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

Dear Secretary

RE : SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE INVESTMENT OF COMMONWEALTH AND STATE FUNDS IN PUBLIC PASSENGER TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

The following comments are provided on behalf of the City of Victor Harbor, for consideration in relation to the Senate inquiry into the investment of Commonwealth and State funds in public passenger transport infrastructure and services

Victor Harbor is a rapidly growing community in rural/regional South Australia. It is located 80 km south of Adelaide, and acts as the regional centre for the Southern Fleurieu peninsula. Linked with rapid growth has been a substantial increase in demand for transport services. In addition, there is a high ratio of the aged in our community, who tend to be more dependent on public transport.

Improved public passenger transport infrastructure and services are needed to provide equity for our community members to be able to access key services and facilities, and be able to engage in community life.

Social inclusion is well documented as an essential component of good health and wellbeing. Someone who does not drive, or have access to a car, currently has limited opportunities to participate in community life in our region. For those people who are geographically isolated in our community, frail, or experiencing a disability, the opportunities diminish further. Basic activities that we take for granted such as shopping, visiting friends and other social activities are often out of reach for this group. Members of our community who are socially or financially disadvantaged also need affordable access to life-enhancing opportunities such as support programs, training or workshops.

Of particular concern is the high level of risk-taking activity by youth due to there being a lack of transport options. For example, 42% of the respondents of a survey of local youth stated they had been a passenger in a car in which the driver was under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and that 14% have themselves driven under the influence.

Cost is a factor that is continuously highlighted as a barrier to using available transport. The community has suggested a fairer transport subsidy scheme that would improve access for all those who experience mobility issues, as well as people who are geographically isolated. A more flexible voucher system would have the ability to respond to individual needs that cannot be addressed through development of regular services. This could range from an elderly person visiting their spouse in the nursing home, to safer choices being made by a young person to return home from a party.

Consideration of vehicle type is another important factor in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. Accessible buses and vehicles are essential for social equity. Comfort and timeliness is another consideration for the frail aged, or people feeling unwell.

Affordable and frequent access to shops and businesses has been highlighted as a need across all community groups, especially for those living away from the existing route services.

Limited transport options impact on the ability of local young people to undertaking after-school activities, such as music, dance and sport. Young people are reliant upon availability of parents to collect them after such activities. If transport from parents is not an option students are deprived from opportunities for personal development. It also limits young people's ability to attend a school outside their area. Children and parents select alternative schools for many reasons such as subject choice, school style or harassment issues. It is important that children are not denied the opportunity of finding a school to suit their particular needs due to a lack of transport.

Limited transport options also impacts on the ability of people to attend TAFE and other vocational education. Students have highlighted issues such as infrequent services that do not suit times of TAFE courses, route service bus stops too far away from home, affordability, and restrictions on eligibility to Department for Education and Children's Services (DECS) buses. It is also worth noting that not only are part-time students precluded from using the DECS buses but they are further disadvantaged by not being eligible for general transport concessions.

Infrequency of the existing route service and lack of any intra-township service make access to places of employment very difficult. Workers in isolated areas, and school students working casually, are further disadvantaged.

People have identified a need for affordable transport to enable access to the Medical centres, visiting specialists, support groups and community programs.

As stated, improved public passenger transport infrastructure and services are needed to provide equity for our community members to be able to access key services and facilities, and be able to engage in community life.

Yours faithfully



Mark Oliphant
MANAGER COMMUNITY SERVICES