

Have bus, will travel

Life has been made a little easier for Toowoomba mother of 14, Saskia Smith, since she took receipt of the exceptional Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 'bus' – leased from QFleet by the Department of Disability Services.

Fleet consultant Patrick Smith said QFleet Risk and Logistics, along with Mercedes-Benz and Bris-Vans, customised the van to meet the family's needs.

"One of Saskia's children is confined to a wheelchair so the van was transformed into a twelve seater bus with a wheelchair lifter and restraints that exceed current safety requirements," Patrick said.

"For added safety the bus has been fitted with individual seating including lap/sash seat belts - a QFleet safety requirement."

The vehicle's roof and walls have also been fully insulated with transport grade foam - a first for any twelve seater bus - including factory vehicles.

Saskia, 2003 Queensland Mother of the Year, who cares for 14 children aged between 7 and 17, said the modified vehicle had made an enormous difference both to her and her family.

"My previous van didn't have a hoist so it made it really difficult for me to lift the wheelchair on my own," Saskia said.

"This saves my back, I don't need any help to lift my daughter and it means she is never excluded from anything we do."

Saskia said the mileage recorded on the Sprinter since she received it in mid June proves just how much of a people-mover it is.

"This vehicle has already done more than 4000 kilometres, so it is definitely a well driven car," she said.

"It's primarily used by myself to cart kids around from one place to another – school, football, softball, volleyball, gymnastics, you name it.

"The bus knows its way to the Royal Brisbane Hospital and back as we have made that trip many times," Saskia said.

The bus is also more comfortable than her previous vehicle with much more leg and head room for passengers.

QFleet's Patrick Smith said the vehicle was also fitted with transport grade flooring, the same as Brisbane City Council buses, with a ten year non-slip warranty.

"With all of these features, the bus may well have a lease life of more than five years, which is what the current contract allows," Patrick said.

QFleet is in the process of creating another nine similar buses for the Department of Disability Services, Department of Health and Department of Child Safety.

Clients with a need for such a vehicle should contact their fleet consultant directly or via QFleet reception on 3224 4292.



The customised Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 'bus'.

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