

## Video transcript Get to the Point Podcast – Tourist Transport Operators

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### Editor's notes

The following transcript is a written record of a conversation. It is a verbatim account of what was said during the recording. When reviewing this document, please note that requests for corrections to grammar or syntax may not be honoured.

**Marcus Binet:** Welcome to 'Get to the Point', a podcast series by the NSW Point to Point Transport Commissioner. The Commissioner is the independent regulator for point to point transport in New South Wales, which includes taxi, hire vehicles and rideshare, as well as some community transport and tourist operators.

In this series, you'll hear from industry representatives and from subject matter experts, as we explore topics relevant to point to point transport and work together to ensure a safer point to point industry.

Hi, I'm your host, Marcus Binet.

Today in 'Get to the Point', we are spotlighting tourist transport operators providing point to point transport passenger services. We are recording here in beautiful Orange, so we will also have a focus on regional New South Wales. It's great to be here.

Today we will talk about how tourist transport fits under the point to point transport law in NSW, answer frequently asked questions from tourist transport operators and how tourist transport operators are an important participant in the industry. The first part of this podcast will be a conversation with a panel of experts. There is more detail on some of the topics at the end of this podcast, and of course, the point to point website is also a great reference point.

Our Welcome to Country will be conducted by a local Wiradjuri man, Jamahl 'Check' Reid.

**Jamahl Reid:** Hello everyone. Welcome today. My name is Jamahl Reid, I'm a proud Wiradjuri man. I was born on Wiradjuri Country and I've lived here my whole life. When I do a Welcome to Country, it's an acknowledgement of ancestors. It also acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders of the land, the younger generations, the children coming through, just to pay respects to all of the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

It's not only the land when you come to Aboriginal country, it's the waters, it's the mountains, it's the wildlife, it's the flora, the fauna, it's culture. When you travel across our land, whether you came here to just visit the beautiful areas of our country, please show respect. It's just the same as if I were to visit your land. If you welcome me to your house, it's the same respect. So welcome everyone. Welcome to our country. Welcome to Wiradjuri Land. Thank you.

**Marcus Binet:** Today I'm joined by Geoff Ferris, CTOA President and Group Operations Manager of Bus Lines Group. Mitch Crump, Owner/Operator of Vine Ventures, Orange NSW and Tathia Shield Wells, Principal Manager of Engagement and Education at Point to Point. Welcome.

**Geoff Ferris:** Thank you.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Thanks Marcus.

**Marcus Binet:** A good place to start is with Tathia. How would you define point to point transport?

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Marcus, in New South Wales point to point, transport is a passenger service and any vehicle of 12 seats or less (including the driver) that can take passengers from A to B for a fare, so that's the point of difference there. And across New South Wales, we have around 2,000 service providers and many tourist operators.

**Marcus Binet:** Ok, yes. Like where we are now in Orange. Now, Mitch, what kind of tourist operators or transport operators operate here, around Orange?

**Mitchell Crump:** I'd say the bulk of tourist operators in Orange focus on the wine and food scene. We've got about 60 vineyards out here. It's a booming wine scene and some lovely restaurants. Most of the tourism operators are focused in the wine industry. We've got a few other operators that have trike's, a 'Harley Davidson' that can sit three people that do, not just wine things, but tours of the mountain. There's also cultural tours as well. We've got Mount Canobolas, which just sits southwest of Orange. It's an extinct volcano rich in indigenous history, and there's lots of operators that focus on that sort of stuff.

**Marcus Binet:** So there's a lot of tours in terms of vans, small buses, like you said, the trike tours, that kind of thing.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Yeah. A lot of people don't know, that trikes actually come under point to point, so that was a really interesting point. Yeah, people miss that, yeah.

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah. It's a pretty cool vehicle when you see it getting around. So we operate a 12 seater bus, we've got a Toyota Hiace. We also use a Toyota Prado for private groups. For normally couples or threes, even though it's a seven seater. But we just have small private groups in that vehicle. Some of the other operators have similar buses to mine, some bigger, some smaller, and yeah, a few other private vehicles as well. So some smaller operators.

**Marcus Binet:** Do you ever come across people (either of you) who say, "oh no, I'm only running tours, I don't need to be authorised"?

**Geoff Ferris:** Regularly. In our operation where we've got large vehicles down to taxis regularly we see those people who don't know where they fit and don't necessarily think they're running a business. Yes, they're running a tourist service, but they only do it on the weekend or they only do it when someone books them. It's not their full-time task. So they, I think, are a little bit in no man's land of understanding what Regulations they have to comply with in, because to an outsider, there is a lot to understand at the start. And that is the issue. It's all too much at the start, and I need to think about what applies to me running my one vehicle only every second weekend, but it's the same as the person running the one vehicle or 10 vehicles every day of the week. The Regulation is still the same.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah, yeah. I think that's what it is. It's that people just don't understand or think "I don't need to do it, I'm only a small business", that kind of thing.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Geoff just touched on a good point. To be under point to point, you are a personal business who is providing a passenger service and taking bookings, and so that's when you need to be authorised. If you're in those vehicles and you're taking bookings, you come under point to point law and those bookings can be obtained, through an app, on the telephone, in person or other means and that's the important point there. So yeah, sometimes an individual, says, "I'm just taking a booking on the telephone or down at the tourist centre". But they still come under the law.

**Marcus Binet:** Yes. And a lot of them will use things like Facebook or other social media to advertise their services. Do you see that Mitch?

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah, we do. I've bumped into a young man who was out at one of the vineyards and myself and one of the other tour operators were having a chat and he walked up and said g'day, and we said, oh, what are you doing? He said, "oh, I got this job because of some website where you do a reverse auction to see who gets the cheapest labour and someone wanted a wine tour and he was getting paid to drive people around. And myself and the other operator politely told him that he would have to be registered ("authorised") to be paid to drive people around. To take bookings like that you have to be registered ("authorised") through point to point and pay all the insurances like we have to do. And that authorisation, and that's an interesting point, it ensures safety.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Because drivers have to go through specific checks, driver onboarding. That's what the regulation is, it's all about the safety of drivers, passengers and the general public.

**Mitchell Crump:** That's a big point and people just think, "oh it's just a wine tour" but they really don't know who they're getting in the car with and I doubt they check if they have a

driver's licence or it's even their car. So there's lots of checks and balances that we have to do that to make sure that, everything is in line and we run a safe business.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah. So in terms of authorisation, now, I know that you bought the business from somebody else, but what's your experience been with the authorisation process? Did you go through it or did you buy it as an already authorised business?

**Mitchell Crump:** We basically bought a bus and a website and the business changed. It was a sole operator and we set it up as a company. We kept the name, but it was basically a fresh start with a bus that was already operating and a website. The previous owner of my business was very helpful actually, he's a top bloke and I was very lucky to have him, but I didn't know anything about point to point. I thought I was buying a bus and you get registered ("authorised") with a bus, but we had the option there when we bought the business, he had two buses and so we could have had a 14 seater and we operate as a bus service, or we had the 12 seater option to run under point to point. I chose the 12 seater, I viewed point to point as a better fit for our business. And also having the licenses, not having to worry about people having a Medium-Rigid licence. That was important as well, so with the 12 seater, you can drive our bus with a car licence. But when we did that, we then went through the point to point registration process, which I found to be pretty easy. But yeah, I didn't really know what point to point was until I dove into the website and the registration, the portal and everything like that. But it was quite self-explanatory.

**Marcus Binet:** So how did you find out about it? I think

**Mitchell Crump:** Just through the previous owner. I would've had to do my own investigation, but he was so helpful and said "this is what you have to do". We chose the smaller bus, the 12 seater bus. He said "you know you have to be registered ("authorised") through point to point". Then, after a quick Google search, I realised that as a small tourism operator with a small bus, that was exactly where we had to be registered ("authorised") and have everything set up so we could operate and function in New South Wales as a tourism business.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** After you did that research, you had an advisory visit, is that right?

**Mitchell Crump:** Yes, I did.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** From our Authorised Officers?

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah. So a few months into after we were set up Jim from point to point contacted me and said, yeah, would you like to do an advisory chat? And I wasn't even sure what that was or what it meant, but I agreed and it was really helpful. I'd already had the safety stuff set up but there was a few tweaks that needed to happen. And Jim was really helpful with explaining exactly, what certain things meant and extra forms that we might have needed to include. I'm quite lucky because coming from an emergency services background, that's where I've been working for the last sort of 15 years, things like the risk matrix and things like that weren't foreign to me so lucky in that regard. So when I set that up and we identified hazards and risks that we have on our wine tours, and then setting up the controls, that came quite easy to me but knowing that you had to do all that, it was really handy to have the advisory chat with Jim.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah. So you just mentioned the risk management and the risk matrix, which is part of the Safety Management System. Geoff, you could probably give us a good summary of a Safety Management System because you've worked with them in all parts of your business pretty much.

**Geoff Ferris:** Yep. Correct Marcus, the Safety Management System. My background is actually in passenger buses where we have dealt with passengers around vehicles and traffic and safety all our life. Point to point Commission came on board and set out the Regulation for vehicles 12 seats and under, which captured our taxis and our shuttle buses under that. The Safety Management System is the backbone of how we run our business. We've got to comply with the Regulation and to have it in one place, to have a Safety Management System that we can go through and check that we are meeting all the requirements in a logical sequence where we know we've got to update this once every time we go out, once a month, once a year with insurances or whatever it is. It is a plan to run your business off. Not a plan about how you're going to make money, it's a plan about how you're going to meet the requirements of the industry and the point to point industry, and it's the Bible we run our business off.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah, so you need to tell us a little bit about your business.

**Geoff Ferris:** We are quite a large taxi operator in rural and regional New South Wales and I'm the president of the Country Taxi Operators Association. So I'm dealing with a lot of those taxi operators across rural New South Wales. And so they're very much a one person operation. Husband and wife/one person running that business who needs to understand their requirement to the Regulation, and that's what we as an industry association have tried to do by providing a template for them to run their business off. Our other business, we run an on-demand service in rural New South Wales. So those vehicles are also under the point to point Regulation. We have to do exactly the same for that. And then our bigger part of our business is to run public passenger buses, be it predominantly school buses, route service buses, and some tourism as well.

**Marcus Binet:** And you were saying before, how many children is that each day?

**Geoff Ferris:** We move about 50,000 children every morning and 50,000 children every afternoon. So safety is the number one priority to everything we do and we talk about risk matrix. The biggest risk matrix. You've got passengers interacting with traffic. Now, whether that's at one of Mitch's wineries where he has got six people or eight people on board, he's still got people walking around and in fact, those tourism instances is sometimes harder than being a school where there's a delineated bus stop where someone gets on or off or, I'm dropping passengers at the museum in town, there's usually a bus stop for us to do that. At someone's winery where there's probably no curb and guttering, and there's probably cars back next to it, sometimes that risk matrix is bigger than someone dropping at a recognised tourist attraction. And they're the issues that are going to come and if you're not prepared and not understanding the risk, your drivers are going to have to understand, "I need to plan this and make sure I don't let the people off into the traffic flow". I don't let the people off behind a parked car who someone gets into and doesn't realise there's people there. That's why the risk matrix is so important and people get scared of the risk matrix, "what's this going to be"? It's a lot of common sense about what you would expect to do if you were getting set down there or picked up there or whatever you're doing and, don't be put off by the term that some big involved matrix. It's a simple thing to recognise the risk, identify them and work out how you will live with them.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** That's what a Safety Management System is, in essence, it's that identification, recording, and management of risk and all about that safety.

**Geoff Ferris:** We all deal with risk.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Yeah.

**Geoff Ferris:** You can't say, "well I can't do it, it's risk". We've got risk in everything we do. As soon as you bring passengers on (and Mitch is dealing sometimes with passengers who have had alcohol and so have we) particularly for winery tours, things like that, it's another risk that you have to identify. You're not barring it because that's the whole idea of not letting them drive their car, but you're dealing with it as another risk that has to be taken into consideration and dealt with.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** So every business has different risks really. And Safety Management Systems will look different, I suppose Mitch, your Safety Management System will look quite different from Geoff's.

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah, absolutely. As we obviously tick every box, but being a small operator with one bus that, we've got two vehicles on the road, maximum not moving 50,000 kids each morning, don't know how Geoff does that. I struggle with two kids every morning... we make sure everything's ticked. Geoff and I had a chat before and he said he's got an encyclopedia, we've got a folder that we keep on our bus with our Safety Management System. It's nothing special, we just call it 'The Folder', but it has all the documents that we need, that our drivers need when they're on the road to deal with incidents as well as emergency contact details, things like that.

**Geoff Ferris:** We've got an electronic folder. The bigger you get, eventually need to go to computerisation, but having it computerised doesn't make it any safer. You've got to do the things on the ground and record what has to be recorded by Regulation and for your own management. But the size is just relative to how you keep the records.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah. Yeah. And it's interesting that you are coming from it, Geoff, from a large company where the Safety Management System is part and parcel of everything you do and you wouldn't run your business without it. So when you look at point to point say, "well yeah, we have to have a Safety Management System", from your perspective, it's like, well that makes perfect sense we've always had one. Whereas for someone who's coming in it from the other end, they would see it as "oh, this is a burden" and all of that kind of stuff and yet the whole purpose of it is, it makes your business safer, and hence the name.

**Geoff Ferris:** Very much Marcus. The other thing I'd say to any new entrant is the first thing, and I see a lot of new entrants into the transport industry, be it point to point, or tourism services, "I'm going to avoid that safety stuff, I know I'm not going to do anything dangerous". But in fact, once you embrace it and you meet the requirement, it is a load off your mind to know you are doing it right. And it's not that hard once you set it up to maintain it.



**Marcus Binet:** Yes, that's right. And now Mitch, you have experience as a Firey (Firefighter), does that give you a different perspective on a Safety Management System like this, do you think?

**Mitchell Crump:** I suppose just, being used to doing, what we call 'Dynamic Risk Assessment'. If you need to do something in a hurry, if there's a burning building, you don't sit down and jot down what your hazards are and how you might control them, you do that on the run, but it's understanding that there is going to be hazards, controls that you can put in place. On my other side of work, often it's PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and things like that. But within the wine tours, we sit down and think, what are we going to get? And as Geoff mentioned, a winery is different to pulling up at a bus stop. So you got to factor in, is it harvest, is there tractors, snakes, things like this. You're out on a rural property, you've got people that are affected by alcohol that might have been at a wedding or something like that, that are staggering around looking for where the bathrooms are, things like that. So you need to factor those in. The background that I have I suppose, made it easier to understand what the risks are and it isn't difficult when you sit down and think about what you do each day and what might go wrong without being silly, they kind of pop up and they are obvious when you sit down and have a bit of a think about what the risks are.

**Marcus Binet:** And the other interesting thing is what you do with your drivers. They're all RSA Responsible Service of Alcohol accredited?

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah. That's our company policy that our drivers have their RSA. It's not mandatory for doing wine tours or anything like that but it just means that they've got a bit of an idea of what someone looks like if they're intoxicated, that's part of the training with your RSA, recognising that and how to deal with it. The way we structure our tours, very careful about who we book. We don't do hen's parties, bucks parties. We've got a good working relationship with our cellar-doors in Orange, which is very important, and our restaurants. So we try to bring good groups around and we space out our day so we are not just smashing wine and moving on to the next one and seeing how many we can do in a day. We space it out. So full day is only four stops with a lunch stop in between, we spread it out and we might throw trip up Mount Canobolas or a trip around Lake Canobolas, so a bit of a touristy thing in as well. We have bottled water on our bus as well, that's another control that we brought in. And we also stash some 'Emergency Ration Pretzels' up the back of the bus, which are pretty popular later in the day normally. So we keep those things on the bus and keep an eye on what's going on as well. We've never had an issue so far, touch wood, but people throughout the day, they're there to taste wine, learn a little bit about Orange, learn a little bit about wine, and have a fun day.

**Marcus Binet:** And it's interesting that you've got things that, like you said, you don't have to have the RSA, it's not mandatory, you just thought this is a good way that we can mitigate risks and that sort of thing.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** So you've identified risk and then your manage it by putting in certain controls specific for your business, which is what the Safety Management System is. Yeah, fantastic.

**Marcus Binet:** Another question, part of that Safety Management System is the vehicle maintenance and that side of things. How do you manage that in a business the size of yours, Geoff?

**Geoff Ferris:** We have to provide as part of our authorisation or accreditation in the bus industry we have to have a service plan for every type of vehicle we have, and it must at least meet, if not exceed the manufacturer's specification. So if we are buying a Toyota vehicle, we've got to make sure that our service schedule meets the Toyota minimum; and then we might do things over top of that because it's a public passenger vehicle rather than a Toyota van, it's a public passenger vehicle, likewise, with a bus. We guide ourselves off our experience but off the manufacturer's recommendation. We've always worked on a preventative maintenance system. We can't afford to have vehicles off the road in our peak time because of breakdown. So we do preventative maintenance, which is what the aim of a good maintenance system is that you control when you do your maintenance, not when the vehicle lets you down.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** We have an Industry Contact Centre (the ICC), always acronyms and we get a lot of calls there about whether you'd come under the point to point Transport law or BOAS is the acronym there. Actually, Geoff, you could answer that. What's the difference?

**Geoff Ferris:** The bus operator accreditation system is a system where each one of our managers, someone in each of our depot operations has to go and do a course and then pass an exam to say they're competent to implement bus safety. It's part of the Safety Management System, if you like, but proving somebody understands it and knows how to implement it into the operation.

**Marcus Binet:** And that's for vehicles over 12 seats...

**Tathia Shield Wells:** 13 seats or more.

**Geoff Ferris:** 13 seats or more, yeah.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Yeah. So that's the difference, I think who you become regulated under is dependent on your business model and your vehicle size.

**Marcus Binet:** Excellent. Good. I just wanted to clarify that one. So the other question I have is around the DVD (Driver Vehicle Dashboard), which is a tool that you can use for managing drivers. It's not mandatory. Do you use it, Geoff?

**Geoff Ferris:** We do. Like you said it's a tool and any tool that's making our day-to-day operation easier is good for us and the bigger you become, you need to make sure your drivers are still authorised to operate. We have systems in place so our vehicles don't lose registration or go out of registration but it can happen. And if I've only got a few vehicles, a lot of our operators have got other industries that they are in, it's not hard to miss that the registration was due, especially with online registration now. So it's a tool that makes managing your driver, DVD (Driver Vehicle Dashboard), managing your drivers and managing your vehicle records. It's a check because that's what you as the point to point Commission see, that vehicle's out of registration at midnight tonight. I've got to make sure that it's not out of registration that driver hasn't renewed their medical or hasn't renewed something to do with their Driver ID, I've got to make sure it is compliant. So it's another safety check on our systems and being able to go in to see the record, make sure there's no



doubt that you give us a ring tomorrow and say, why is this driver not got an ID anymore? It's another tool to help Mitch and myself, whatever size operator you are, to make sure we are compliant with the Regulation.

**Marcus Binet:** And Mitch, you use the DVD?

**Mitchell Crump:** Yeah, I do. Yeah. I suppose a little bit different to Geoff who's grown up in the industry. Being new, just getting my head around the terminology that you read on there. Pressing a button to "Run a Driver", I didn't really understand what that meant. But after a few goes, it's a really easy place to just double check with a few clicks of the mouse that your drivers, all their licences and everything's up to date and the vehicles are good to go for that day. I get on there regularly and just a couple of clicks, you get the green lights and then it's peace of mind then to know that everything's in order as far as those things go to make sure that the vehicles and the drivers' accredited and good to go for each tour.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** I think Mitch just touched on a good point there as well. Again, dependent on your business, is how you'll use the DVD in terms of how often you would make those checks. Some businesses have them regularly, daily, weekly. Some will go through on a monthly basis. A lot of it is depending on your business. But it is really good to use that Driver Vehicle Dashboard.

**Marcus Binet:** It's been great having you. First Mitch, do you have any closing comments you'd like to make? Observations, thoughts?

**Mitchell Crump:** I've found that the point to point system, being a new operator, so I don't know anything else but the system, the dashboard and things like that it's all fairly simple. Once you go into it, and as Geoff said, I think it's a daunting thing to worry about audits and checks and balances. But once you just do it and do it right, and there's people that you can ring and ask, there's people that you can chat to via Zoom and things like that and there's information on the website, so if you do have any questions, it's an easy place to go and find an answer. Geoff really touched on it. I suppose not being scared, jumping in having a read. You can find out a lot yourself and make sure that everything's in order because, not having things right can lead to all sorts of things. It's very important for your safety, your passenger safety, to have everything in order and the P2P website and the dashboard, I find it pretty simple to make sure that we're all good to go.

**Marcus Binet:** That's good, Geoff?

**Geoff Ferris:** Following on from what Mitch said, the biggest thing I would say is don't be scared of it. It's daunting when you come in first time, acronyms, all that sort of thing. What have I got to do, how do I make sure this happens? Follow the procedures. There is a very good call centre that point to point operate. Call the 13 number, talk to someone, don't be in any doubt. Just remember there's over 2,000 authorised service providers. They've done it, and they are no smarter than you. Seriously, someone else has done it the same as you have. Don't be scared by it. Yes, you'll be audited, if you've got your records in place it's quite an acceptable thing. It's not the policeman coming around looking to fine you so don't be daunted by it and once again, get the right information and you can comply and live with it quite easily. In the bus business, we self-audit every year 13 times.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Yeah.

**Geoff Ferris:** And do external audit every two years. Auditing is just part of our life, and the point to point one was the smallest one we do. Auditing always keeps on your toes, but audit's just part of life.

**Marcus Binet:** Yeah.

**Geoff Ferris:** You're going to be scared and anxious about this, the more involved you get, the more you understand it's not meant there to catch you out.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** It's all about safety.

**Geoff Ferris:** It's there to make sure you meet the standard and once you embrace meeting the standard.. audits don't worry us.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Marcus Binet:** Excellent.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** It's good.

**Marcus Binet:** Good. Thank you everyone. It's been great having you and it's been great being in Orange. Thanks again.

**Tathia Shield Wells:** Thank you.

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