Understanding the impacts of commuting: Research report for stakeholders

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Introduction

It is no secret that commuting within many Australian cities is the source of significant stress. Yet, while the stress of journeying to and from work is a part of everyday life in many Australian cities, its effects have not been properly understood.

This project is the first of its kind to explore how commuting stress emerges, plays out through home and work life, and impacts on the longer term plans of city workers and their families.

There are important economic productivity and public health reasons for understanding how commutes are impacting on people's lives. However, improving the wellbeing of city workers and their families is an important objective in itself.

This project was designed to develop a richer understanding of:

- how commutes are changing people
- how commutes are impacting on people's work and home lives
- how commutes are impacting on people's longer term plans
- how the negative impacts of commuting are responded to by a range of diverse stakeholders.

Research was conducted with commuters and stakeholders in Sydney, Australia.

It aims to be useful for those involved in making cities better for their inhabitants.

The findings of this project increase our understanding of how life in our cities is undergoing change. They will be used to engage key industry stakeholders, policymakers and politicians on current issues of urban transportation.

Key findings

1. Our commutes are changing who we are

Commuting to and from work creates subtle but significant transformations in people over time: transformations to the way people act towards others; what they desire from their work and home life; their tolerances levels and what they can cope with; and their habits of thinking and feeling. Previous research has emphasised the relative stability of people's commutes, usually understood from the perspective of the mode of transport that they use. However, this overlooks the significant changes that commuting creates for people that can have powerful effects over time. These can sometimes build to 'tipping points' where people change their route or mode of travel, or even move house. Although they cannot necessarily be 'seen' or 'measured', these subtle transformations are important because they affect how stress is interpreted and managed by people.

2. Our commutes are changing our relationship to cities

Commuting changes people's relationship with the city in powerful ways. Over time, commuting is changing the way people feel about their city and their connections to communities. There are some practical implications here in terms of how the commute is changing how and where people access services, and do everyday activities such as shopping. It can also change how and where people want to spend their leisure time. For instance, for many, travelling for long durations during the week makes the very idea of travelling any distance at weekends unappealing. In many cases, commuting is changing people's aspirations in terms of where they want to live and work.

3. Our commutes are intimately connected to the rest of our everyday lives

The true significance of the commute can only be understood in the context of how it relates to the other activities that make up people's everyday lives. Many policy approaches have treated the commute as a freestanding and relatively self-contained activity. But commuter journeys are a time where social life with family and friends, learning, thinking, planning and working all take place. Work and home life seep into the commute in many ways. Similarly, the commute can also seep into work and home life. Experiences during the journey can change what people are capable of doing at work and home.

4. Our commuting stress is being caused by diverse factors

The stress that people experience as a result of commuting is felt in different ways. Sometimes, the experience of stress is created when the commute isn't going to plan, by frustrating encounters that happen during the journeys themselves, or even by the construction of new transport infrastructures. At other times, the experience of stress is more about work and home life pressures that are felt particularly acutely during the journey, because this is often a time where people have the space to reflect on their lives. Stress can also be an experience of the 'opportunity costs', when people's 'commuting lives' are preventing them from undertaking things that they might rather be doing. And it would appear that stress is experienced differently by novice and skilled commuters.

5. There are multiple ways of alleviating commuting stress

Traditional infrastructural solutions to commuting problems, such as road building and increasing public transport provision, are only a part of the answer. Many people and organisations have responsibility for alleviating commuting stress, including transport providers, advocacy groups, workplaces, households, families and friends. At the same time, commuters themselves show considerable initiative in response to their commuting stresses. People are experimenting with new ways of working, new ways of relating to their futures, new ways of finding relief, and new ways of relating. These knowledges are useful for a range of stakeholders who play a role in improving city life. The findings of this project will be used to engage key industry stakeholders, policymakers and politicians on current issues of urban transportation.

Fieldwork

A set of research methods was developed that could capture the richness and diversity of commuting to understand how the journey to and from work shapes what it is to be a Sydneysider today.

Qualitative methods were chosen because they are well suited to capturing people's desires, expectations, aspirations, sensitivities and tolerances – put simply, those less tangible things that make us who we are and attach us to the places and other lives that shape us.

Commuter interviews

During 2013 in-depth interviews were conducted with 53 commuters for whom commuting significantly impacts on their life. Participants were recruited through advertisements placed in the Sydney Morning Herald and the free mX commuter newspaper calling for stressed commuters. Over 100 responses were received. Quota sampling of these responses ensured the participant group included a diversity of gender, ethnicity, usual mode of transport, family situation, and location of work and home. These interviews focused on capturing the impacts of commuting on people's lives and how people were changing over time.

Stakeholder interviews

During 2014 in-depth interviews were conducted with 26 key stakeholders involved in Sydney's commuting spaces in a professional capacity. These included journalists, transport advocates, policymakers, politicians, radio presenters, traffic reporters, transport staff, human resources staff, advertising executives, writers and historians. These participants were actively recruited to encompass a wide range of professional perspectives on commuting in the city. The interviews examined how the expertise of these people can improve our understanding of the impacts of commuting stress in Sydney.

Participant observation

In addition to interviews, participant observation was undertaken with commuters in and around Sydney. This involved two intensive 'week in the life' experiments. The first of these, in 2012, was a commute from Castle Hill in Sydney's north-west to the central business district by different modes of transport. This was selected because the north-west is currently one of the most transport-poor areas of the city. The second, in 2013, was a 'long distance' commute from Wollongong to Sydney by train. This was selected because it is one of Australia's largest long distance commuter routes. Photographic fieldwork of a major transport hub in Sydney was conducted in 2013. This fieldwork provided first-hand experience of some of the key locations and spaces that participants talked about during the commuter interviews.

1. Changing dispositions

Key messages

Commuting is a charged social space that can affect people's wellbeing in positive and negative ways.

Over time, a build-up of little events can lead to significant 'tipping points' for people.

Negative events can give transport companies and commuters an opportunity to positively respond.

As commuters walk along pavements, ride in train carriages, sit in cars, cycle along bike paths and stand on buses, they encounter many other people. For many city workers, it is during their journey to and from work that they experience the public life of the city up close and personal.

While it might not feel like it, this is actually a powerful space between home and work that actively shapes people's attitudes and opinions about the world, changing their dispositions in the process. People's preconceptions can be challenged, and their likes and dislikes altered. Encounters with other people can be joyful or they can be saddening.

Whatever the effect, the social life of the commute can be a source of fascination and frustration, often in equal measure.

Commuting can be a positive social experience

Commuting is a complex social setting. Although people may not be talking to each other, they are communicating through a host of bodily expressions. A glance, gentle nod, smile, frown or shrug all carry meanings that connect people in different ways. Public transport can be an especially valuable space for being with other people. It can also help to prevent social isolation. Many participants described the pleasures of moving with the same people every day, looking

out for them, and being interested in what they are doing. Furthermore, technological advancement reflected in the near ubiquitous use of mobile phones on public transport means that this can be an important time for people to socialise with friends and family.

Unpleasant encounters negatively impact on people's wellbeing

The commute can also be a space of unpleasant encounters. Some people described how these encounters can often be subtle things, such as a glance or a stare. Other people described their experience of far more harrowing encounters, involving verbal and physical abuse. The majority of these people commuted by public transport. Such experiences can profoundly affect people's sense of wellbeing. These experiences can generate fear, distrust and depression. Safety concerns about travelling on trains were prominent, particularly among female respondents. CCTV was seen as a poor substitute for the sense of security created by the physical presence of transport workers.

Little events can build to tipping points

Although it might look like commuters are the 'same' people travelling each day, commuters are changed in minute ways every day by the encounters that they have. This means that the way that people respond to others changes over time. Some people described how their

tolerances have increased, while others said they were much less tolerant than they used to be. Correspondingly, the concept of 'anti-social behaviour' meant different things to different people. Over time, these minute changes can build up to 'tipping points'. Two participants who take public transport to work drew attention to their 'uncharacteristic' outbursts of anger. Confrontations can be the culmination of lots of little frustrations that have built up over time.

Transport companies and commuters can positively respond

Unpleasant encounters have been responded to through a variety of official strategies; for example, humorous anti-social behaviour poster campaigns in public transport spaces, and the designation of quiet carriages on trains in response to passenger frustration over loud conversations. In addition, commuters have supported each other when ugly encounters occur, showing real care and generosity. Unpleasant encounters can create a sense of solidarity between commuters. Increasingly, people have captured these encounters on mobile phone videos and circulated them rapidly through social media, extending this solidarity.

2. Changing skills

Key messages

Commuting requires many different skills that can take time for people to develop.	Once developed, these skills continue to change which makes the experience of commuting different over time.	Confidence is an important part of skill development, and it can be lost abruptly or more gradually which affects how commuting is experienced.

Since so many people commute, we might imagine that journeying to and from work is something that happens quite easily for the people involved. However, commuting requires a range of advanced skills that can take time to develop.

These skills include navigation, timing and coordination, control of vehicles or bikes, and non-verbal communication with other commuters, and involve finely honed reflexes for making split-second decisions, enabling people to respond instantly to situations.

However, once these skills have been developed, this does not mean that they stay the same. These skills continue to change, both incrementally and sometimes more abruptly.

Starting out commuting can be stressful

Appreciating that commuting skills can take some time to develop means that for people who are new to commuting in a city such as Sydney can be a particularly stressful experience. Many people who had moved to Sydney from other cities in Australia and overseas described how it took time to adapt to the local conditions of moving around the city. For example, many people who were used to driving to and from work in other cities described how the style of driving in Sydney was much more aggressive than they were used to. Commuting skills are therefore not just about the legal conventions involved in road and passenger transport, but the local 'social' conventions that make moving through the city an easier experience.

Commuting confidence takes time to develop

Confidence is an important part of skill development. Commuters draw on a range of different strategies to improve their confidence. This was particularly the case for people who ride a bike to work, given that cycling amongst city traffic can be an intimidating experience. For some cyclists, locally organised 'bike buses', where people cycle together in a group at a designated time, were a particularly effective way of improving confidence. For others, 'cycling in the city' courses funded by local councils played a vital role in increasing confidence. People new to the city who drive to and from work described having a family member or friend in the car as being beneficial in improving confidence.

Commuting skills are always changing

Commuting skills don't stay the same. We might not always realise this because they change gradually over time. When commuting becomes 'second-nature', people described how they search out new ways of making their journey more interesting. This was revealed most strikingly by experienced car commuters. Some drivers experimented with new routes that helped to make their journey more pleasurable. Other drivers were candid about the pleasure of pushing their skills to new limits, even if this meant breaking road rules. These skills can also lead to new forms of expertise about transport infrastructures. Many drivers, for instance, revealed experiential insight about poorly coordinated traffic light sequences that could be changed.

Commuting skills can be lost abruptly or gradually

The skills that commuters develop can be much more fragile than we might assume. Events such as being involved in an accident, or even an uncomfortable confrontation on the road or on public transport, can knock people's confidence. This loss of confidence is significant because it means that it can take time to relearn skills required to get to and from work. For some people, these might be just short-term setbacks. For others, the loss of confidence can be so significant that they switch to an entirely different way of moving to and from work. This loss of skills can also be gradual. For example, many older participants described how their bodily skills were declining and that physical discomforts were being experienced more intensely.

3. Changing times

Key messages

Commuting time is being used productively for both work and leisure, although the range of activities depends on what the specific travelling environment permits.

Realisations about the 'opportunity costs' of commuting is a significant source of stress, particularly for longer distance commuters.

Changing to more flexible working practices and job retraining are among the responses to this stress.

The journey to and from work is an in-between time, caught between the times in which work and home life take place. This time spent travelling is often assumed to be 'wasted time'. However, for many people, this is simply not the case, and commuting time is being put to work in all manner of ways.

The way in which commuters talk about their travel time reveals crucial things about what they value in their work and home lives, and the shape of their future aspirations.

While some commuters felt strangled by their commute, others felt that the commute was the part of their work–life balance that they had a significant degree of control over, through the activities that they choose to do.

Commuting can be valuable 'time out'

For many commuters, the journey to and from work is a necessary transition time between home and work. Some participants even described how they would actually extend their journeys in time by waiting somewhere along the route, or travelling a different way. For some, the commute home was a valuable opportunity to process work-related issues that were unwelcome at home. For others, commuting time was valuable personal time out from responsibilities of both work and home life. Some

participants said this was the only time that they get to themselves during the week, and so used it to dream, relax and meditate. A distinctive advantage of public transport is the freedom that it permits for doing things that they see as 'luxuries'. In this regard, the rise of mobile devices has increased opportunities for watching films and TV, as well as playing games and using apps.

Commuting spaces are becoming mobile offices

The place where work gets done is changing. Commuting time is increasingly being used to undertake work activities. For some workers commuting time is counted as part of their working day. Many people described how they would save up specific tasks each day to accomplish during their commute. The choice of task depended on factors such as the constraints of the space, with trains generally being more conducive to work than the more cramped and bumpy experience of buses, and the degree to which confidentiality mattered. Public transport spaces are also being used for educational opportunities, particularly for studying.

Commuters are alert to the missed opportunities that their journeys create

Sydney's average commute of just over half an hour pales into insignificance when we consider the journeys of those who spend over five hours every day in transit. For these people, the stressful

dimension is not necessarily the journey itself. Rather, the stress comes from the opportunity costs of spending such a huge amount of time travelling every day. Participants described the 'parallel lives' that they live with their family, children and friends. They were melancholic about the time lost to commuting and were alert to the many possibilities that it prevented. These commuters were often determined to preserve weekends for quality family time in their community.

Commuters are changing their work in response to commuting stress

The time spent commuting for some people became so burdensome that they had to make big changes to their working practices. For some people, this involved changing to more flexible working arrangements, such as 'teleworking' from home for some days each week. However, those people described how this can introduce new challenges around the loss of social contact at work, and managing work and leisure time. Some people with very long commutes eventually decided to retrain to work in vastly different employment sectors just to be able to regain balance in their home life. Commuting stress also occurred when employers relocated. Office relocations that might appear rather insignificant were described as incredibly stressful, forcing people to change their mode and duration of commute.

4. Changing spaces

Key messages

What makes for a comfortable journey is important to commuters, but this can change over time and is different for different people.

The feeling of a smooth journey is significant and this can be helped by new technologies.

The personal histories of commuters, and the histories of different spaces live on through the commuting experience.

The design of commuting spaces has considerable influence over the experience of the journey to and from work. How commuting spaces make people feel plays an important role in whether the commute is comfortable or not. These spaces have the power to make us feel uplifted or depressed; safe or insecure.

From pavements to platforms, and from carriages to cars, the commute for most people is made up of many different spaces that are threaded together through a journey. Rather than seeing them as isolated spaces, we need to appreciate how these spaces work together in the context of a journey.

It is important that we understand the different logics that go into the design of commuting spaces and how commuters respond to these designs.

Transit comforts are important to commuters

People's choice of commute involves consideration of much more than just getting from home to work by the quickest or cheapest possible means. Whether commuting spaces make people feel comfortable or not is a significant dimension of people's choice. It is often the little things in these spaces that matter. A bus might seem similar to a tram, but the feel of these spaces can be very different – for example, the bumpiness of the ride and the alignment of seats. Furthermore, what is considered comfortable is different for different

people. Fieldwork with people who experience significant bodily impairment, for instance, demonstrated that these spaces are experienced in different ways by people who have different needs. This also shows how comfort, and accessibility, can change for people over time.

Joining the dots can make a smooth journey

Commuting spaces are becoming filled with new ways of 'joining the dots' of people's different journey parts to create a smoother experience. In this regard, getting interchanges right is important, so people can transition between different commuting spaces as smoothly as possible. From announcements and indicators in commuting spaces, to increasingly sophisticated real-time notifications and updates on smartphones, the changing technologies involved in the commute are making the experience of journeying to and from work more seamless than ever before. The close relationships that develop between app designers and users show how many of these developments are commuter-led. Technologies are powerful in many ways. For instance, RFID smartcards such as the Opal card do more than replace paper tickets. They join up the city in new ways by providing easier transitions between different modes of transport and increasing flexibility.

Visual captivations can change the experience of commuting spaces

Commuting spaces are full of different visual captivations. Commercialisation opportunities are changing the

experiences of these spaces through the use of interactive and increasingly immersive forms of advertising. Large advertising firms are working to captivate commuters in new ways, to change the way they feel during the commute. This new advertising landscape adds variation to commuting spaces. Transport companies also shape commuting experiences through their visual identities involving the use of specific colours, typefaces and diagrams. The use of visual brands presents transport companies with new challenges and opportunities for shaping different dimensions of commuting experience.

Histories impact on the experience of commuting spaces

Even as commuting spaces get redesigned, their 'past lives' can live on in powerful ways. Designers are sensitive to the historical legacies of commuting spaces, and sometimes these legacies form a deliberate part of redevelopments; for example, where images or objects from the site's past are incorporated into the new design. In other respects, legacy is less about the physical make-up of these spaces, and more about how previous uses continue to be felt by commuters. This shows how commuters are alert to the power of the histories of the spaces they move through, and how their own personal histories are threaded through these spaces, enriching them in the process.

5. Changing voices

Key messages

The way that commuters talk about their journeys can change the way that they feel about their experiences.

Commentaries provided by traffic reporters and journalists can help people to navigate the city, and understand the complexity of transport policy.

Consolations are appreciated by commuters when things go wrong.

The way that commuting is talked about by different people in different places – from commuters to media announcers –has powerful effects on the way that it is experienced.

From water-cooler conversations at work to the end-of-day debrief upon arrival at home, conversations with others can be a part of how people deal with the stresses of commuting.

Other forms of communication act in different ways to change the experience. Traffic reports broadcast on radio and TV can provide vital information to help people negotiate rush hour. When things go wrong, consolations from transport companies are an important way of reducing stress.

Traffic reports are useful and they are increasingly interactive

Traffic reporting has been a part of the fabric of the commute in Sydney for some time now. Traffic reports on both radio and TV can be very helpful for people to make changes to their daily commute, but only when the incident report is up to date. Commuters themselves are increasingly using social media to provide accurate and current information on the status of delays. This also gives commuters the opportunity to vent their frustration. Social media has also become a vital part of how

transport organisations get to know about problems. Traffic reporting also has the effect of creating local media personalities who come to be associated with the city.

Commuter commentaries can change how people feel about their commute

The way that people 'commentate' on their experiences both to themselves and to each other can really change how they feel about their commutes. For some people, the journey 'debrief' is an important part of quickly overcoming the stress of travelling to and from work. For other people, however, having to listen to these gripes can get them down, particularly if it becomes a routine thing. Similarly, getting caught up in our own internal monologues about the commute can increase stress. Rather than getting caught up in these everyday commentaries, many people described how different relaxation techniques, such as mindfulness, while on the commute were an effective way of reducing stress.

There are diverse 'expert voices' that help to make sense of commuting issues

A key concern voiced by commuters was the frustration with a lack of action on urban transport problems. As the interviews conducted with stakeholders highlighted, urban transport policy is a complicated subject. Transport journalists and bloggers are an important way through which information about

urban transport policy gets disseminated and picked up, helping to shape people's opinions. They translate challenging policy into simpler language that is easier to understand. These 'expert voices' often view their role as an intermediary between industry, government and the public. However, some commuters were anxious about the disproportionate influence of radio 'shock jocks' over important transport infrastructure decisions concerning cycling in the city.

Media channels can console commuters

Transport companies use the media in different ways to improve relations with their customers. This is particularly significant when things go wrong. However, these appearances are not just about providing information. They are also important opportunities to console their customers and empathise with them. These consolations can also take the form of signs and notices that apologise for problems. Such consolations, however small, are appreciated by commuters and make them feel more cared for. This highlights the importance of treating commuters with respect and compassion. There are other ways that consolation is provided. 'Drive-time' radio shows can be an effective way of providing consolation, particularly on the journey home.

6. Changing advocacy

Key messages

Some of the infrastructure problems that can cause commuting stress are being championed by different community, grassroots and peak body organisations.	Commuting stress is an issue that brings together diverse communities, providing opportunities for collective advocacy.	Commitments to building new transport infrastructures can be challenging within the timeframes of political cycles.

Commuting actively changes people and places in the process. However, for many people in Sydney, there are specific things that need to be changed to make travelling to and from work a better experience.

Different types of transport advocacy are currently taking place in the city: community and grassroots groups, operating at a local level; and peak body organisations and political parties that reflect the interests of particular constituencies.

To understand the most effective strategies that are required to shape the future of Sydney's transport infrastructures, it is important to understand how these different advocates work to achieve their goals.

Community champions are engaged in positive campaigning

A number of community groups exist that champion local transport in different parts of the city. These groups are very active at the local level, holding regular meetings and ensuring a visible presence at local events, as well as being social media experts. They have many novel ideas about how local transport can be improved and provide specific information about their particular area. Their techniques often involve gathering rich qualitative information that can be used to capture the attention of policymakers. They recognise the power of positive campaigning.

Grassroots collectives bring together diverse communities

Larger organisations have emerged in recent years that advocate for the transport needs of the whole city. Campaign issues are developed with the involvement of local communities. These organisations recognise that the city's commuting stresses unite diverse communities, thereby offering important social and political opportunities. For these larger organisations, it is necessary to have clear goals that can be matched up with demonstrable 'wins'. They often stage events that different communities can attend collectively. This helps to keep up the momentum of campaigns.

Peak bodies are frustrated by risk-averse governments and civil servants

A number of peak body organisations are involved in commuter advocacy. They usually champion specific modes of transport in the city. These groups saw as important the creative freedoms they have to provide innovative solutions to government. However, they also voiced frustration about how their suggestions and solutions were slow to be taken up by government and a risk-averse civil service. Some perceived that organisational culture in government was stifling transport innovations that could help commuters. Others thought that signature large scale transport projects for the city were too caught up with party politics, meaning that smaller projects were not taken seriously enough.

Political will is necessary to improve commuting infrastructures

Interviews with state and federal politicians involved in transport advocacy showed the significance of how transport relates to broader issues of urban liveability. The most effective strategy is to talk in tangibles, rather than abstractions. However, they were concerned about the persistence of ideologies in making decisions about commuting infrastructure improvements, rather than listening to communities themselves. A similar concern related to a perceived lack of transparency about process or costings involved in decision making processes, based more on rhetoric rather than sound evidence. There is often a mismatch between election cycles and the longer term political will that is needed to improve commuting infrastructures.

7. Changing infrastructures

Key messages

While many commuters want new transport infrastructures, construction can create additional stresses.

Events and displays can be powerful ways of creating enthusiasm for new transport infrastructures.

Transport infrastructure projects have significant emotional impacts on people and communities.

Investment in new commuting infrastructure projects was one of the key wishes voiced by many stressed commuters. Yet infrastructure projects create their own distinct challenges as well as opportunities, both at the planning stage and during construction.

Infrastructure projects can be seen as events in their own right that have the capacity to change people's relationships to the city in different ways. They can create cynicism and mistrust, and they can bring people together in new ways, create excitement and enthusiasm, and shine a light to new ways of moving about the city.

Understanding how transport projects affect the emotional life of communities is important.

Managing expectations is an important part of new commuting infrastructure projects

Many new transport infrastructure projects are currently underway in Sydney. Although they seek to alleviate commuting problems in the long term, in the short term they can create frustration for commuters. As part of preparing people for change, managing expectations is key to mitigating the frustration associated with disruption and inconvenience caused by

construction. In addition, planners need to ensure that there are not too many 'staggered' changes that keep intruding on people's everyday journeys. A key challenge for them is to accommodate the diversity of voices that have an interest in these infrastructures.

Opening events for new commuting infrastructures can be powerful spectacles

The opening of new transport infrastructures are relatively infrequent events, and are therefore important in their own right. Transport providers use these events to generate excitement and allure, and draw people's attention to alternative ways of moving in the city. Also important are new commuter-related infrastructures in the workplace. For instance, buildings that have been kitted out with new cyclist facilities can encourage alternative ways of getting to and from work.

Displays can create interest in new commuting infrastructure projects

Different types of displays can change commuters' relationships to new infrastructure projects: scale models, diagrams, images and virtual-reality tours are powerful ways of bringing a possible future into the present, making it easier to engage and excite people. A visitors' centre for a large

public transport infrastructure project in the north-west of the city highlighted the importance of visualisations for creating positive relationships. Designers described the lengths to which they go to create what they deem to be 'realistic' visions of the future.

Barriers to developing commuting infrastructures can be overcome

The development of new infrastructures can change communities in profound ways. However, there are barriers to developing new infrastructures, and one of the most difficult barriers is public cynicism. This can be a result of NIMBYism ('not in my back yard') where people at the local level are resistant or concerned about the impacts of new infrastructures on their lives. Cynicism can also result from broken promises or non-delivery of previously announced projects. Different sorts of community engagement can create new affinities between people and public transport. From campaigns with local schools to public meetings; and from bus tours with senior citizens around key development sites to regular social media coverage of construction, a range of techniques are used to dispel cynicism and fuel enthusiasm.

Project publications

Academic publications

The project has resulted in the following academic publications to date:

- Bissell, D. 2015 How environments speak: everyday mobilities, impersonal speech, and the geographies of commentary, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 16: 146-164.

- Bissell, D. 2014 Transforming commuting mobilities: the memory of practice, *Environment and Planning A*, 46: 1946-1965.

- Bissell, D. 2014 Encountering stressed bodies: slow creep transformations and tipping points of commuting mobilities, *Geoforum*, 51:191-201.

- Bissell, D. 2014 'Commuting and the multiple capacities of stillness' in S. Hemelryk Donald and C. Lindner (eds.) *Inert Cities: Globalization, Mobility and Suspension in Visual Culture.* IB Taurus, London, 77-97.

Further journal articles and book chapters are currently under review or in preparation. These will be listed on the project's website http://commutinglife.com in due course.

A monograph provisionally entitled *Commuting Life* is in preparation.

Policy and media contributions

The project's findings have also been used to contribute to policy and media work:

- Bissell, D. 2015 Submission to Senate inquiry on aspects of road safety. Available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=f2da42e8-9c1a-4f82-b3eb-e799ddcb84a1&subId=303526

- Bissell, D. 2014 Submission to Productivity Commission inquiry on geographic labour mobility. Available at: http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/134205/subdr056-labour-mobility.pdf

- Bissell, D. 2014 Submission to Senate inquiry on the role of public transport in delivering productivity outcomes. Available at: http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=a7810d52-8444-4b05-938b-87a6abf768ee&subId=125071

- Bissell, D. 2013 How commuting is changing who we are, Mobile Lives Forum, SNCF. Available at: http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/video/2014/05/12/how-commuting-changing-who-we-are-2339

Acknowledgements

The researcher

Dr David Bissell is Senior Lecturer and an Australian Research Council DECRA award holder in the School of Sociology at the Australian National University. He combines qualitative research on embodied practices with social theory to explore the social, political and ethical consequences of mobile lives. His research has been published in many academic journals including *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* and *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. He is co-editor of *Stillness in a Mobile World* (2011) and *The Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (2014). He is on the editorial board of the journal *Mobilities*.

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