

Media release

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New On Demand public transport Trial revamped in the Bega Valley Shire

Sapphire Coast Buslines, in partnership with Transport for NSW, have been trialing different on demand bus services in Eden and Candelo, and more recently Merimbula and Bega.

Whilst the new Merimbula and Bega services, launched in July 2019, are growing rapidly, the Eden and Candelo services have experienced lower than expected patronage. As a result, the Candelo service will wind down as of 27 September 2019 and the Eden service will be remodeled.

The trial is being undertaken as part of the NSW Government's On Demand Public Transport Pilot Program, which was launched in late 2016 to test and learn new and creative ways of delivering public transport services. Data, insights and feedback from the trial will be used to inform future improvements across the entire transport network.

The nature of the trial allows for dynamic changes to be made to the service in order to meet the needs of the customers. Unfortunately, whilst those who have used the Candelo service enjoyed it, the patronage was too low to continue.

The remodeled Eden service includes an expansion of the pick-up/drop off area. It will now allow customers to pre-book the bus to pick them up from/near their home and take them anywhere in Eden, and vice versa. Customers can book via the newly updated Flexibus App or website and pre-pay their fare also if they wish. Customers booking via the App have the ability to view their bus on the App so they know when it is getting close to picking them up.

An innovative component of this trial is the use of school buses during their down time in between school runs each day. The remodeled Eden service will see a low-floor wheelchair accessible school bus being used as an On Demand public bus in Eden 8:45am to 1pm, Monday to Friday during school term.

Flexibus Managing Director Ms Jamie Klemm says they are so grateful to be able to continue and improve this trial as it has so many far reaching benefits to the community that include;

- Personalised public transport service that picks customers up from/near their home and take them to where they need to go in the township
- Growing employment hours to bus drivers
- Improved access and independence for customers who are vision impaired or in a wheelchair

- Local business opportunities through the development and creation of the Flexibus App, utilizing a local business to create the software development.
- Increased travel options to reduce social isolation for local residents
- Improved low cost transport options for those who may have reduced options due to financial hardship.

“The advantage of Flexibus On Demand is that people have more choice and opportunity to access bus transport when and where it suits them,” Klemm said. “There are always going to be differing opinions and scrutiny of government and operators when such things are so new and under trial, but it is our opinion that there are gaps in the market that cannot be met by traditional forms of transport, bus route services or otherwise, and we are excited to see the learnings and outcomes of these trial and what the future brings.”

“Whilst we are disappointed to see the trial in Candelo cease at the end of term 3, we are very aware that resources need to be driven by demand and learnings, and we are very motivated by the fact that we have managed to secure a further term in Eden, to commence in term 4 2019, to try some different options and gain learnings from that as well.”

“We have advocated very hard to have these services continue, Sapphire Coast Buslines have always put the community first when it comes to public transport and we hope that the community continue to get behind these trials to see them be as successful as possible.”

- **More information about Flexibus On Demand services is available at www.flexibus.com.au**