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From jet planes to buses

Most bus passengers remain blissfully unaware of their bus drivers' previous occupation but Surfside is happy to let passengers know they may find themselves being driven around by a former fighter jet technician, drive-in theatre manager or bank officer.

Surfside spokesperson Megan Harkin said their drivers come from many varied backgrounds before joining the company.

"There is an impressive array of skills and talent that brought them to be driving our buses but the common denominators Surfside picks up on is professionalism and enjoyment of dealing with people," she said.

Driver Stephen Hopkins trained as an engine and airframe technician in the RAAF, including working on F111s, before working in airline roles in New York and Kenya until he returned to the Gold Coast in 2000.

"I joined Surfside in 2009 and like many drivers I enjoy the job for the lifestyle it offers.

"After all our travels around the world I enjoy being home with the family, and working for Surfside means I still get to meet interesting people from all over the world who are visiting the Gold Coast," he said.

The Gold Coast lifestyle and enjoyment of customer interaction are reoccurring responses when speaking to Surfside drivers.

Bernie Brooks has enjoyed a variety of jobs including drive-in theatre manager, motel and restaurant manager and a real estate agent. All these jobs had a strong customer focus, but it was encounters with coach drivers during a two year stint travelling around Australia with his wife that provided the impetus for Bernie to become a bus driver.

"The drivers appeared to enjoy their work and the idea of bus driving seemed to combine the holiday environment of the Gold Coast and the interaction with people.

"I particularly enjoy the excitement of tourists when they visit our theme parks," he said.

The jump from banking to bus driving may seem unusual but Kathleen Penman says it is one of the best things she has ever done.

"The sales pressure in banking did not sit well with my outlook on life, but when my partner suggested driving a bus I thought I couldn't possibly do that.

"However, I obtained my licence and now I work autonomously, yet I'm still able to utilise my customer service skills and enjoy plenty of people contact," she said.

When Andrew Antoniou returned to Australia after 34 years working in the United States, he had his bus drivers licence in hand, a life time of experience, and knew he wanted to drive professionally.



“All the various companies and positions I’ve held over the years gave me the desire to drive as a transportation specialist (bus driver),” said Andrew.

“I am enjoying my position with Surfside as bus driving means I interact with the public and the company has a positive approach to the needs and requirements of the community.”

Anyone interested in a career with Surfside can visit their website at www.tagroup.net.au

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