



great community transport inc.

Community Solution for Community Needs

GREAT Community Transport Inc. (GCT) is a not-for-profit, charitable, community based organisation, incorporated as an association and is managed by a community board of management.

GCT's vision is "...linking community through transport" providing special care transport for eligible clients in the Blue Mountains and Penrith Local Government Areas. GCT came into being on 1st July 2004 when Mountains Community Transport and Nepean Community Transport amalgamated. Before this date both services operated independently for approximately seventeen years until it became evident that amalgamating these two services could improve service delivery without losing the local nature of the service.

As a specialist transport service GCT has a team of 26 paid, 130 unpaid workers, 21 service vehicles and operates out of two office premises. These resources place GCT in a good position to continue to provide an effective and flexible transport service for the growing number of special needs client requests.

GCT services are provided using a "small group" model, where clients travelling to the same destination, around the same time are transported, in a variety of vehicles (vans and mini-buses), many have extra steps, rails and are wheelchair accessible. Individual transport can be provided either in a service vehicle or in a volunteer's vehicle when the clients' needs are indicated as requiring it. Transport requests include taking clients shopping, to medical and hospital appointments (locally and further afield), on social outings, to centre-based meals, respite and other. Services were provided to 2,959 individual people with 56,344 passenger trips being provided in the twelve months period (2008 to 2009).

GCT's primary funded target group is the frail aged, people with disabilities and their carers, with services being developed over 23 years to meet the local clients' transport needs. GCT is primarily funded through the Home and

Community Care program (HACC) and is administered through the Dept of Ageing, Disabilities and Home Care through Transport NSW. Accountability requirements include annual budgets, audited financial statements, participation in the monitoring and review processes and carrying out the Minimum Data Set data on a quarterly basis. HACC eligible clients are asked to contribute towards their transport as per the HACC Fees Policy and services are not refused if they are unable to give a donation.

Many other people in the region are temporarily "transport disadvantaged" through frailty due to age, isolation and because of their state of health. The continuing numbers of requests GCT receives, is from the client's homes to and from hospitals (for outpatients, specialists, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy etc) appointments. Day surgery is also a large generator of transport requests with many people being unable to get to Nepean, Westmead, Royal Prince Alfred, Royal North Shore or Lithgow hospitals from the Mountains or Penrith at the times required. Many admission times are 7.00am and discharge can be as late as 7.00pm at night. Also a high proportion of these people require regular visits to health facilities, but cannot use the train or fixed route bus system and do not have access to private transport.

Recognition of the needs of these people has come in smaller State government funding grants through the Transport NSW -Community Transport Program and through NSW Health's Transport for Health program. The issue of how people who aren't eligible for HACC services but are elderly, are expected to get to their doctors' and specialists appointments is huge with no funding being made available for transport assistance.

An eligible GCT client is known to the GCT team members with their individual situation and needs being identified through the services' client assessment process. This information is collected with the client's permission and entered into the CIARR (Common Information and Referral Record) and TRIPS computer programs for statistical reasons, service provision and client's specific needs. In so many cases community transport is the first point of contact for people seeking help, and in the twelve month period July 2009 to June 2010 GCT assessed 786 new clients and reassessed 806 existing clients. For more complex cases a home visit is arranged so that access and/or equipment issues can be assessed. This formal Risk Assessment procedure is carried out by a trained team member at the client's residence and can identify more than the client's transport needs.

GCT provides a door-to-door service with drivers and if required a volunteer carer providing assistance for clients, their mobility aids and their bags. GCT services are provided in a safe, secure and understanding manner. The driving team members attend regular training in Customer Service, OH&S, Manual Handling, First Aid, Low Risk Driving, Using Wheelchair Hoists and working with Special needs clients such as Dementia, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

backgrounds etc.

GCT team members have chosen to work in a community service, with their primary motivation being to look after the people travelling with GCT. From the initial telephone call requesting transport assistance, taken by the volunteer office receptionists, the client's request is processed with each individual request being allocated to the most appropriate form of transport for that day; Volunteer carers can be rostered on to assist specific clients as well. GCT drivers don't pull up and "toot" their horn; instead they arrive at the prearranged pick-up time, park the vehicle, go to the clients' door and walk out to vehicle with them, doing the same on the return trip. This more individualised transport support allows the clients to maintain their independence longer, improve their quality of life, reduce their social isolation and reduce the burden on families, friends and carers.

Community Transport is flexible and well placed locationally to provide specialised transport assistance for those people, who are aged and/or temporarily "transport disadvantaged" and don't have access to a motor vehicle and are unable to use public transport and don't need the level of care that an ambulance would provide but need a little extra support that taxis are not able to provide.