



HEALTHY CITIES ILLAWARRA INC.

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6<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Committee Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
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Canberra ACT 2600  
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**RE: Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services**

Healthy Cities Illawarra (HCI) is dedicated to improving the health, physical environment and quality of life of people of the Illawarra. People's physical, mental and spiritual health depends on a healthy environment, including sufficient open space, clean water, clean air and sustainable natural ecosystems.

HCI has been involved in planning and advocating for sustainable transport options for many years. We convened the Transport Environment Taskforce in the past and presently convene the Illawarra Active Transport Taskforce. Both of these taskforces are joint agency / expert / business / environment groups dedicated to improving transport options for our region.

The Transport Environment Taskforce produced a Sustainable Transport Strategy for the Illawarra which identified major transport problems and opportunities over ten years ago. Unfortunately many of the problems continue to this day and many of the opportunities have been missed. The Active Transport Taskforce promotes the use of cycling and walking for recreation and commuting, through advocacy, education and policy advice.

**Problems with Road Transport**

HCI commissioned two reports during the 1990s, with the University of Wollongong<sup>1</sup> and the NSW EPA<sup>2</sup> respectively. Our concerns for the impacts of transport decisions on public health and the environment include:

*Air pollution*

The health impacts of emissions from motor vehicle emissions are well-documented. Even in 1992, Young and Laird noted that:

*".. major air pollutants emitted from road vehicles are recognised by authorities including the OECD (1988) and the NHMRC (1992), as Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrous Oxides (NO), Hydrocarbons (HC), Lead (Pb) and Particulates. Although Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is not universally recognised as a pollutant, motor vehicles are a major source of CO<sub>2</sub> and the NHMRC (1992, p62) notes that combustion of a single tank of gasoline produces 130-180*

<sup>1</sup> Young A and Laird P, 1992, 'Illawarra Environment 1992 - Air Quality and Transport Options', Healthy Cities Illawarra and the University of Wollongong

<sup>2</sup> Wilkinson Murray, 1992 and 1993, Traffic Noise Study. Healthy Cities Illawarra and NSW Environment Protection Authority

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*kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub>, and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from vehicles contribute significantly to global warming (the greenhouse effect). These authorities also note that in some cases, each of these pollutants is capable of producing adverse health impacts. In addition, the effect of several air pollutants can combine to produce more severe health impacts, along with indirect effects such as ozone production. The NHMRC (1992, p61) notes that ozone may cause health problems and that ozone levels in some Australian cities have exceeded the current air quality standards.”*

The Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics<sup>3</sup> gave a mid-range estimate of the annual health-related costs from air pollution from motor vehicles in Australia's capital cities of \$2.33 billion for the year 2000. This comprised \$1,596 million from the estimated cost of mortality (premature death as a result of air pollution), and \$735 million for morbidity (quality of life and/or productive capacity of victims impaired or reduced as a result of air pollution).

These health costs are an indication of the levels of human suffering directly attributable to road transport.

#### *Noise pollution*

Noise is a public health and environmental issue. It is necessary for people to have periods of quiet for sleep and relaxation to be able to maintain their health and well-being.

Wilkinson Murray (1992 and 1993) found that

#### *Road accidents*

HCI shares the concerns expressed by the Wollongong Transport Coalition (WTC) that more coal trucks, in addition to the car-carrying trucks, will have implications for the safety of other road users.

Road commuters between Wollongong and Picton, Cambelltown, Sutherland or Sydney will face an increased risk of accident on their daily trip to and from work. The increased truck movements will also affect holiday traffic moving between Sydney and the South Coast, as well as those who live at Kiama and Nowra and drive on the Mount Ousley road. HCI notes that trains are 20 times safer than road in the movement of freight ('Rail – Safer, Cleaner, Greener', March 2007, Australasian Railway Association Inc (ARA)).

#### *Greenhouse gas emissions*

Rail transport uses only one third of the amount of energy that trucks use to move the same weight of freight (ARA, March 07). The impacts on Australia's greenhouse gas emissions must be a vital consideration in any transport planning; therefore we believe that NSW should be supporting moves towards rail alternatives rather than road transport for freight transport to and from Port Kembla.

HCI considers that more information is needed from PKCT to enable independent verification of the data produced in both the Environmental Assessment (EA) and Submissions Report.

#### *Road pricing and hidden subsidies*

As identified by the 1990 Wollongong City Council Coal Transportation Task Force report, more attention needs to be given by all levels of Government to the external costs of truck operations. These include road infrastructure and maintenance costs, congestion costs, road accidents,

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<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics 2005 Working Paper 'Health Impacts of Transport Emissions in Australia: Economic costs' (WP63)

tourism opportunity costs, air and noise pollution and climate change. One loaded B-Double truck causes the same road wear as 20,000 cars.

These impacts of road use highlight the need for appropriate road pricing for heavy trucks as well as enforced regulations to control safety, noise and exhaust emissions. Using the Road and Traffic Authority's former guide of 3 cents per net tonne km for recovery of road system costs from heavy trucks implies that for a 40km haul of coal from Appin to the PKCT, there is a hidden subsidy of about \$1.20 per tonne.

The 1992 estimated cost to the community to move 10 mtpa coal by road over say, 40km, would be \$12 million per year. By 2009, this figure is substantially greater. In a competitive world, this could be enough to favour road transport over an otherwise competitive rail quote.

## **Public Transport Issues**

There needs to be much greater commitment to public transport, and much less resourcing of roads and related infrastructure in our region and across NSW. The need to move towards sustainable transport and away from unsustainable modes is recognised at all levels of government. However the words now need to be turned into action.

We see the following as important components of a public transport strategy.

### *Resourcing*

There are around 20,000 people commuting daily from the Illawarra to Sydney for work, the majority of whom depend on the railway link to Sydney for their travel. While we have seen the rail network throughout NSW deteriorate progressively over recent decades, the road network continues to be expanded and improved. Train passengers on the South Coast line have often suffered journeys of over two hours with no toilet facilities, train carriages are usually dirty and unattractive, and there are few bus services which link to the train timetables.

If the large sums of money spent on roads were diverted to public transport we could have world-class active, bus and rail transport in place throughout NSW. Australia-wide, public transport needs to be fully integrated and resourced rather than the piece-meal approach we now suffer.

### *City Planning*

Even as early as 1991, Healthy Cities Illawarra, in conjunction with the University of Wollongong, had proposed a strategy for shaping our cities around the benefits of public and active transport<sup>4</sup>. This submission envisioned projects to plan and develop an integrated transport system:

*'Reducing dependence on private car transport and improving public transport use if a key objective for the betterment of the Illawarra.'*

Suburb design is an integral part of encouraging the use of public and active transport. New suburbs should include provision, funded by the developer, for fully integrated public and active transport facilities. Existing suburbs should be audited for their ease of access to public and active transport and plans prepared for their gradual improvement.

HCI also collaborated with the University of Wollongong in a sustainable transport strategy for the Illawarra in 1995<sup>5</sup>. This strategy identified large-scale urban sprawl as a cause of rising car ownership and use.

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<sup>4</sup> HCI & UoW 1991. Towards Better Cities – Shaping the Illawarra of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

<sup>5</sup> UoW & HCI Transport Environment Taskforce 1995 Sustainable Transport for the Illawarra

### *Pricing*

Given the dollar benefits of public transport, when compared to the range of overt and hidden subsidies to road transport, serious consideration should be given to providing some public transport free or at very low prices. This has been announced recently in Wollongong for a local bus circuit around the central city.

At the same time, hidden subsidies for road transport need to be phased out to ensure full competition between the private and public, road and rail, transport modes.

### *Decentralisation*

In the Illawarra and the rest of coastal NSW there are significant population and development pressures which impact on the health of the environment, heritage and communities. This can be partly assigned to the reduction and closures of regional rail services to country centres.

As part of the response to climate change-induced sea level rise governments should be encouraging people to move to inland centres. This will require a dedication to refurbishing and re-opening rail links across the State.

### *Sustainable transport links*

People's use of rail would be enhanced through better linking of sustainable transport options. This means providing cycle and walking paths which connect with bus and train nodes, cycle storage facilities at nodes and the easy transport of cycles on trains.

There is also a need for good integration of timetables so that people can connect bus journeys with train trips, or train with train.

The completion of the Maldon-Dombarton rail link, and its use for public transport as well as the transport of freight, will improve the access for commuters and tourists between Wollongong and Sydney. This rail link will also remove coal trains from inner western Sydney and free up pathways for metropolitan passenger trains.

Yours sincerely

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