

31 October 2003

The Secretary
Environment and Heritage Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into Sustainable Cities 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

Bicycle New South Wales is a community organisation representing over 10,000 members and the two million people who own bicycles in New South Wales. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the important growing issue of sustainability in cities.

Bicycle NSW is highly supportive of federal government policies that actively support the development of sustainable cities within Australia. Policies that equally reflect the economic, social and environmental necessities in an urban context are crucial to the future of Australian cities. The type of transport used, and overall transport usage is a major determinant of the overall sustainability of a city. This submission is focused on the issue of transport, and the enormous benefits that active transport of cycling and walking. Bicycle NSW believes that the federal government should discourage car use and promote cycling, walking and public transport usage to achieve a goal of sustainable cities.

Land Usage and Urban Sprawl

Common to cities across Australia is the pattern of urban sprawl. Inherent in this situation is the dominant transport usage of the private motor vehicle. As a result of this up to one third of Sydney's 'available' public land is dedicated to car usage through the provision of roads, parking and areas to support motor vehicles. This is an inefficient use of space that could be alternatively used as urban green zones or as community space. Cities should be developed with fully integrated public and active transport systems. This entails urban hubs to be excellently serviced by public transport that is closely linked to pedestrian facilities and

bicycle routes. This subsequently reduces the requirement for further roads development that strongly supports continual urban sprawl and an increase in unsustainable car usage.

Resource usage and Emissions from transport

Presently motor vehicles are one of the main causes of air pollution in an urban environment. Road transport use consumes 90% of Australia's transport energy requirements and produces 15% of the nation's greenhouse emissions. This occurs as fossil fuels are the main source of transport energy in Australia, and results in the over-use of scarce resources and a strong contribution to climate change. In addition to this, the transport sector produces atmospheric and surface pollutants. Motor vehicles are the largest emitters of carbon monoxide, benzene, oxides and lead. All of these materials are highly hazardous to human health with all emissions increasing in Australia except for lead that has been phased out.

The sustainable alternative to motor vehicles is walking and cycling which does not require fossil fuel energy. The widespread usage of active transport (cycling, walking and public transport) would result in a vast reduction in transport pollution. This is especially possible as 35% of journeys to work are 5km or less. This is a distance that can be comfortably covered by bicycle with smaller distances making it practical to walk.

Community Health and Access

The use of the motor vehicle has a social cost to the community in the form of inequity, congestion and health costs. The result of car-based cities is that equity is reduced by limiting access to those with cars. Many areas are now only accessible by personal motor vehicles due to poor planning. Bicycle NSW supports the development of cities that are accessible to all. Cycling enables access and equity to people to travel beyond the boundaries of public transport that in many areas, and at times is limited. Heavily trafficked arterial roads can divide communities. By providing integrated transport systems such as bicycle lockers at train and bus stations, making bicycles free of charge on trains and a reducing the amount of car dependence, the access and liveability of urban communities can be optimised.

In addition to heightening community interaction, cycling and walking assists communities through their benefits to human health. Cycling is an excellent form of cardio-vascular

exercise, which has the benefits of reducing stress and assisting health by reducing the chance of diabetes and obesity.

The role of the federal government in sustainable cities

To ensure sustainable cities are possible the federal government is required to take active steps to assist sustainable transport and reduce overall vehicle kilometres travelled (VKT). Government policies that actively support the motor vehicle industry to the detriment of other modes need to be revisited, and action needs to be taken in the following areas:

- The federal Government needs to end the Fringe Benefit Tax concession on company cars and divert this subsidy into the construction and maintenance of urban public transport and cycling and walking facilities. This would greatly enhance the sustainability of cities by reducing the number of cars on the road and by providing a source of funding for public transport.
- The funding of the Department of Transport and Regional Services “Australia Cycling 1999 - 2004 The National Strategy” which was launched in 1999 but has no funding. To keep abreast with the developments in other OECD countries the Federal Government should provide appropriate funding to give this program impetus and effectiveness.
- Continue and enhance the “Roads to Recovery” program (Federal Government roads subsidy direct to specifically target cycling and walking projects. It is important that the role of active transport is promoted above that of further road development projects. A “Paths to Recovery” program may be necessary to actively facilitate this.
- Further support for the \$2.4M Federal Government ‘Sustainable Cities’ initiative in developing integrated transport beyond the current four year commitment. The public will only take up the use of lockers if the coverage is adequate. eg in NSW there are currently only 560 lockers, yet there are 2 million bikes available for usage and extra long term funding is needed to provide sufficient coverage.
- Revise national standards so that all public and private buildings, transport nodes and public services include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure such as end-of-trip facilities.
- Include provision of safe, attractive bicycle facilities as part of the 10 year Plan for Tourism. To assist the growing area of cycle tourism the Federal Government

should give serious support to the provision of cycling infrastructure and motorist cycle aware behaviour programs. This will assist in overcoming Australia's poor reputation for dangerous city cycling conditions when compared to European cities such as Paris and Amsterdam. The current aggressive road conditions discourage many tourists who view it a normal practice to explore a city by bicycle. This action would assist the development of a sustainable economy based on eco-tourism.

- Support programs that contribute to sustainable material usage through the facilitation of uniform national recycling regulations. The benefit of container deposit legislation and recycling lessens energy and material use, urban litter and the safety impediments of cycling such as broken glass, which is a major impediment to safe and convenient cycling on our roads.
- Improve the safety of active transport users through: the development of a national communication campaign to raise awareness of cyclists and the benefits of cycling; a focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety on all roads; and the support of the lowering of urban speed limits nationwide.

We are available to provide further evidence as required. Please do not hesitate to contact us on 02 9281 4099 or by e-mail at ntonkin@bicyclensw.org.au.

Yours sincerely

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