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# Media Release

## Improving Community Transport Accessibility Across Gippsland

Residents in Sandy Point and Venus Bay will benefit from new transport options to connect them to health care, local businesses, education and more, through a collaborative pilot community electric minibus service supported by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

Through funding of \$249,450 from the DTP'S Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program (FLTSP), the purchase of electric buses will help engage the two communities to reduce their carbon impacts as well as promote inclusion.

Minister for Public and Active Transport Gabrielle Williams said tailored local community projects, like the Gippsland E-Bus trials, are what funding from the Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program is all about.

"Lack of accessible transport services can have a real adverse effect on communities, especially in regional Victoria, so we're doing everything we can to address this," Minister Williams said.

The day-to-day operation and management of the services will be undertaken by the respective committees and local communities, with the pilot being supported by a two-year research project aiming to identify sustainable models to benefit remote communities.

South Gippsland Shire Council - Mayor, Cr Nathan Hersey said the project is innovative and community-led.

"It will create opportunities and social connection for residents in remote communities, by providing transport to neighbouring townships and important health, education and employment services," Mayor Hersey said.

As well as assisting with the promotion and marketing of the new service, the research project will, through contributions from the DTP's Transport Research Team, La Trobe University and the iMOVE Cooperative Research Centre, investigate ways to make the community bus service efficient, financially sustainable and provide a model for other regional communities in Victoria.

iMOVE Program's Director Lee-Ann Breger said transport in regional areas is an ongoing challenge all over Australia.

"This collaboration brings the local community together with government and researchers to investigate an approach that provides immediate benefits for two communities, while also developing a framework that could be applied in many other rural areas," Ms Breger said.

Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Industry Engagement La Trobe University, Professor Susan Dodds said the university has a long and proud history of pursuing sustainability and the transition to renewable energy.

"We aim to support that transition through transport research and innovations that increase safety, accessibility and efficiency, such as electric vehicles," Professor Dodds said.

The funding from the Victorian Government is via the FLTSP which provides funding to local government and community organisations for small-scale transport projects, evidence-based transport studies, and funding to redesign and trial new ways in which transport services at a local level can be delivered across the state.

For more information on the Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program visit the Department of Transport and Planning website.

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**24/7 Media Enquiries Line: 03 9854 2160**

**Media Enquiries Email (monitored 7am to 5pm Monday to Friday): [media@transport.vic.gov.au](mailto:media@transport.vic.gov.au)**