

Submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services

From the Victorian Community Transport Association

The Victorian Community Transport Association (VCTA) represents community transport providers Victoria.

Community Transport provides non-profit passenger transport services that cater to the needs of people who cannot make use of existing private or mainstream public transport systems. Community transport provides transport for the more vulnerable members of our communities i.e. the major focus for all CT providers is to deliver door-to-door transport services to frail aged people, people with disabilities and their carers, transport disadvantaged people, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

The VCTA is committed to the development and support of community transport providers within Victoria and reflects the principles of access, equity and participation.

The VCTA's objectives are:

- To represent community transport providers within the state of Victoria;
- To make representations to Government, non-Government and the Private Sector on behalf of the membership;
- To provide information and support to its members;
- To develop policy and standards that promote best practice in community transport organisations;
- To promote community transport issues within Victoria.
- To liaise with organisations involved in transport throughout Australia.

While the VCTA does not have the resources to prepare a detailed submission to the Inquiry (we have no staff, paid or otherwise), we would like to offer the following for the Inquiry's consideration, with particular reference to point e) of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, viz: "the role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport":

The VCTA believes that community transport providers play an increasingly important role in providing support to frail aged and disabled and geographically isolated people in allowing them to continue to participate in life's daily activities while remaining in their homes. In particular, the provision of volunteer-based door-to-door free transport by local government agencies and not for profit organisations, not only to medical appointments but to social and access activities (personal grooming, group activities, banking, shopping etc) increases the well-being, esteem and participation of people who may otherwise become socially isolated, marginalized and dependent on more intensive and costly social services, including supported accommodation.

The VCTA is concerned that support for community transport is inconsistent across Australia and between states. Applications of funds (for instance Commonwealth/State funding such as HACC) is inconsistent across states, which leads to inconsistent service availability to citizens who may be more able to access these services in one state or region than in another, which is inequitable.

While not necessarily advocating direct Commonwealth involvement, we ask that the Committee include the provision of community transport services in its considerations with a view to recognising the role played by these services in providing transport at little or no cost to vulnerable members of our society, in some cases transport that is essential to their health and well-being, and often in circumstances where public transport is not available or not accessible.

The VCTA places on record its support for the outcomes of the *Seniors Speak Up!* Consultations in Victoria, in particular for the following finding:

"Perhaps the most consistent priority for senior Victorians across the consultations was in relation to the mobility and transport barriers they face in maintaining their independence and participation.

...

"Second is the increasing need for a range of transport options, not only in a number of areas where there are limited public services, especially after hours and on weekends, but also for more affordable door-to-door options, such as community buses, to complement the public transport network, which many frail older people cannot access."

(Ref: Seniors Speak Up! Report of Key Findings to Minister for Senior Victorians

From the Ministerial Advisory Council of Senior Victorians, December 2008

[http://www.seniors.vic.gov.au/Web19/osv/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/report+to+the+Minister/\\$file/Seniors](http://www.seniors.vic.gov.au/Web19/osv/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/report+to+the+Minister/$file/Seniors))

Respectfully submitted

On behalf of the Victorian Community Transport Association.