

## Submission Part A

It is vital to Australia's national interests, and to the personal health and welfare of all individual Australians, that the country develops and operates the best nation-wide public transport service that is achievable. That system in turn must mesh in harmony with an overall national transport system and land-use system. As the National Transport Commission says, national interests must be put before "working in silos" and "patch protection". The latter still permeates too much of our transport (and related land-use) decision making.

The system we urgently need, must be safe and efficient, as well as being a major component of reducing and minimizing transport related greenhouse gases, while minimising other unhealthy emissions and fuel usage. At the same time it is imperative that it plays a fundamental, integral role in reducing the continuing unsustainable, unsafe and unhealthy dominance of private car use and associated road building of the last half-century.

I believe there is widespread agreement on many of these basic tenets, which have been argued for, to varying degrees, for decades.

I am sure that many other submissions to this inquiry will cover many of the important aspects of public transport issues, including the need for more and better public transport by heavy rail; light rail; bus and tram and bicycling, integration of services and ticketing and much more. Various submissions will stress the linkages to land-use planning; pricing and other issues.

However, I am not certain that these various submissions will stress the crisis situation we have already entered, and the worsening near future we face, unless we act with great urgency, unless we "get it right", and very soon.

Australia faces what could be a land transport "meltdown" by 2020 or not far beyond.

Key predictions by the year 2020 include:

- Double the road freight task from 2000 levels.
- Burgeoning numbers of older unsafe drivers, with many being de-licensed, creating along with others, a huge transport disadvantaged and socially excluded underclass.
- 78% increased transport emissions from 1990 levels.
- Urban traffic congestion costing \$20 billion per year.
- Road crash costs of near \$30 billion p.a.
- Crash costs involving heavy vehicles of more than \$3 billion p.a.
- Significant growth in other health issues related to transport emissions.
- Shortage of suitably experienced and suitable traffic engineers and heavy vehicle drivers, with serious safety implications in both cases.
- Unmanageable growth in currently emerging /growing risks with already high-risk younger drivers/riders.
- Estimated roads upgrade funding shortfall approaching \$100 billion nationally, to meet targets developed from the "Safe System" approach to road use and safety, adopted by the Australian Government.

Separately these issues present huge challenges. When merged they may overwhelm us with a crisis involving public health, occupational health and safety, accident and injury prevention, risk management issues, greenhouse gas emissions, imported fuel usage and traffic congestion.

All of these issues have important nexuses to public transport development. It would take a long and detailed report to adequately cover the nexuses. I would be happy to assist this inquiry by meeting with the committee members to discuss these issues further, and by providing further information.

However, for the purposes of keeping this submission more concise and succinct, I would like to stress some key points in the relationship between the issues mentioned in preceding paragraphs and the public transport situation. These are:

- Urgency - I don't believe enough people and organisations/agencies understand the urgency before us, nor the short time to act - which in reality is even shorter, given lead -in times for policy, project and program development, and implementation (including design and construction of necessary built infrastructure.) Remember we do not have a national transport policy or plan yet.
- The difficulty of changing organisational "cultural" attitudes and approaches that stand in the way of vital change and to putting the national interests before "silos mentality and patch protection"
- Linked to the above is the continuing, somewhat understandable almost obsessive attitudes from organisations (including corporations and government agencies) in looking at costs in isolation ("keeping within my limited budget"). A glaring long-standing example is assessing the costs of certain public transport services to *one* budget, saying it is "costing money" without including externalities. Proper costing of *not* operating Sydney or Melbourne's public transport systems in terms of safety, health and social issues for instance are hard to find and under-valued, but would be massive.
- The lack of understanding by non-public transport users of how what happens with public transport will affect *them* in *their* future. The flow-on effect of this is that they are not arguing for public transport.
- "Keeping on Driving" - The difficulty of my baby-boomer peers believing that they will drive their own private motor vehicles when and where they like (with obvious limitations) for as long as they like (into very old age). It is sadly not true for a great many, and will be less so in the future, but the belief permeates into many aspects of transport and acts to impede if not stop progress in some areas.
- Ageing + freight + young- A great deal of the continuing growth in road freight transport will be on urban roads, and the interactions between older and younger road users, linked to their use or non-use of public transport will have considerable consequences in terms of safety, congestion and more.

A summary of this first part of my submission is that A national approach to public transport is a fundamental part of steering our way out of the transport cul-de-sac into which we are heading, and we need very clear collective vision as a nation, and strong political will as a driving force to achieve the fundamental and monumental changes needed. I believe that a federal government must play a significant leadership role in that, including with funding.

## Submission Part B

While a major focus of this inquiry, and submissions made will be on public transport that utilises heavy rail; light rail; bus, tram and taxis, this part of my submission relates to the equally important segment of transport that is generally called "community transport". This special transport is vital for a significant number of community members to access medical and health, shopping, education, employment and social needs.

It is especially so in Australia, where a very large number of health and medical, educational, social and other services, industry and other employment have access that is heavily oriented towards access by private motor vehicle. In a significant number of instances, the only viable access is by private car (or possibly taxis), or "community transport"

Community transport generally includes community cars and vans/buses, taxis modified for people with disabilities and other vehicles dedicated to travel for organisations/institutions and any other special needs.

There is a substantial number of community members who do not have access to private car usage, and for whom taxis are not an affordable alternative. Many people can not safely or physically access ordinary public transport.

As mentioned in Part A above we face a near future with significant growth in an ageing population. There will corresponding growth in numbers of people who cannot continue to safely drive their private cars, if at all. There will be a similar growth in those who can drive, but will be limited by authority or personal decision to driving within a limited area. Many of these people will either not have availability of ordinary public transport, nor will they be safely or physically able to access that type of transport.

However, this presents a major impending problem as community transport is already under-resourced, including under-funding in many if not all parts of Australia. Services are stretched to beyond capacity already, or in some cases, non-existent.

In addition, there are existing sections of the community who are transport disadvantaged, but are not eligible to gain access to community transport.

Other people need short term access to special transport for medical reasons, but while considered eligible, are presented with costs that are beyond their means.

**Case Study Example;** A man who needed cancer treatment 5 days per week for 7 weeks. Lived in a dormitory village with no public transport, and the bill for special transport would be \$90 per week with no subsidy available.

When people have inadequate or nil access to ordinary public transport or community transport, the results can be more problematic than 'just' social exclusion and monetary problems. Of the myriads of studies on these problems, "No Car, No Go", and "Stuck at Home" tell much of the story in their titles.

But our studies for the Home and Community Care (HACC) program in NSW found many more problems. People forced by circumstances to continue to drive when or where they were not safe to do so put themselves and others at great risk. (as do other people who continue to drive by choice when not safe, therefore compounding the problem).

**Case Study Example:** An older woman in Gosford, after visiting her husband in a nursing home, got "lost" on the way home, and spent the night in her car. Using her car was the only affordable option when taxi use was too expensive.

**Case Study Example:** A couple in Northern Tablelands NSW., living on a property distant from a small village, and not close to any town. Husband with Dementia at home, wife still

driving, but struggling to do so safely. Their situation was known by various people who “turned a blind eye” from compassion, because for the wife to stop driving would make it untenable for them to live at home. Compounded by nearest suitable alternative accommodation being some 150 kilometres away, meaning a complete move away from their local area.

Other problems encountered included ‘border issues’. In one, transport services from a small NSW village stopped at the Murray River border, yet medical services, shops etc were on the Victorian side and not accessible by non-driving people. Border issues also existed in regional areas.

Closure of regional hospitals and shortfall of medical services coupled to lack of public or accessible community transport in country areas (not seemingly considered when regional hospitals were closed) , forced older drivers to drive out of their local area onto highways, including at night times, Higher traffic speeds, increasingly larger trucks and other traffic means increased danger.

Locally, we have a community can that can take people to services in the regional centre, but has no capacity for local trips.

Again, I believe that a federal government must play a significant leadership role in vastly improving this situation, and I would welcome the opportunity to make much more detail available to the committee of inquiry on this vital issue, including references for various information included in this submission.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission

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