

The Legend that is the Flxible Clipper



The Ansair Flxible Clipper is widely recognised and remembered as a touring coach of class. Built in Melbourne by Ansair Pty Ltd, under licence from the Flxible Company USA, they were used Australia wide as touring and express coaches during the 1950s, 60s and 70s by Ansett Roadways, Pioneer Tours and several other smaller operators including Cooks Sedans in Hobart Benders Busways and Sullivans Sedans. The Clipper is now an Australian legend and much sought after by collectors.

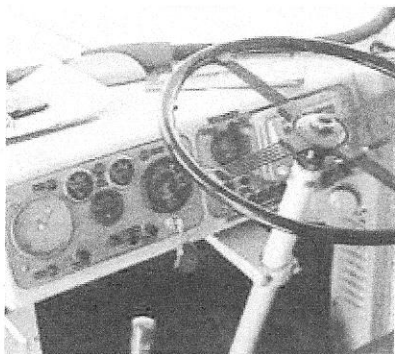
Its American designed sleek appearance featured an aerodynamic front, spherical rear ends and roof mounted airscoops meant the Clipper was at the forefront of modern design and driver comfort in their day. Australia had not seen anything like them before and they took the passenger transport industry by storm. Pioneer Tours, part of the Reg Ansett organisation, imported their first Flxible Clipper from Ohio in 1948. It had a straight eight cylinder Buick engine and had to be converted to right hand drive by Ansair. It began tour operations in January 1949.

Following this Ansair built another 131 Flxibles, under license from the USA, between 1951 and 1960. Of these, 115 Ansair Flxible Clippers went to Ansett owned companies, six went to Newmans of New Zealand and the last few to Hobart and Geelong. Most of the coaches built in Australia were 33 feet long, had seating for 29 or 33 passengers, full air brakes, large luggage racks, rear luggage compartment, sliding windows and public address systems.

The chassis and body were all steel with an aluminium roof, jig built in one unit, and incorporated under frames and side pillars to window level. They were certainly state of the art for the day and most drivers remember the Clipper, with its low centre of gravity, as one of the best handling coaches in Australia. The Flxibles had rear mounted engines and were initially powered by the Leyland 7.4 litre or the Cummins JBS600. Later Duetz air-cooled 614 and 714s dominated the fleet although later repowers included Detroit 4/71s.

The Flxibles remained King of the Road for the next decade or so being used on both Express and tour work with equal success. They were largely replaced by the first GMC PD4106s and were eventually sold off as they were retired from the Ansett fleet, although the Hamilton (Vic) depot operated some until the mid 1970s.

Sadly most of these buses were left to decay or were cut up for scrap. Fortunately a few have remained and have been restored either to original condition or turned into motorhomes by members of the well known Flxible Clipper Club of Australia.



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