

On the Buses with Robyn

Liz Janney interviews bus driver extraordinaire
Robyn Seidel



For years I have seen Robyn driving the bus around town and it was only recently I had the chance to have a chat with her. She was just about to celebrate 14 years with the Town Bus Service and it was such a joy to meet someone who loved her job.

'I moved to Broome in 2002. I floated my horse up from Tom Price and rode on the beach morning and night - and that was when I fell in love with Broome. I drove back to Tom Price, quit both my jobs (bus driver and postal contractor) - I just needed a sea change. For the first few months I enjoyed Broome - did a bit of bus driving for Abdul Casley the camel man at the time as he allowed me to have my horses at his place and then thought it was time to look for a job. I went to Centrelink to see if there were any jobs, they said do you have a resume and I said no (I had never needed one). Anyway Centrelink rang and said Town Bus Service is looking for a bus driver. I went for the job and it was between me and another guy and Scott and Melissa went with me. Went I rocked up for the interview I saw a car with WK on the numberplate, I said where's that. Scott said Wikepin, well I said I used to live in Wikepin - I used to caretake the Banfield's 7,500 acres, he said he married the younger daughter Melissa. Amazing connection and we have just been hanging out ever since. When I started, there was 2 buses and 2 drivers that was it. Now there is about 10 buses, two coaches, school buses and during the tourist season about 9 - 10 drivers.

When I started the job I never thought 14 years later I would still be driving the buses. I was on my way to Darwin, I had always wanted to go to Darwin as my best friend lived there - so I did not make it to Darwin - though of course have visited a couple of times now.

I am now 53, no children, no husband - keeps me young and happy. I've had some nice boyfriends over the years but still looking for the right one! My passion is my horses and dog and they do come first, then me, then fishing - so not much room for that someone special.

Yes we do get a lot of funny incidents on the buses. One time we had Harold from Home and Away on the bus with his wife. Once he got off the bus I said to everyone - and do you know who that was "Yes that's Harold" they shouted.. We have had quite a few celebrities but I just treat them like any other passenger. The funniest thing I have seen in Broome is one day driving up the hill to the Mangrove and there on the side of the road was the hugest pig I had ever seen, and people were patting her - the story goes that she had come from Fitzroy Crossing and the sow was staying with a family at Kennedy Hill. Someone must have rung the police, we heard they came and locked her up for the night for her own safety. Also the singing bus was a day to remember. I had a couple of girls get on at Town Beach and they were singing Australian songs -

by the time we got to Cable Beach we had a full singing bus.

I have my regular passengers than come every year in the dry.. There is a lady that is 103 and her daughter. They have been coming since I started driving the buses. She came to Broome on the Stateships when she was a little girl, her father was a captain on one of the stateships - so she was coming to Broome from around the 1920's. When the other regulars arrive you will see them at the bus stop waving and they get on the bus and say you are still here and give me a kiss, the next person after them says 'do I have to kiss you too'. I have so much fun with the people.

I also did Clerk of the Course on Saturdays at the races for 6 years and then my Appaloosa decided he had had enough and would sulk in the paddock, so I said that is enough time to retire him.. In early 2016 I took my horses (Milo & Copper Sun) and dog (Bruce) to Adelaide for 3 months as I needed to be near my 94yr old Mum. I bought a big truck - took me 11 days to drive to Adelaide, stayed with a friend and the horses had their own paddock. It was a great time hanging out with Mum.

My day starts at about 5am. I make sure my horses are fed before I go to work, then I walk the dog 2kms and then get on my bike and go for a ride. I live at the bus premises, so that is handy - they can always find me! I do the school bus in the morning till 8 and then drive the town bus from around 8.30 till 1.45 and then onto the school bus for the afternoon. That's the AM shift.

On my days off I love going fishing. I have just a little 12ft 15 hp dinghy. Usually just go in the bay and sometimes crabbing. Always take someone with me, handy to hold the boat and pull up the anchor.

How long will I be on the buses. I don't know. I came to Broome with a horse, two ducks, two dogs and a bird, today I have two horses and one dog Bruce - life is good. Driving the buses you need a great sense of humour and loads of patience. I met some old ladies the other day who wanted to take me back with them to Wollongong!!!!

I get lots of thank you letters from my customers. This is a poem that Alan McKenzie who is a regular visitor to Broome wrote!

Well she's magic, this lass,
Who drives Broome's town Bus
All the tourists, en masse,
Adore her lack of fuss
When I hear her voice
And her friendly chit chat,
I know I made the right choice
Broome's where its all at!
Yes, I would run a mile
To hear her say "you're back"
And see her welcoming smile
Then sit and have a good yack.