

18<sup>th</sup> January 2009

The Secretary  
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Jeanette Radcliffe,

In response to your invitation of 19 December 2008, 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney (FROGS) makes this submission to the *Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State Funds in public transport infrastructure and services*. The comments are based on findings from the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project undertaken by the Warren Centre at Sydney University in which members of FROGS were involved and which FROGS has the carriage to fruition; and subsequent work by FROGS in pursuit of its task to produce a more sustainable Sydney and cities throughout Australia.

### **Credentials for making the Submission**

Two hundred of Australia's leading professionals and practitioners invested 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years and \$4 million in the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project (STSC). The project's leaders and contributors covered a wide range of disciplines including urban planning, transport, economics, law, community behaviour, health and education. They were drawn from all States of Australia and included invited overseas specialists from the UK, Europe and the United States. Almost 2000 persons drawn from the wider community were involved in the project.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities*' findings have been well received by government, industry and professional associations and the project won the prestigious Bradfield Award for Engineering Excellence in NSW. The findings remain current in 2009.

FROGS was established specifically to pursue implementation of the STSC findings and broaden that to the objective of developing a sustainable Sydney in areas of water, energy, waste, transport and biodiversity.

### **Background to Submission**

This submission relates the findings of the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project and other work by FROGS to the Infrastructure Review, with a specific focus on a National (Federal Government) perspective and particularly to public transport.

This submission comprises this letter and the attached:

- ◆ 10,000 Friends of Greater Sydney Brochure (Ref 3)
- ◆ *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* Summary report brochure – *Towards a City of Cities*, (Ref 4)
- ◆ *Sydney Integrated Transport Strategy* brochure (Ref 3)



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Greater Sydney<sup>®</sup>  
ABN 43 117 689 362

*Working Towards a  
Sustainable Greater  
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### **Financial and In-Kind Supporting Members**

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Willoughby Council  
Gavin Anderson

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- ◆ *Towards a Sustainable NSW Central Coast Region* brochure ([www.10000friends.org.au/reports](http://www.10000friends.org.au/reports))

The projects covered by the above reports highlight the aims to:

- ◆ Improved lifestyle for the community increasing access for everyone to everything;
- ◆ Increased use of public transport walking and biking to reduce growth of private motor car use;
- ◆ Improved freight logistics to enhance economy of movement;
- ◆ Increased social and financial equity;
- ◆ Reduced energy use;
- ◆ Reduced atmospheric pollutants and their contribution to climate change.

The submission firstly addresses the topics/issues raised in your letter of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008 with reference to previous submissions and reports to which you refer therein and then proposes strategies to address those topics/issues and public transport projects that would contribute to those strategies.

### ***Discussion of Topics/Issues in letter of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008***

#### **(a) An audit of the state of public passenger transport in Australia**

This is vital to gain an understanding and appreciation of the public transport task in Australia and the infrastructure and services needed and currently provided to address that task. Key aspects that will need to be addressed in the audit are the lack of suitable data in the various States and where data is available the inconsistency of that data between the States.

The audit should encompass Real Time Public Transport Information Systems and Bus priority systems.

#### **(b) Current and historical levels of public investment in private vehicle and public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

Historical levels of investment in public passenger transport infrastructure in Australia have been low compared to investment in road based transport, which position remains today. This is attributed to:

- The rapid growth of car travel throughout Australia since federation
- The political imperative arising therefrom to get the motorist 'out of the mud'
- The growth of cities with rapid urbanization since the 1939-1945 war
- The reluctance of the Commonwealth Government to recognize this growth and contribute to development in cities evidenced by the National Highways program firstly and later the Austlink program largely ignoring transport in cities and especially passenger transport.

#### **(c) An assessment of the benefits of public passenger transport, including integration with bicycle and pedestrian initiatives**

Unsatisfied transport demand today is greatest in our cities due to the rapid urbanization referred to above; cities are where most Australians live and vote and today are the centres of economic growth. This transport demand cannot be met by more roads and road transport and attempts to do so lead to unsound investment in cities. It is only by an integrated transport plan that this demand can be effectively addressed with appropriate levels of public and road transport, cycleways and pedestrian ways, then integrated with an appropriate land use plan for the city that focuses on the lifestyle Australians desire in their cities. The primary requirement in this mix is investment in public transport; the benefit of the right mix



is the lesser financial investment required to achieve an effective transport system in our cities.

**(d) Measures by which the Commonwealth Government could facilitate improvements in public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

These include:

- Reintroduce an equivalent Better Cities program as a basis for Commonwealth funding assistance within cities
- Show leadership in developing a National Transport Plan
- Embrace cities and their transport requirements within the Austlink program for funding
- Require States to undertake comprehensive assessment of all transport options for Austlink funding

**(e) Options for Commonwealth funding for public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

Essentially this is a single option to 'embrace cities and their transport requirements within the Austlink program for funding'. States should be required to produce a rolling infrastructure investment plan, prioritized, costed, supported by transport/ economic studies and demonstrably part of a comprehensive integrated transport plan.

**(f) The role of Commonwealth Government legislation, taxation, subsidies, policies and other mechanisms that either discourage or encourage public passenger transport**

The greatest discouragement to developing effective transport in Australia, especially in our cities and particularly public passenger transport is the lack of access to Commonwealth funds for this purpose, that is the too narrow focus of the Austlink program. The best means to address this economic disparity is to bring city transport and especially public passenger transport into the Austlink program for funding.

**(g) Best practice international examples of public passenger transport services and infrastructure**

While Australia can learn from international examples of best practice in public passenger transport, it must shape those practices to Australian culture and conditions and not simply implement them without due consideration of our lifestyle. Examples included:

- Bus services in Curitiba and Bogata (Ref 1 David Henshaw), Brisbane and Perth
- Rail service in Europe (especially services in Zurich) and Hong Kong
- High speed rail in Europe, Japan and China (Ref 2 Gary Glazebrook)

### ***Proposed Strategies***

Strategies that need and can be undertaken are presented below. These strategies, as are the projects discussed below, are those that FROGS investigation and research has shown to be practical, socially responsible, environmentally acceptable, economically sound and financially viable.

- **Show leadership at the Federal level of Government in having a single minister and single Department responsible for transport planning across the Nation and encourage States and Territories to do the same.**

The reluctance or lack of will by governments to restructure to a 21<sup>st</sup> century outcomes basis seems to be the greatest impediment to advancement of Australia in every field of endeavour, including transport.

Development of Australia has reached the stage where we cannot even effectively consider States separately in developing the nation. Yet we persist in considering transport not only on a State by State basis, government by government (Federal, State and local) basis and even mode by mode separation. This means we have no comprehensive integrated transport plan for Australia; we have no effective integrated land use/transport plan for our cities; we have no all inclusive investment strategy for transport.

More importantly the electoral cycle allows political parties to use investment in Transport as a crude electoral carrot. The cashback program in Sydney is one of the worst examples of distorting the whole transport economics of the city

The consequences in transport, as shown by the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project, is that while we are investing sufficient funds into transport to achieve an effective sustainable system, we are investing it so poorly that transport performance is progressively getting worse year by year; and nothing is in a worse state than public passenger transport performance in NSW.

➤ **Provide leadership at the National level to develop an all embracing National Transport Plan through the Austlink Program**

FROGS investigation has shown that the most significant impediment to establishing a sound framework for transportation in our major cities, which would generally apply to Australia as a whole, is the failure to see transport in a holistic manner aimed at moving people and freight from origins to destinations.

The structure of government in NSW and the disparate government silos involved inhibits this occurring, for example the Victoria Road case discussed below. Also the inability or reluctance of government to effect change within the departmental structure introduces constraints on adopting best practice. *For example Sydney is introducing Metro trains into the city structure but has decided to keep this mode clear of the perceived incompetent rail authority; this places an undesirable constraint on adopting best practice and has long term inefficiency implications*

Likewise there is no comprehensive consideration of transport as a whole which distorts investment to achieve optimum outcomes. A bus network now being introduced in Sydney will serve most trips not met by rail but this is constrained by lack of investment in buses and bus routes with road investment in contrast running apace trying to catch up with increase in travel demand for movement. The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project showed that a Very High Speed Train (VHST) could be the incentive/nucleus for a major change in behavior as it was so attractive in terms of travel time that it increased use of other public transport to access it especially bus usage.

➤ **Require broad consideration of transport projects as a whole covering all modes and focusing on outcomes related to sustainable movement of people and goods.**

There seems to be an over concentration on engineering aspects within each mode of travel focused on achieving the most economical engineering solution rather than the best overall solution (sustainable outcome) for moving people and goods.

This approach inhibits the opportunity to evaluate a variety of alternatives across modes to achieve the best outcome in terms of social, environmental, economic and financial performance. For example the best solution to a transport issue may be a land use change to inhibit the need to travel.

➤ **Require comprehensive evaluation of all projects on a consistent basis covering social, environmental, economic and financial aspects**



Economic evaluation also seems to be limited to engineering aspects of travel time savings and safety rather than the wider aspects covering gain to economy and lifestyle improvements.

We do not address overall travel demand properly, as the focus is too narrowly on modes, e.g. the solution to a road capacity problem may be a rail or bus solution. For example Victoria Road in Sydney where the road authority in NSW is planning to increase road capacity towards the CBD which cannot accommodate more cars while the rail planning body has adopted a Metro train along the same route.

*All projects should be part of a comprehensive plan and be thoroughly investigated. The recent history of NSW major transport infrastructure announcements based on very limited assessment is an example of flawed policy making.*

➤ **Look to undertake works through Public Private Partnerships (PPP's)**

Only economically sound works should be undertaken, the criteria should be 'investment' with borrowed funds (preferably in a similar manner similar to Queensland Treasury Corporation) to be repaid rather than borrowing that increases public debt. With these criteria projects become viable PPP's.

*The concept of Alliance Contracting should be more widely adopted as a means of risk sharing and the disasters currently in NSW will be avoided or at least minimized.*

➤ **Re-introduce the concept of the *Better Cities* program to produce a more cohesive city structure**

Congestion is occurring and increasing in our major cities due to the over reliance on roads to move people and goods and the under investment in public transport due to the narrow focus of authorities involved; this especially applies to investment in rail.

The *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project clearly showed that we could not build our way out of congestion by infrastructure investment especially road investment. What was required was a comprehensive assessment of travel demand for the future city structure and thence the evaluation of solutions embracing land use changes, all transport modes operating as an integrated whole and pricing measures to provide the incentives to change.

Transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions (impacting climate change), environmental impact and energy consumption, especially transport in cities. The primary focus should be to reduce dependency on car travel and this means increasing train and bus travel.

The key barriers to the adoption of cost-effective, low emissions public transport sector are:

- Lack of provision of effective public transport as a viable alternative to the car in cities
- Lack of effective integration of transport modes and land-use in State Governments
- Lack of leadership by Governments in taking up viable initiatives, including lack of interest by the Federal Government in cities and their transport.

## **PROJECTS**

Public passenger transport projects that would contribute to abovementioned strategies would include:

- **A very high speed train (VHST) network to link major centres in major cities (where it is financially viable)** and incrementally extend from cities to link east coast cities of Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne.

Work undertaken in investigating a Very High Speed Train (VHST) between Sydney and Melbourne and between Sydney and Canberra is a bad and good example of infrastructure and investment planning. The work undertaken at the Federal Government level correctly showed that there was not enough patronage between the cities to economically justify or finance a VHST. This was too narrow a focus and disregarded the movement between centres in our large sprawling major cities.

In contrast the work undertaken by The Warren Centre at Sydney University in the *Sustainable Transport in Sustainable Cities* project and subsequently confirmed by FROGS showed that a VHST was both economically viable and financially practical in connecting the major cities within a city, for example in Sydney, linking the CBD to Parramatta thence the Central Coast and Newcastle in the north and Campbelltown and Wollongong in the south; this then if copied in other major cities lent itself to incremental extension to provide an eastern coast link between Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.

The above work also showed that the introduction of a VHST in the major cities would represent the greatest initiative ever to behavior change in transport usage in our cities. Modeling of a VHST network showed it to be so attractive that it became the primary attraction to capture patronage to such an extent that it increased overall patronage of public transport, rail and bus to access this network.

A VHST network between cities would over time also make a major contribution to climate change by reducing demand for air travel where there is a lack of alternatives to fossil fuels for air transport. It would also reduce the demand for future airports in cities.

Recommendation: *The Federal Government finance a study of VHST for Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with a view to subsequent incrementally linking in the future (drawing on the work to date by FROGS) under an expanded Austlink Program. Thence allocate \$1 billion to each State under that program as investment seeding to implement networks consistent with each other as PPP's with debt to be repaid.*

- **Convert Train Networks in Cities to Metro Systems**

For efficient operation, most rail routes in Sydney and major cities should be changed to Metro trains (20-40 % greater capacity than present suburban double deckers in Sydney) with suburban double decker trains reserved for the longer trips (over 25 kms) and VHST introduced for the longer inter-centre trips.

Metros are being considered for Brisbane but the present incompetency of NSW Railcorp provides an impediment to such a change in Sydney; as a consequence the State Government is proposing a complementary Metro system operated by the private sector. This line will be largely in costly underground construction in lieu of the relatively inexpensive conversion of most of the existing surface network (with expanded CBD underground stations). There is ample right of way to duplicate much of the existing dual tracks in Sydney (some bridges will be needed) but this investment would greatly improve timetables and freight capacity.

Recommendation: *The Federal Government as part of a grant under a "Better Cities" type program provide funds to each major city to identify the most efficient rail network for that city; require*



*exchange of information between States to ensure optimum outcomes. Thence provide seeding funds under that program to accelerate conversion to the more efficient network.*

➤ **Bus Network in Cities**

Work associated with the Sydney Olympics in 2000 and subsequent work by FROGS showed that a regional network of buses operating at high frequency could materially influence public transport attitude and increase patronage in cities. Work is proceeding in Sydney to this end but funds able to be allocated, couple with individual funding of government silos, make implementation a drawn out process, inhibiting the opportunity to introduce as quickly as desired.

Recommendation: *The Federal Government as part of a grant under a "Better Cities" type program provide funds to each major city to identify the most efficient bus network for that city (comparing outcomes from each city to establish the optimal system). Then provide seeding funds under that program to accelerate conversion to the more efficient network as PPP's (or other similar partnership structures) with debt to be repaid to a Government administered Infrastructure fund.*

Yours faithfully  
**Desmond Dent CEO**

*Desmond Dent  
Secretary and CEO  
10000 Friends of Greater Sydney*

*Signed on behalf of the following Directors*

Ken Dobinson Dobinson and Associates  
Ann Turner Ann Turner Consultants  
Morris Caputi Veolia Transport  
Kary Petersen TTF  
Wayne Costin Costin Roe  
Dominic O'Brien HATCH  
Piers Brogan HATCH  
Steve Green CCROC

References

1 Henscher David, **Bogotas Breakthrough Vision** -Transport Infrastructure Summit Sydney 2009

"By lowering unit operating cost, Bogota is able to provide higher frequencies, multiple express services, fewer transfers, and connections to stations off corridor".

2 Glazebrook Gary, **Reinventing Sydney** RTSA Conference Sydney 2009 (Website Ref 3 )

"Best solution is to expand Parramatta and then focus on Liverpool and Penrith"

3 REPORTS ON FROGS WEBSITE [www.10000friends.org.au](http://www.10000friends.org.au)

