

# Tourist town bus service going nowhere

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**Toughing it out:** Regular Mission Beach bus user Ailsa Sedgwick, 79, says losing the bus service would hit the community hard.

Picture: JULIE LIGHTFOOT

A FAR Northern tourist town spread across 30km of coastline is at risk of losing its public bus service:

Worried elderly residents at Mission Beach, south of Cairns, yesterday said they relied on the service to get them to the medical centre, post office and supermarket – and tourists and teenagers also needed it.

Bus owner John North has said the business is not viable.

Mr North, who took over the service six months ago to keep it

running, said there were simply not enough “bums on seats” to keep operating.

“People use it, and need it, every day, but not enough people,” he said. “Without support from businesses or government we can’t go on.”

The previous owner sold up after similar difficulties.

Residents’ fears led to a meeting at Mission Beach last week of stakeholders, council representatives and a government grants adviser.

Cassowary Coast councillor Jennifer Downs said private discussions were under way with a potential new operator and she was trying to get a grant for a study into the need for a public bus service in the town.

“The community wants to save its bus – we’ve had several elderly people tell us they would have to leave town if it goes,” Ms Downs said.

“We have one library chemist and medical centre and people need to travel a long way north

and south to get to them.”

Regular passenger Ailsa Sedgwick, 79, said rumours the bus service might be stopping were a major concern not just to herself but to teenagers and the tourism industry, with backpackers also taking trips to the shops and walking tracks.

“I sold my car in 2002 and I rely on it (the bus),” Ms Sedgwick said.

Calypso Coaches’ Ray Boshich confirmed yesterday he was in negotiations over a new public bus service for beach residents.