

**Jenny Aitchison**

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads



## Media Release

# Smoother, quieter journeys on Sapphire Coast's Flexibus On Demand service with two new electric minibuses

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Two new electric battery powered minibuses, the first of their make and model in Australia, have started operating on the south coast's Flexibus On Demand transport service.

Sapphire Coast Buslines recently purchased the two 18-seat electric vehicles and is using them on the Flexibus service that runs in the Bega Valley Shire and parts of the far south coast.

Transport for NSW contracts the company to provide On Demand services - a flexible public transport option designed to improve connections to transport hubs and popular destinations like shopping centres or hospitals.

Around 22,000 passenger trips were made on the service in the 12 months to April 2024.

The new minibuses are a prominent sight around Eden, Tura Beach, Merimbula and Pambula with their distinctive blue livery that says, 'This is a zero emissions bus' and 'Breathe easy'.

People who make a booking to use the Flexibus On Demand service on the far south coast can now look forward to smoother, quieter journeys on the electric battery powered minibuses, which are also more environmentally sustainable as they produce zero emissions.

This comes as the NSW Government delivers a multi-billion program to transition the state's 8,000 plus diesel and natural gas public transport buses to zero emissions technology.

The new minibuses are HDrive EV70 vehicles which are low-floor models and are equipped with ramps, making them accessible for people with disabilities or mobility issues.

They feature USB chargers, a luggage rack and large windows allowing passengers a comfortable and enjoyable journey.

Each vehicle has a range of 250 kilometres per day and are recharged at Sapphire Coast Buslines Pambula depot each evening, after the company made significant investment to install two charging stations.

### Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

"I am pleased to see these two new EV minibuses on the far south coast, enhancing the On Demand service and ensuring our regions are increasingly being powered by cleaner, greener transport technology.

"The NSW Government is committed to a zero emissions future across NSW as we seek to provide more comfortable journeys and liveable places for our passengers and communities.

"The Flexibus On Demand service means people can get transport from close to home to appointments, medical services and shops in a flexible and convenient way.

“This is a vital travel option and those with disabilities make up around 37 per cent of customers and people aged over 60 represent about 58 per cent of customers.

“We know that safe, accessible and reliable transport makes a measurable difference in the lives of many regional people and is a key social determinant of health, opportunity and wellbeing.”

**Member for Bega Dr Michael Holland said:**

“I congratulate Sapphire Coast Buslines for being part of the zero emissions future in purchasing and operating these environmentally sustainable vehicles.

“These beautiful little blue EVs are the first of their kind operating in Australia.

“They are a wonderful addition to the Flexibus On Demand service that runs in the Bega Valley Shire and parts of the far south coast under a contract with Transport for NSW.”

**Managing Director of Sapphire Coast Buslines Jamie Klemm said:**

“We are thrilled to be pioneering the use of electric buses on On Demand bus services in rural and regional NSW and we are proud to be the first bus operator in Australia to purchase this type of EV 70 minibus.

“Minibuses are important for On Demand services as they are small enough to navigate most streets, allowing us to pick up and drop off passengers from locations that are convenient and accessible for them, so being now able to run EV minibuses is a great step forward.

“The introduction of electric buses as part of our fleet is a significant stride towards sustainable transportation practices and aligns with Sapphire Coast Buslines' commitment to reducing carbon emissions and promoting cleaner air quality in the region.

“Our drivers also love the smoothness of the drive and have commented that they feel like they are steering the future, one quiet revolution at a time!”