

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Celebrating Our Whitsunday Transit Connecting the Community for 25 Years

Colin Crossley established Whitsunday Transit in 1998, little did he know that 25 years later it would still be going strong, having grown into a multi-generational family business, employing 60 staff and connecting an entire community.

Celebrating the company's quarter-century milestone with the arrival of two, state-of-the-art, specially branded buses this week, the former motor mechanic turned transport boss said this was as much a birthday gift to the region, representing another million-dollar investment in The Whitsundays.

"These are the most modern buses in Australia – they're hi-tech, market leaders that all the major capital cities are starting to adopt, and we are among the first to bring them to the regions," Mr Crossley said.

Taking the fleet to 47, these new buses are also a reflection of just how far Whitsunday Transit has come since the early days when it all began.

Already an established name in Australia's bus industry by the end of the nineties, Mr Crossley had always kept one eye on The Whitsundays, scoping out potential runs on annual family holidays from Sydney to Bowen.

Eventually the stars aligned and after selling his southern businesses he was able to purchase first Sampson's, then Daley's, and finally Butterworth's bus services, encompassing Cannonvale, Proserpine and Kelsey Creek, and combining them all into 'Whitsunday Transit'.

The decision to break with industry practice and name the company after the region instead of the owner was the first in a string of acts that would set the tone for the years to come.

As well as giving the local community a sense of ownership, focus immediately turned to modernising the initial fleet of 17 buses.

The ultra-low-floor, wheelchair accessible vehicles introduced were the most advanced on the market at the time, winning 'Bus of the Year' at Australia's premier bus and coach industry event of 1998, and earning the company the accolade of providing the highest accessibility level of any operator in Queensland.

After a timetable over-haul, Whitsunday Transit could also boast having the highest frequency passenger service outside a capital city, not least of which included a late-night run ensuring patrons could get home from popular watering holes like Mangrove Jack's.

Within three years, Mr Crossley was assisted in these endeavours by his son Darren, who relocated to The Whitsundays from Sydney in 2001, and who, 22 years later, has not only followed in his father's footsteps but begun bringing his own son, Jackson, up through the ranks.

The overall result is the Whitsunday Transit the community has come to know, rely on and love, manifesting itself in a daily, comprehensive transport service from Proserpine to Shute Harbour, as well as dedicated connections to air and rail, and 26 school runs carrying 2,000 children per day.

Maintaining this service level hasn't always been easy; although the Crossleys can proudly hang their hats on statistics such as handling over 80,000 passenger movements for the Whitsunday Coast Airport each year, and meeting every flight since 1998, there were times when it was far from profitable to do so.

"When Ansett dropped out it was costing me over \$100,000 a year to support the airport and it was the same with the rail service – if the train came in at 3am there was a bus there to meet it even if there was no-one on it – but I believe in doing things properly or not at all, and cutting costs isn't always the way to the future," Mr Crossley said.

Happily, this ethos paid dividends of a different sort, with the Queensland Government formally recognising the investments.

Following legislative change to the Transport Operations (Passenger Transport) Act, Whitsunday Transit became the only bus operator in Queensland to hold a commercial contract for passenger services in a population of less than 7,500 people, paving the way for the company to continue servicing the region's flights, rail connections, school children and local commuters to this day.

Tourism Whitsundays Chief Executive Officer, Rick Hamilton, said this was just one of many achievements over an incredible 25 years.

"Whitsunday Transit connects the community through their bus runs and their support of our tourism operators and brand, whether through providing buses as mobile billboards for the region or from being an integral part of many visitors' arrival and departure experience," Mr Hamilton said.

"We're also extremely fortunate to have a family in the driver's seat who puts the heart into our transport network, providing generous support to both the tourism industry and community whenever there is need – from acts like sponsoring New Year's Eve fireworks in years when there would have been none, to simply bringing everyone home safely from networking nights – so on behalf of us all: 'Thank You'," he said.

St Catherine's Catholic College Principal, Luke Thomson, echoed these sentiments, saying without Whitsunday Transit, the world would be a very different place for thousands of school children and families around The Whitsundays.

"In a region like ours the team at Whitsunday Transit not only removes the tyranny of distance and makes education more accessible, but they do it with care," Mr Thomson said.

"They understand what it is to be a local because they are locals themselves – they're entrenched in the community and as a result they support many community organisations including ours," he said.

“They also work flexibly where and when they have to – whenever there’s a traffic or weather event their staff go above and beyond to get our children home, bending over backwards to minimise the effects on the community.”

As for the future, Mr Crossley said he hoped there would be at least another 25 years.

“All the other bus runs we’d owned prior to Whitsunday Transit we’d built up and sold but then we got here and I said, ‘this is it’,” he said.

“You’ve got the water on one side and the mountains on the other – it’s one, long run and you can service everyone, but for me it’s also about the sunshine and the sailing and the people.

“We’re certainly not fly-by-nights and I’m proud of that as much as anything; I hope when people see these new buses driving on our roads, they can feel that same sense of pride too.”

This release was sent in partnership with Whitsunday Transit
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To view a Word Document of this release and supporting images, [click here](#).

To view The Whitsundays destination video, [click here](#).

Notes for Editors

Fast Facts

Whitsunday Transit handles:

- 26 school runs carrying 2,000 children per day
- 1 road service operated by 7 vehicles
- 47 buses across the fleet
- 2 bus depots
- 80,000 passenger movements for Whitsunday Coast Airport per year

About the Crossleys

Colin Crossley – Founder

After completing his apprenticeship with Leyland Motors (formerly British Motor Corporation), Colin became State Service Manager for the company’s bus and truck division.

He went on to establish his own bus runs in New South Wales and South East Queensland, including Sydney’s ‘Crossley Bus Lines’.

Arriving in The Whitsundays in 1997 and being granted the licence for Whitsunday Transit in 1998, Colin worked alongside many of the tourism industry’s pioneers.

He was recognised for his own endeavours as Whitsunday Regional Council’s Citizen of the Year in 2017 and with Tourism Whitsundays’ Bob Porter Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual in the same year.

Darren Crossley – General Manager

When Darren asked his father for a job in the family business after graduating school, the answer was initially “no”.

Undeterred, he not only completed an apprenticeship as a heavy vehicle mechanic but went on to make a name for himself in the bus industry independently, culminating in being selected for the committee charged with designing the bus depot for the Sydney 2000 Olympics – largest in the world at the time.

After finally persuading Colin to welcome him into the workforce, Darren was managing workshops by the age of 22, moving to The Whitsundays one year later to “start again from the bottom up, sweeping floors and driving buses until Dad wanted to step down”.

When that day came, Darren told his father: “there can’t be two bosses”.

“I hadn’t even finished the sentence before the wheels were spinning in the carpark and Dad leapt into semi-retirement,” he recalls.

Like Colin, Darren says he saw opportunity for both business and lifestyle in The Whitsundays, adding: “I’ve raised my children here and I don’t want to be anywhere else – it was a gamble at the time, but it’s paid off”.

Jackson Crossley – Heavy Vehicle Mechanic

Being brought up around bus depots, Jackson believes his first word was probably “bus”, and that he was destined to follow in his forefathers’ footsteps.

After spending many a school holiday doing Work Experience at Whitsunday Transit, Jackson has just completed his apprenticeship as a heavy vehicle mechanic at the tender age of 19.

Now in the process of also obtaining his Driver’s Authority, Jackson has clear aspirations to continue forging the family path, and hopes one day he’ll have the same conversation his dad and grandad had, only this time the wheels spinning in the carpark will be Darren’s.

About Tourism Whitsundays: Tourism Whitsundays (TW) is the organisation responsible for destination marketing and visitor attraction for the Whitsunday region. It is the lead agency recognised by Tourism and Events Queensland and the Whitsunday Regional Council to lead the promotion of the region as a tourism destination. Tourism Whitsundays markets all aspects of the region including the Great Barrier Reef, Whitsunday Islands and Coast, accommodation, boating and sailing, fishing, touring, recreational activities, adventure, dining, shopping, weddings and honeymoons, conferencing and business events.

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