



## **BusNSW Submission to Senate Inquiry into Public Transport**

The NSW private bus industry is characterized by small and medium sized businesses, employing approximately 16,000 people, operating 7,000 buses and coaches.

BusNSW) represents:

- All Sydney Metropolitan and Outer Metropolitan private bus operators
- Country town and school bus operators throughout NSW
- Tourist coach and charter operators, including CountryLink rail replacement services

We provide an essential service to the community and feel the Commonwealth Government should take a strong policy and leadership role in public transport. In the past the focus has been on road and heavy vehicle regulations, largely ignoring the role public transport plays throughout Australia.

We understand that the States have primary service delivery responsibilities, however public transport needs stronger Commonwealth Government influence. Some of the reasons for a greater intervention include:

1. **Reduction in congestion** – Traffic congestion, largely caused by private cars, is costing Australia and Australian business billions of dollars a year and inhibiting economic growth.
2. **Petrol prices** – The high cost of driving and fuel price uncertainty is increasing the demand for a public transport alternative.
3. **Climate Change and Pollution** – Enabling more people to leave their cars at home and take public transport will cut greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution and noise pollution.
4. **Safety** – Quite apart from the tragedy of road accidents, the death and injury to thousands of people every year costs our country billions of dollars. Increased use of public transport will reduce accidents. Buses are the safest form of land transport.
5. **Land use and resources** – A permanent trend to greater public transport use will reduce new road building and land resumption. Public transport has a significant role in the structure and function of our cities. Poor land use planning leads to substandard public transport.

6. **Health** – People who walk to the bus stop or train station are healthier (and leaner!) than those who drive. It's that simple.
7. **Our ageing population and social exclusion** – As the Australian population ages, the number of people unable to drive is increasing while the need for these same people to access government and community services is also increasing. A failure to focus on public transport, particularly in outer metropolitan and regional areas, will increase exclusion and social problems and frustrate delivery of services by a range of Commonwealth and State government departments. The solution for many of these challenges is for the Commonwealth Government to play a greater leadership role in the planning and coordination of public transport.
8. **States get sidetracked on using funds from the Commonwealth Government** – There is a strong case for tying some of the funding to national interest public transport spending.

#### **A) INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING – IMPROVED UTILIZATION OF EXISTING ROADS AND FUNDING**

The Bus Industry believes Commonwealth infrastructure funding through Infrastructure Australia, the Auslink and Roads to Recovery programs should be made conditional on public transport considerations being taken into account. Auslink funding is currently provided based on the National Guidelines for Transport Systems Management in Australia. These guidelines should include the requirement for all projects to meet public transport planning guidelines and the requirements of the National Charter of Integrated Land Use and Transport Planning endorsed by both Ministers for Transport and Planning in 2003. The same could apply to Roads to Recovery and Infrastructure Australia transport projects

#### **B) BUS RAPID TRANSIT – BUS PRIORITY**

BRT projects are an avenue for Commonwealth and State Government partnerships to address a specific problem. They also provide information on passenger travel behavior and choices. BRT projects can be as big as the Queensland Busways project in Brisbane or as small as investment in Intelligent Transport Systems which provide real time information to passengers and dedicated bus priority. BusNSW sees that the Commonwealth Government could provide funding for major BRT projects. These projects could be done in partnership with the NSW Government for a BRT as a transition plan for the very long term heavy rail projects for North West and South West Sydney.

#### **C) BLACK SPOTS – URBAN CONGESTION TREATMENTS**

A funding initiative for consideration is to extend the existing Black Spots program that is directed to road safety black spot to include congestion black spots. This could include simple treatments that would assist in providing bus priority such as traffic light priority, priority lay by lanes at intersections and lights, intelligent transport system solutions such as real time information, priority traffic information to improve travel times in peak periods.

#### **D) TAXATION INCENTIVES FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT USE**

Currently the taxation system encourages the use of company cars leading to increased traffic congestion. A taxation incentive for both employers and employees provides in turn a simple incentive for the greater use of public transport services and reduced reliance on the car.

In 2006 the Canadian Government introduced a tax credit for public transit which allows Canadians who have purchased monthly transit passes or passes for a longer duration to claim a 15.5% credit in their income tax returns. This applies to all users.

Employers could be provided the incentive to provide employees with public transport passes as part of FBT salary packaging arrangements as an alternative to car and car park packaging.

#### **E) TRAVEL SMART – NATIONAL TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE – CLIMATE CHANGE**

Travel Smart is an educational/promotional program that promotes walking, cycling and the use of public transport. It promotes clever options such as tele-working and discourages single occupant car use. Funding is provided by the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

This educational/practical initiatives program should be expanded by the Commonwealth to provide information to the community about the cost of running a car and the alternative travel options available (similar to the Commonwealth's "Understanding Money" Education campaign). Local Government involvement should be considered as well as direct advertising with existing public transport providers.

#### **F) LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCESSIBILITY/PLANNING TRANSPORT COMMITTEES**

An increasing national problem is social exclusion where people without transport, particularly ageing populations become socially isolated and increasingly requires health and social security resources. This is because they cannot reasonably access community services. It is proposed that Commonwealth funding could support Local and State Governments through Regional Partnerships Accessibility/ Planning and Transport Committees that:

- assess existing passenger transport services within their council area or region
- undertake a transport needs survey of the community
- develop a Transport Needs Plan to feed into State Governments to better co-ordinate and utilize existing public transport services, community transport, veterans affairs and indigenous affairs transport
- appoint Regional Transport Coordinators that actually contribute to setting appropriate levels of access for their communities. The NSW government has set up such coordinators but they have no authority to influence service delivery. A national standard requiring compliance from the states should be developed.

NSW Regional Coordinators are only really focusing on transport disadvantage and have no link with helping coordinate existing (non disadvantage based) services

#### **G) INVESTMENT ALLOWANCE TO RENEW BUS FLEET**

Extend the investment allowance beyond 30/6/09 to bus and coach operators to encourage the purchase of newer, more comfortable and attractive vehicles. This would make public transport travel more appealing and (with the right incentives) motivate States to increase the number of services provided to meet increasing patronage demands.

This would assist in meeting the compliance requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act Accessible Transport Standards, new emission standards and support the local bus manufacturing industry.

The deregulation of the tourist and charter industry has resulted in a rapidly ageing fleet and an investment allowance for this sector would respond to Australia becoming an Eco/Heritage and environmentally attractive destination.

#### **H) EMISSIONS TRADING**

The Bus Industry supports the concept of reducing the emissions cap for transport energy use, as recommended by the Prime Ministerial Task Group on Emissions Trading, where it can be demonstrated that policies are in place that reduce transport energy use and provide energy efficiencies. This would include the Commonwealth Government acknowledging the impact of achieving lower vehicle emissions and the external benefits of public bus transport use to the environment over its major competitors the motor vehicle and rail. Public transport providers should receive trading credits for the environmental benefits they provide in taking cars off the road.

#### **I) SECURE PASSENGER TRANSPORT IS A SEPARATE EMPLOYMENT SECTOR IN THE NEXT STAGES OF AWARD MODERNISATION**

The bus industry sees the benefit of Industrial reforms. There is a critical shortage of bus drivers in NSW and it is essential the Industrial environment for bus industry workers is not consumed in the freight/ trucking environment. We seek a commitment that land passenger transport employment standards would stand alone in any award rationalization process.

#### **J) PROVIDE FUNDING FOR TRIALING HYBRID FUEL TECHNOLOGY BUSES**

In support of initiatives to reduce emissions the Commonwealth government should fund trials of hybrid electric or other alternate fuels and technology buses in Australian conditions.

#### **K) TOURISM AND THE COACH INDUSTRY**

The national land transport tourism report released last year showed the enormous advantages to the economy of tourists using coach travel rather than private cars to destinations of choice. BusNSW proposes that the Commonwealth Government follow up the land transport strategy with a specific coach tourism marketing campaign.

#### **L) INCREASE GVM OF 2 AXLE BUSES/COACHES**

The progress on improving mass and dimensions restrictions and incentives for 16.5 Tonne 2 axle buses and coaches is particularly slow and the industry considers that interim arrangements for axle and GVM tolerances on these vehicles should be put in place. To overcome liability issues and give certainty to the community the industry seeks ATC early attention to such interim measures while a full package of dimensions/productivity and pricing is developed. DOTARS should release in principle support for moving to 18 tonne.

#### **M) NATIONAL STANDARDS**

The Bus Industry has also put forward a number of other initiatives to improve the safety and reliability of the industry relating to national standards of accreditation and mutual recognition across state boundaries. At present there is inadequate recognition of the high level of accreditation needed for passenger transport compared to freight transport, when national guidelines are being considered. For example NTC fatigue guidelines have been overridden by state exemptions. Another example is the treatment of Performance Based Standards and mass limits which appear to discount the social and environmental benefits of growing public transport. Mass and dimension standards for Buses and Coaches should be harmonized with the rest of the world.

#### **N) MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY- CREATE NEW PORTFOLIO OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Given the importance of growing public transport to the Australian communities, BusNSW recommends a specific Ministry of Public Transport be created within the federal government. At present it could be argued when examining ATC communiqués that the cooperation between the states and federal government on transport has been heavily dominated on regulating heavy vehicles without adequate focus on the differences between moving people and freight. The federal government structures do not adequately provide leadership with growing public transport and tends to be more about trying to harmonize vehicle standards, without promoting the benefit of getting more people out of their cars. At present there is a lack of coordination between federal funded Health transport (eg. HACC scheme) and state government contracted services. The State funded fleets can be better utilized for servicing the transport disadvantaged. A separate Ministry can submit major public transport infrastructure projects.

#### **O) PROVIDE MINIMUM STANDARDS OF SERVICE LEVELS AND PROMOTE MODE INTEGRATION**

There is a strong need to ensure the community has adequate access to public transport. There are great differences between the service levels provided in cities and country towns and the linking of villages and towns of a similar nature. The Federal government should establish minimum service levels for urban centers, regional towns, villages and links between them.

The Federal Government should be actively encouraging the integration of public transport modes, including faster transport interchanges, better public transport planning, simpler seamless ticketing systems, and road priority systems that favour greater use of existing and future public transport networks.

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