

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Call for better public transport and a regular Hobart-Launceston service

The University of Tasmania has called on the State Government to improve public transport options for students, by improving timetables, providing regular services out of hours, introducing a more equitable fare system, and establishing an early morning service between Hobart and Launceston.

In a submission to the Government's Review of Core Passenger Services in Tasmania, UTAS said the current public transport system was a big disincentive for students considering studying in Tasmania because of the poor coordination of bus services.

In its submission UTAS called for:

- Improvements in Metro routing and timetabling to ensure regular and accessible transport without long delays;
- recognition that services should include after hours and weekends;
- Better connections between outer urban private providers of transport and Metro buses and routing through University zones where appropriate.
- A regular early morning bus service between Hobart and Launceston
- Removal of discriminatory access to discounted and subsidized student fares on both metropolitan and regional fares, to ensure all students had equitable access to public transport.

Executive Director Finance and Administration, Mr Bernard Lillis, said it was unacceptable there was no regular Monday to Friday coach service running between the State's two largest centres prior to 10am.

"UTAS was so concerned with this situation we began a subsidized charter bus service for students between Launceston and Hobart early this year and its success has shown there is an unmet demand in Tasmanian public transport," Mr Lillis said.

"UTAS has had enquiries from members of the public, the business community and TAFE regarding use of the morning charter service, which has been very successful, but a financial drain on the University's resources.

"Clearly, there is a need for the Government to provide financial incentives for private companies to operate such a service on a regular basis.

“With the full time equivalent of 12,500 students based on three campuses across the State, a comprehensive public transport service is crucial if we are to continue attracting students to study in Tasmania,” Mr Lillis said.

A trial, which is currently being conducted by the University to encourage students to travel by bus rather than drive themselves or with friends, clearly shows the high demand for public transport.

As part of the trial, the University subsidises ticket prices so students only pay \$10 one way to travel between Hobart- Launceston, or Burnie- Launceston.

In the first five weeks, an average of more than 390 students per week took advantage of the \$10 Redline fares.

More importantly, when surveyed, these students said that if the subsidised fares were not available:

- 39% would have driven themselves instead;
- 25% would have car-pooled with friends;
- 19% would have paid the normal Redline student fare;
- 16% would not have gone; and, frighteningly,
- 1% stated they would have hitch-hiked!

The results of this survey show that, of the 1958 \$10 tickets sold in the first five weeks of the trial, 64% of these have kept motor vehicles off the Midlands and Bass Highways. That is potentially 1253 cars.

“The primary aim of the trial is to discourage use of motor vehicles and enhance safety, which has been achieved, but the cost of the trial to UTAS is substantial,” Mr Lillis said.

“If better tertiary student discounts were available, more students would use coach rather than motor vehicle transport to travel between campuses and major centres.

“This clearly shows the Government must ensure there is equity for all students in accessing relevant public transport needs,” Mr Lillis said.

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