real Time Bus Arrival information (Passenger Information Displays), improved shelters and security cameras at major bus stops.
- Driver facilities (toilets and meal rooms) at interchanges and layovers.

5. Age of the Bus Fleet and Technology

The current (Government contracted) bus fleet is aging, with a maximum age of 25 years and 364 days for most vehicles. Lowering the maximum age of the fleet (for example, to 18 years) provides significant benefits for the community. Newer buses would provide improved accessibility (priority seating and wheelchair spaces), reduced emissions (via Euro fuel standards and hybrid/electric vehicles) and the latest safety technology (autonomous emergency braking, adaptive cruise control, lane assist, bus fire suppression systems). A plan should be developed to transition the fleet to a lower maximum age over several years and should include the phasing in of electric and semi-autonomous vehicles.

To further enhance customer satisfaction and encourage people out of their cars, BusNSW would also recommend that the following enhancements be included on all new buses contracted by the NSW Government:

- Free Wi-Fi on all regular passenger service buses.
- USB phone charging ports installed on seats in new buses.
- Standardised on-board technology to provide consistent data for customer information, network management, and service planning across the state.

6. Congestion Management and Feeder Bus Services

Congestion in Sydney has now extended beyond weekdays to weekends. Therefore, beyond individual initiatives, BusNSW believes there is a need for a more comprehensive congestion management and road allocation strategy in Sydney, in which buses and shared vehicles are prioritised. As is demonstrated in many European cities, congestion management requires an integrated approach in which public and active transport are critical components.

As part of this integrated strategy, local and suburban feeder bus services should be planned concurrently with rail projects and implemented with the commencement of any new rail services. Encouraging people on to trains via convenient and reliable bus feeder services will enable people to access their nearest work area and bring the “30 Minute City” closer to reality.

BusNSW encourages the next NSW Government to consider the costs and benefits of increasing the frequency of local and suburban bus services, before building car parks at train stations. Alternatively, the introduction of restricted access policies and/or parking fees could be used to incentivise commuters to use bus services or active transport when connecting with the rail system. At the very least, bus / rail interchange facilities (and increased local bus frequency) should be incorporated into rail station upgrades. The introduction of road pricing reform (where those who contribute to congestion pay for it) and public transport tax concessions could also assist commuters to leave their cars at home and use public transport for first and last mile journeys.





Regional NSW

BusNSW shares the Government's desire for livable communities and productive economies in regional NSW based on the concept outlined in the *Future Transport Strategy*, which includes a focus on "regional cities"; connections between regional cities and towns; and improved transport within towns. Buses play a vital role in rural communities, and some simple changes to regional bus services would allow these communities to better access employment, health and educational opportunities.

7. Better utilisation of the current Bus Fleet

The industry supports the Government's *Future Transport Strategy* proposal to convert school bus services into a model that provides better access for communities. BusNSW has long argued for better utilisation of the bus fleet in rural and regional NSW where, outside the am and pm peaks, some buses sit idle. These buses need to be utilised to fill different transport needs, whether this be "on demand", community based or other services. Such a proposal enables an existing capital resource to fill a future need, rather than creating new and additional resources, with the resulting financial implications.

Using the rural and regional contract bus fleet for other community-based services would facilitate public transport in low

population locations and could improve the link between smaller towns and regional centres. Such transport services have social inclusion benefits by allowing individuals and groups to more readily take part in society.

8. Improve the Process to Vary Services to Meet Community Needs

Under previous rural and regional bus contracts, increases to regular passenger services and dedicated school services in towns with a population greater than 7,500 were the responsibility of the operator. From June 2016, when the contracts were changed, service planning became the responsibility of TfNSW. Under the new contracts, operators can apply for service changes via a *Bus Service Alteration Request* (BSAR). Currently, a significant proportion of BSARs sent to TfNSW are declined. Some of these relate to growth associated with residential developments around regional centres, whilst others relate to requests from parents to improve safety or convenience for students walking to bus stops. BusNSW recommends a more transparent method of assessing BSARs to ensure that bus service changes are responsive to community needs and to growth in regional areas, including the consideration of non-monetary benefits.

9. Increase Service Frequency and Span of Hours in Major Regional Towns

In NSW, public transport availability in many large regional towns is marginal. Some towns for example, have no bus services on Sunday, limited services (until midday) on Saturday and no night services on weekdays. When the *Rural and Regional Bus Contracts Task Force* was developing the new contracts, the industry and TfNSW agreed on a set of key service planning principles. This involved analysing the changing needs of towns, and objectives such as more frequent services, wider network coverage and better integration of transport services. A commitment to service planning via network reviews in large regional towns would help to clearly identify where rural and regional bus services can be improved.

BusNSW also seeks a commitment in future budgets for funding to improve service frequency and span of hours in regional towns. BusNSW recommends that the span of operating hours for major regional towns be at least 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday. Major regional towns would include Albury, Bathurst, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Nowra-Bomaderry, Orange, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Tweed Heads-Coolangatta and Wagga Wagga. This should be accompanied by a marketing campaign promoting bus travel in these areas.

10. Improve Country Roads

The standard of the country road network is concerning, particularly in remote parts of NSW. Investment decisions tend to focus on major highways, at the expense of roads under local government control. This approach has significant safety and commercial impacts on regional communities. Poor quality roads lead to increases in accidents, driver fatigue, travel times, operating costs (driver wages, fuel, maintenance, bus downtime), and can reduce the operating life of rural buses. The longer-term impact for government is increased contract costs for public transport in regional and rural NSW.

NSW needs a targeted upgrade of the country road network, developed and implemented in conjunction with regional councils and local communities. This program should be funded separately from the overall road network, and supported by ongoing road safety campaigns.

11. Extend Opal to Regional NSW

Regional and rural public transport commuters have endured varying standards of ticketing for decades. The optimal solution is for the entire state to have one ticketing solution. This should include OPAL and the ability to use contactless debit/credit cards. This measure would dramatically improve the customer's experience and provide rural commuters with a seamless integration with the Greater Sydney public transport network.

As a priority, NSW TrainLink coaches should be OPAL enabled. Passengers would benefit from cashless payments which are quicker and more convenient. BusNSW also supports the expansion of the TrainLink coach network (based on the 'hub and spoke' model included in the TfNSW Future Transport plan for Regional NSW) to benefit isolated communities and facilitate travel for health, education and leisure.



Tourist and Charter Services

BusNSW commends the Government's plan to double overnight tourist expenditure by 2020 and recognises the critical link between easy and accessible public transport and the tourist's experience of NSW. Coach travel needs to be factored into the Government's tourism strategies.

12. Improve Bus Access and Parking Facilities in the Sydney CBD

Sydney is a major destination for tourists (both local and overseas), many of whom travel on coaches. Coach destinations include hotels, tourist icons such as the Opera House, and event venues such as the Sydney International Convention Centre. To support such tourism the provision of adequate parking for coaches to layover within the Sydney CBD is essential.

BusNSW considers that coach parking and access, to pick up and set down passengers within the Sydney CBD, should be a tourism priority for the NSW Government. Critical here is a Sydney Coach Terminal near Central Railway, similar to Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra, to provide a modern interchange for coaches providing long distance, tourist and charter services from the CBD.

Disappointingly, the Government's recent *Tourism and Transport Plan, Supporting the Visitor Economy*, does not commit to a coach terminal at Central, categorising the proposal only "for investigation" within the next 10 years. BusNSW has a view that this is shortsighted. A new transport interchange in the Central Station Precinct is critically needed to improve the passenger interface between transport modes, and the tourist experience more generally.

13. World Class Coach Interchange and Layover at Sydney Airport

Sydney Airport had approximately 37 million customers during 2017. Of those, approximately 11 million were international tourists. A significant proportion of tourists who come to Sydney travel as part of an organised program, usually meeting a coach at the airport. Sydney Airport is the gateway to New South Wales, with visitors travelling via coach from the airport to the Sydney CBD or a destination in regional NSW. Arrival and transfer at Sydney Airport are the first experiences that many of these visitors have of our state.

BusNSW believes that the interchange of passengers between planes and coaches at Sydney Airport can be improved. Appropriate coach layover and access for both domestic and international terminals should be a transport priority for NSW. Currently, Sydney Airport is developing a Master Plan for the

use of the Airport over the next 20 years and BusNSW seeks the NSW Government's support for the construction of a modern coach interchange and layover as part of that forward planning. Such a strategy also needs to be factored into the proposed Western Sydney Airport and Badgery's Creek Aerotropolis.

14. Marketing and Tourist Amenities

The coach sector plays a vital role in linking regional destinations with both international and domestic travellers. Tourism Australia has been a world leader in terms of marketing Australian cities and icons (Opera House, Uluru, etc). BusNSW believes a similar marketing strategy is needed to increase international and domestic tourist numbers in regional NSW.

Such a strategy requires funding and a specific coach focus highlighting routes connecting major cities/towns, tourist attractions and regional areas; for example, Sydney, the Hunter Valley and Port Stephens. Such marketing increases the exposure of tourists in each area, increases coach tourism overall, and connects regional areas in line with the Government's *Future Transport Strategy*. The NSW Tourism strategy needs to educate tourists on land transport options available in NSW *before* they arrive at Sydney Airport.

Marketing should be supported by efforts to secure and grow major events and to develop the educational tour sector (including primary, secondary and tertiary students) and cultural tours.

Beyond marketing, investment is needed to enhance accessibility and amenity in key tourism regions across the state. This includes coach infrastructure and facilities in regional towns.

15. Expand Controlled Access Bus (CAB) Network

Controlled Access Buses (12.5m to 14.5m long buses and coaches) are restricted to operating on approved roads in NSW. BusNSW is seeking assistance from RMS and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) to expand the CAB network. There are a large number of CAB's operating in NSW and real productivity benefits to be achieved if these higher capacity buses and coaches had greater access to the road network. BusNSW is also seeking for the RMS to expedite the digital mapping of the CAB network, which would provide benefits for operators, customers and government.



Other

16. Recruitment and Training of Bus and Coach Drivers and Safer Workplaces

There is a shortage of bus and coach drivers in Greater Sydney, with large numbers needed, and recruitment unable to keep up with demand. Projects such as the Epping-Chatswood rail closure have created greater demand for bus drivers. There is also demand for drivers in the coach sector, where specialised skills are required.

A more structured approach is needed to create a smooth pipeline of drivers for the industry. A key initiative here would be NSW Government support for new entrants to obtain a Heavy Vehicle licence upgrade and Driver Authority. This and a skill-set or certificate qualification would lead to the bus industry becoming a genuine career choice. BusNSW calls for broader funding and a promotional campaign to address demand for drivers within the sector, specifically:

- Government funding and a payroll tax exemption to support the recruitment and training of bus and coach drivers.
- A careers education campaign and pathway to promote employment within the bus and coach industry.
- Apprenticeship support for employers, particularly for mechanics and operational staff.
- A specific focus on attracting women to careers within the bus and coach sector.

Bus drivers provide frontline services that involve dealing with the public. Providing a safe workplace is critical and BusNSW is seeking tougher penalties for anyone found guilty of verbally and/or physically assaulting a bus driver.

17. Transport of Children with Disabilities to and from School

For the last two years, the Bus Australia Network (consisting of bus associations in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia and the federal representative body, the Bus Industry Confederation) have been seeking to persuade the federal government to remove the school transport of children with disabilities from the NDIS's charter and to direct the NDIS not to pursue attempts to "uberise" the transport of schoolchildren with disabilities. BusNSW is seeking the NSW Government's support to retain the existing stable and proven system in NSW and to remove the school transport of children with disabilities from the NDIS's charter.

18. Appointment of an Industry Liaison Officer

For some years BusNSW has advocated for the appointment of an Industry Liaison Officer within the Transport "cluster". The new structure of transport, roads and infrastructure bureaucracies has made industry engagement/relations problematic. Industry deals with all sections

of government but often each agency (and sometimes units within these agencies) act in isolation, with conflicting policies and priorities. An Industry Liaison Officer with responsibility to act across agencies would help to improve this situation by providing a conduit between industry and the bureaucracies. This in turn would help achieve better policies, customer outcomes and reduce red tape for the industry.

19. Review of NSW Government Bus Procurement Strategy

The current bus procurement climate is highly variable. Procurement lulls are scattered with periods of high demand which causes demand stress in other areas of the sector and discourages manufacturers. BusNSW is calling for a more structured approach via a clear Government Bus Procurement Strategy that would allow industry (including the Australian bus manufacturing industry) to better plan for the future and ensure the retention and upskilling of qualified and experienced tradepersons.

20. Role of bus in Future Transport Models

Buses will play an important part in future transport models. This includes *Mobility-as-a-Service* (MaaS) subscription services, where users pay a fee to access a myriad of mobility services, including ride, bike and car sharing and on-demand buses, in addition to a core network of mass transit services.

BusNSW understands that TfNSW has a vision to enable a vibrant, open mobility marketplace where providers compete, with compelling alternatives to car ownership, to meet community and customer needs. There is a need to determine how and where buses for fixed route services and on demand services fit into the MaaS framework. BusNSW is seeking for the NSW Government to work with BusNSW and both contracted and non-contracted bus operators, to develop collaborative solutions that will benefit the community.

To assist BusNSW members and their communities with voting, BusNSW is seeking a response to the proposed recommendations from parties contesting the March 2019 NSW election.

Replies should be sent to Matt Threlkeld, Executive Director of BusNSW at mthrelkeld@busnsw.com.au or Locked Bag 13, North Parramatta NSW 1750.



Be part of the conversation and promote the BusNSW recommendations using #BusNSW and #nswpol

Bus Australia Network

