Community transport joins eco-friendly hybrid revolution

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NORTHERN Rivers Community Transport manager Colleen Thomas believes the company's new hybrid car is a step in the right direction.

The Civic Hybrid is sponsored by Honda Ireland and the Southern Cross Credit Union. The car combines a 1.3 litre petrol engine with an electric motor, using about half the fuel of a regular car.

The NRCT yesterday unveiled the environmentally-friendly four cylinder vehicle at the East Lismore Bowling Club as part of its 20-year anniversary celebrations.

The event celebrated the dedication of hundreds of volunteer drivers to thousands of clients in the Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond Valley shires.

Ms Thomas has been with the organisation for 10 years and said it had grown enormously since it was established.

"Much of the fleet resides at our outlying areas and in nearby towns, and has been able to resource isolated Aboriginal communities," she said.

Ms Thomas said the number of vehicles had increased from one car and two buses to 19 vehicles.

"With increasing demand we're looking at reducing our environmental footprint and trying to find innovative partnerships with existing transport providers," she said.

The Honda Hybrid is able to run on electric power alone when travelling less than 40km/h, and the motor draws on supplementary power only when accelerating.

Energy is generated and the battery recharged when the car is cruising, braking or decelerating.

Vehicle sponsor Neil Ireland said technology was improving and hybrid cars were becoming cheaper to produce.

"Honda has had hybrid cars for 10 years now, but it's just starting to take up an increasing part of business," he said.

"They're selling them quicker than they can build them."

NEW DELIVERY: Volunteer drivers at the unveiling of the Northern Rivers Community Transport hybrid vehicle at East Lismore Bowling Club yesterday.
Picture: BRENDEN ALLEN