

Media Release

Powering up the regions as first trials start under \$25 million zero emission bus trials project

Tuesday, 30 April 2024

As classes resume for term two today, students in the Armidale and Tweed regions will have a cleaner, greener ride to school on brand new battery electric-powered buses.

The start of term two marks the start of the first on-road trials as part of Transport for NSW's \$25 million project to look at how zero emission bus technology can be delivered to the regions.

Armidale and Tweed are the first two trial sites to be launched, with two battery electric buses now operating on Armidale school routes serviced by Edwards Coaches and two operating on routes in the Tweed area serviced by Kinetic.

At different times over the course of the trial, the zero emission buses or ZEBs will service 30 schools across Armidale and Uralla and the Tweed.

In Armidale today, Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison also announced the locations for further ZEB trials in regional NSW.

Narrabri will play host to one bus, Queanbeyan three buses and Deniliquin will have three trial vehicles. The second deployment of the trials are scheduled to begin during term 4, 2024. Details about these trials will be provided at a later date.

Conducting trials in different locations with diverse landscapes, using a range of bus types and vehicle suppliers, will help inform what best suits regional and remote service needs in the transition to zero emissions.

For the Armidale and Tweed trials vehicle dealership, VDI Australia supplied all four buses – Armidale will have one 57 seat bus and one 24 seat vehicle while Tweed will have two 55 seat buses.

The ZEBs will be a prominent sight around Armidale and Tweed with distinctive blue livery and signage, touting 'This is a zero emissions bus' and 'Breathe easy'.

Passengers, drivers, and bus operators will be encouraged to provide feedback during the trials to help with the future roll out of zero emission buses.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

“I was delighted to tour one of the ZEBs today at an open day at Armidale Secondary College and see the enthusiasm of the students and drivers who will experience the benefits of these buses on their daily journeys and as part of a cleaner, greener future.

“This is part of the NSW Government’s commitment to fully transition the state’s 8000-strong fleet of diesel and gas buses to ZEBs by 2047. As 37 per cent of the state’s fleet is in the regions, it is critical we trial them in all conditions.

“It is estimated that having a fully zero emission bus fleet in NSW will reduce carbon emissions by 509,000 tonnes a year, or the equivalent of 5400 return Sydney to Bali flights.

“There are also benefits for our economy. The transition to zero emissions technology encourages investment, training and jobs in our regions, particularly in manufacturing, servicing and depot upgrades.”

Duty MLC for the Northern Tablelands Peter Primrose said:

“It is fantastic that 13 schools in Armidale and Uralla will be serviced by these two new battery electric vehicles at some stage over the course of the trial.

“It is so exciting to see these beautiful new blue ZEBs in action on the roads around Armidale and the Tweed, providing a quieter, smoother and comfortable ride for hundreds of students, while not emitting harmful emissions.”

Duty MLC for Tweed Emily Suvaal said:

“The ZEB trial in the Tweed area will provide unique insights about operating zero emission buses in a coastal climate with hilly topography.

“I’m sure there are a lot of students eager to try out these ZEBs with 17 primary and high schools in Banora Point, Bilambil, Carool, Cudgen, Kingscliff, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads South, Terranora, and Tumbulgum to be serviced at different times over the course of the trial.”

Edwards Coaches Managing Director Brad Edwards said:

“We are proud to be part of one of the first Transport for NSW regional ZEB trials and our drivers, who have been fully trained in the technology, are excited to be doing the school runs from term two in such smart, comfortable vehicles.

“Armidale is one of the highest cities in Australia, at around 1000m above sea level. Conducting a trial in this part of the Northern Tablelands will provide important information about vehicle performance in a higher altitude.”

Kinetic Co-CEO Michael Swards said:

“We know our passengers love travelling on electric vehicles and each ZEB on the road replaces a diesel one and that has an immediate benefit to the environment, community and passengers.

“It is important that transport infrastructure and technology meets the needs of passengers today and into the future and we look forward to continuing to share our expertise operating zero emissions buses here in beautiful Northern Rivers region of New South Wales.”

Armidale Secondary College Head Teacher, Science Tobie White, said:

“Having these new battery-powered zero emission buses in Armidale offers a firsthand opportunity for our Armidale Secondary College students to learn more about how electric vehicle motors work

and their impact on the environment.

“It’s perfect timing as our Year 7 students are exploring Unbalanced Forces and safety in cars, Year 9 are looking at Energy Transformations and Electrical Circuits, while Year 10 is assessing the effectiveness of different types of batteries in our Chemical Reactions unit.

“Our school also has a particular focus on the environmental impacts of human activities so we are hoping that these buses will promote the uptake of electric vehicles in our local area.”