



Volgren will build the bodies for hundreds of hybrid and electric buses on Melbourne's roads.

Electric-bus jobs boost

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Dandenong bus-body builder Volgren will create 50 jobs in helping supply fleets of electric and hybrid buses on Melbourne's roads.

It follows operator Kinetic being awarded Melbourne's franchise public-transport bus fleet by the State Government.

Kinetic will replace 341 of the existing 537-strong diesel fleet with zero or low emission vehicles over the next 10 years.

Production on the Volgren-built fleet begins in January. Five battery electric buses (BEBs) are expected to be ready by June and 36 by mid-2025.

More than 100 Volgren-bodied hybrid buses will also be built.

Volgren uses about 100 Australian suppliers for its electric buses, with nearly 90 per cent local production for the body build.

About 20 of the 50 new jobs will be on board by Christmas.

Volgren, which has been based in the South East for four decades, will also offer 16 traineeships during the contract, chief executive Thiago Deiro said.

"Every manufacturer strives to plan and structure their business based on long-term demand.

"The Metropolitan Bus Franchise helps us to do exactly that.

"Our expectation is that our direct labour resources will increase by 45 to 50 percent, or by around 50 direct new jobs.

"Volgren keeps investing in jobs and in the local supply chain because we want local manufacturing to succeed but we know government backing is essential for that to continue."

During a two-decade partnership, Volgren has contributed more than 30 buses to Kinetic's SkyBus and Surfside fleets.

Mr Deiro said Volgren was well placed to deliver high volumes of "tried and tested" BEBs.

"All (Volgren) factories are geared-up to start building BEBs at the scale required to meet the needs Australia's shift to zero-emission technology."

Australian manufacturing was offering the "highest quality levels I've seen in the bus industry", he said.

Public Transport Minister Ben Carroll said the franchise would accelerate the State's plans for all new public transport buses to be zero emissions from 2025.

"We are jump starting our push for a zero-emissions bus fleet in Victoria to benefit the environment and help build our engineering, design and manufacturing expertise in these emerging technologies.

"It will be great to see the electric buses start rolling off Volgren's production line early next year, kickstarting a program to replace diesel buses with zero and low emission vehicles."

Dandenong MP Gabrielle Williams said it was creating "employment opportunities for our community".