

Submission to *Inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services*

b. Funding in Australia in recent years has favoured investment in the road system over public transportation. The impact of climate change and the long-term increase in oil prices will make this a very poor investment. I would urge the committee to set targets for state and federal investment so that a significant proportion of all transport funding is directed towards public transportation. While Australian capital cities experience some congestion, even the worst of this is minor compared to similar cities worldwide. Moreover, congestion is not something that can be 'solved' and to a certain extent, is a useful encouragement to commuters to use transport alternatives, if available. In some states this problem is compounded by having public and private transport handled by different departments. If these were under one department then investment could be better allocated to whichever transport would best meet the needs of the community.

c. One problem with public transport in Australia is that little investment has occurred in it over the last fifty years, and cars have become the normal form of transport. For public transport to work it needs to be reliable and regular. When services occur with a frequency of greater than 15 minutes, many people will not use them unless they have no alternative. Attention must be paid to increasing the frequency of services, with ten minute intervals being desirable during all major traffic times. While many inner suburbs in capital cities are served by public transport, most newer outer suburbs are not. Attention must be paid to investing in these areas otherwise they risk becoming unviable communities if private transport becomes less avoidable. For most communities the best way of providing these services will be through a smaller number of fast heavy rail services, with dedicated feeder bus routes that are able to use existing road networks. This can be supplemented by good and safe bicycle networks for local travel, and for travel to railway stations.

d. The commonwealth government could provide scrutiny of state-based transport providers, whether publicly owned or private, to determine whether these are providing a cost-efficient and necessary service. There are example of both good public and private systems in various places around the world, but both of these need good management.

e. The beneficial taxation treatment of company cars, and novated leasing is one of the most undesirable taxes in Australia today. Not only does this give people an incentive towards private car use, but it is weighted favourably towards those who drive more rather than less. This tax should be phased out as soon as possible, and replaces with

tax-deductability for such things as monthly/yearly public transport tickets, carshare schemes, bicycle maintenance costs, or similar.

f. Zurich is well-known to have an excellent public transport system combining both public and private elements. It provides a comprehensive and regular service to a large number of people in a relatively cost-effective way. Central to its success is that it relies on effective transport planning, so that all elements of the system work to make it a success. In contrast many capital cities have systems that compete with each other for patronage, or operate unviable routes supported by government subsidies. We need public transport systems that are designed to move as many people as possible, in relative comfort, with costs kept more affordable than private transportation, to provide incentives to keep passenger numbers high.