

Thursday, 30 April 2020

BUCKLE UP: 150 NEW SCHOOL BUSES IN REGIONAL NSW

Regional communities will benefit from an extra 150 new school buses fitted with seatbelts, following recommendations of an independently chaired taskforce to improve the rural and regional seatbelt program.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Paul Toole said the new air-conditioned buses would replace any dedicated school bus in regional NSW more than 20 years old with new buses fitted with seatbelts.

“All dedicated regional school buses will be fitted with seatbelts by the end of 2021 – two years ahead of the Government’s initial commitment in response to the 2012 School Bus Safety Community Advisory Committee Report. This is great news for school children and families right across regional NSW,” Mr Toole said.

“To date, 861 new school buses with seatbelts have been delivered to the bush, and 273 buses have had seatbelts retrofitted as part of the 10 year commitment to service and improve bus safety in our regional areas.”

As part of the recommended changes to the program, regular route buses will not have seatbelts fitted. Fitting seatbelts in these buses meant that flip-down seats at the front of the bus, and backrests for people in wheelchairs could not be accommodated.

Transport for NSW will work with suppliers and industry to investigate options to retrofit flip-down seats and back rests to the small number of route buses that have had seatbelts fitted, to better cater for customers in wheelchairs or other mobility limitations, parents with prams, and those carrying shopping.

The changes will be made based on the recommendations of the Rural and Regional Seatbelt Program Taskforce, which was chaired by Derek Schoen, a former President of the NSW Farmers Association. Representatives of Transport for NSW and BusNSW formed the remainder of the Taskforce.

“School student safety is our number one priority – this is about ensuring students on a school bus travelling on unsealed roads, or on roads with a speed limit of 80 kilometres per hour or more outside of urban areas can wear a seatbelt and don’t need to stand,” Mr Toole said.

“We will continue our ongoing conversations with local providers to ensure that our regional communities are experiencing efficient and safe upgrades which will benefit all customers travelling.”

Customers can access more information on these upgrades by contacting their local bus operators.

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