

Yasmin Catley

Minister for Police and Counter-terrorism
Minister for the Hunter

**Kate Washington**

Minister for Families and Communities
Minister for Disability Inclusion
Member for Port Stephens

Jenny Aitchison

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads
Member for Maitland

Media Release**Thousands of new seatbelts making Hunter school buses safer**

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School children in parts of the Hunter region are now benefitting from safer journeys following completion of a \$10 million program to provide 92 additional seat belted school buses.

This achievement was made possible after the Rural and Regional Seatbelt Program was extended to include school buses in selected outer metropolitan areas.

This means that as well as the 2,583 dedicated school buses in rural and regional NSW that have received seatbelts in recent years, an additional 92 buses in Cessnock, Singleton, Maitland and Port Stephens now have seatbelts as well.

A total of 92 school buses in the Hunter have been retrofitted with seatbelts, while 10 are brand new seatbelted vehicles.

Transport for NSW carried out careful analysis to determine which Hunter school buses received seatbelts, determining they be installed on vehicles which regularly travel on roads with a higher crash risk rating with speed limits of 80 km/h or more.

The buses operate on dedicated school routes serviced by Transport's contracted operators Rover Motors, CDC NSW and Port Stephens Coaches.

The program was the result of a close partnership between Transport for NSW, the bus operators and seat belt retrofitters, Sydney-based Baxter Omnibus Sales & Service and Royans Brisbane.

On the buses that were retrofitted, a total of 6,671 seatbelts were installed on 4,624 seats, including one, two and three-person seats.

Disruption to normal school services was minimised during the 15-month retrofit program with replacement buses being used throughout.

Minister for Regional Transport and Roads Jenny Aitchison said:

“Children are among some of our most vulnerable road users and we are committed to ensuring they can travel safely to and from school every day.

“Wearing a seatbelt doubles the chance of surviving a crash and reduces the risk of injury and I know having seatbelts on more buses in the Hunter will give a level of assurance to families that their children are going to and from school better protected.

“Safety of bus services remains a top priority for the NSW Government and is a key focus of the Bus Industry Taskforce, with a multi-year campaign to promote seatbelt use on buses already underway and work continuing on other ways to improve safety for standing passengers.”

Minister for the Hunter Yasmin Catley said:

“We know seatbelts make buses safer and safety is what our kids deserve as we move them around the Hunter.

“This will get seatbelts on 92 more buses so more kids can buckle up on their way to and from school.

“I’d remind parents, carers and everyone in our community to set an example for our young people by wearing a seatbelt when one is available. It’s vitally important and it’s the law.

“This upgrade to bus safety is just part of the NSW Government’s commitment to better public transport.

“We know the importance of buses in our integrated transport system. Investing in buses means less traffic on the road, less pollution in the air, better accessibility for passengers and more jobs in the industry.”

Member for Port Stephens Kate Washington said:

“The safety of kids on our local school buses has been a longstanding concern for families in Port Stephens.

“In the absence of a local public high school in Medowie, we have thousands of students travelling long distances on school buses every single day.

“Many years ago, our community campaigned for seatbelts on school buses. Finally, after more than a decade, our school buses now have seatbelts and our kids will be safer.”