

Question on Notice

No. 140

Asked on 14 March 2023

MR M CRANDON ASKED MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT AND MAIN ROADS (HON M BAILEY)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the 721, 722, 728 and 729 bus services, servicing the Northern Gold Coast—

Will the Minister advise the number of times each of these bus services have been cancelled in each calendar year from 2019 to 2022 and 2023 year to date (reported separately in table format, by individual bus service, per year up to and including the most recent week ending on Saturday 11 March 2023)?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Coomera for the question.

Across Queensland, of the more than half a million individual trips scheduled last month, 98 per cent were delivered as normal. This is an outstanding effort from the hard-working drivers that carry out close to 17,000 trips every single day.

The Northern Gold Coast recently saw a significant increase in frequency with almost 800 new services per week added earlier this year. The improvements for routes 721 (Coomera to Ormeau via Upper Coomera), 722 (Coomera to Ormeau via Coomera River) and 726 (Coomera station to Coomera Waters) form stage one of a joint Queensland Government and Gold Coast City Council \$16.4 million trial of new and upgraded bus services. The jointly funded northern Gold Coast bus service improvement package provides funding for trials of new, or upgraded, bus services over the next five years.

The Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) is committed to providing a safe and reliable network across Queensland. Routes 721, 722, 728 and 729 are operated by TMR's delivery partner, Kinetic Gold Coast (formally known as Surfside Buslines). Kinetic delivers approximately 76,000 trips on the Gold Coast and Tweed each month, including 300 daily school bus services.

Driver availability as a result of a nation-wide labour shortage and above average absenteeism from illness, including COVID-19, has resulted in impacts to some services across the region. TMR is working with Kinetic to address the current driver availability concerns. Driver availability issues are happening in all jurisdictions across Australia now due to the low unemployment rate creating labour shortages. Worker availability is common across many industries.

Regional labour force data showed the unemployment rate in the Gold Coast in February 2023 was 2.5 per cent, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points over the year. This 2.5 per cent unemployment rate is the lowest the Gold Coast has recorded since the data series began in 1999. The unemployment rate for this area was identified as the fourth lowest of all 19 statistical areas within Queensland.

While each bus operator is responsible for its own recruitment and retention of bus drivers, TMR's Translink division continues to work closely with its delivery partners to ensure the timely and reliable delivery of public transport services. The Palaszczuk Government is in ongoing discussions with the Queensland Bus Industry Council, bus companies and unions about this issue to try and look at solutions.

Where staff shortages are likely to impact service delivery, Translink works with bus operators to prioritise school services. Some students also catch urban route services as part of their school journey and every effort is made to also prioritise these services, along with services that operate at an hourly frequency and the first and last services of the day.

The table below shows the number of incomplete trips that have occurred for each route based on calendar year. Under the current service contract, an incomplete trip is the result of 90 per cent of the trip not being completed.

	Route 721		
	Cancelled	Scheduled	% Missed trips
2019	38	5171	0.7%
2020	10	5197	0.2%
2021	14	5171	0.3%
2022	58	5153	1.1%
at 11 March 2023	111	1644	6.8%

	Route 722		
	Cancelled	Scheduled	% Missed trips
2019	97	8500	1.1%
2020	43	9042	0.5%
2021	37	9037	0.4%
2022	98	9044	1.1%
at 11 March 2023	245	3388	7.2%

	Route 728		
	Cancelled	Scheduled	% Missed trips
2019	48	5171	0.9%
2020	15	5197	0.3%
2021	26	5176	0.5%
2022	166	5161	3.2%
at 11 March 2023	61	992	6.1%

	Route 729		
	Cancelled	Scheduled	% Missed trips
2019	71	5171	1.4%
2020	15	5197	0.3%
2021	30	5171	0.6%
2022	129	5153	2.5%
at 11 March 2023	54	992	5.4%