

Media Release

The Hon Ben Carroll MP

Minister for Industry Support and Recovery

Minister for Business Precincts

Minister for Public Transport

Minister for Roads and Road Safety



Thursday, 30 June 2022

MODERN REGIONAL BUS AGREEMENTS TO BENEFIT PASSENGERS

The Andrews Labor Government has finalised new 10-year contracts worth \$2.3 billion for Victoria's entire regional bus network, delivering value for money and improved services for passengers.

A total of 177 bus contracts with 58 operators comes into effect from 1 July across the state including local town services in Echuca and Hamilton, school bus services and major operators servicing regional cities such as Ballarat and Geelong.

Under the modernised contracts, four major bus companies operating in Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, and the Latrobe Valley will for the first time be subject to new performance measures and service standards consistent with bus services in Metropolitan Melbourne.

Seven hybrid buses and 56 new low-floor, step-free diesel buses will be introduced across 74 smaller regional routes by the end of next year, replacing more than half the fleet on these services with new buses.

The fleet replacement and upgrade schedule outlined in the contracts will result in the entire regional bus fleet being compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) by the end of next year, with the new diesel buses having the latest European emissions technology that either meets or exceeds Australian emissions standards.

Provision has also been made in the contracts for the introduction of zero emissions buses as part of Victoria's Bus Plan, which will see all new public buses be zero emissions from 2025, contributing to the Government's target of net zero emissions by 2050.

In a first for regional bus contracts, operators have signed up to a social outcome agreement, with at least 250 jobs to be created over the next 10 years for priority groups including at least 90 new roles for women and at least 17 new roles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as disadvantaged Victorian jobseekers.

Local industry also benefits with the bus operators meeting over 91 per cent local content for bus operations, at least 60 per cent local content for the fleet, and strategies to increase opportunities for apprentices, trainees and cadets, and gender diversity in the workforce.

All bus timetables will operate as normal under the new contracts.

The contracts deliver on key outcomes from Victoria's Bus Plan including stronger performance, improved customer experience, and better value for money. They were awarded following a robust, three-stage evaluation process by the Department of Transport over the past year.

Since 2014, the Andrews Labor Government has invested over \$500 million in new and upgraded bus services, with buses a key part of transport network which is being transformed through the \$90 billion Big Build.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Public Transport Ben Carroll

"Modernising the regional bus contracts will deliver more reliable bus services, a cleaner bus fleet, improved accessibility and job creation in regional areas that need it most – all great outcomes for rural and regional Victoria."

"These new regional bus contracts complement our investment in new and improved bus services, and the \$90 billion Big Build which is transforming public transport in Victoria."

Media contact: Isobel Loschiavo 0431 963 479 | isobel.loschiavo@minstaff.vic.gov.au