



Council of Social Service of New South Wales

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

Dear Committee Secretary

The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is the peak body for the non-government human services sector in NSW. We work with our members, the NSW Government and other relevant agencies, towards achieving social justice in New South Wales.

Public transport plays an important role in enabling people experiencing disadvantage to participate in society. As such, NCOSS believes that public transport is essential in building a more productive and more equitable Australia.

We welcome the Senate Inquiry into the role of public transport in delivering productivity outcomes, and provide more detailed responses to selected matters covered by the Inquiry's Terms of Reference below.

- *The social and environmental benefits of public transport projects compared to road infrastructure projects such as Westconnex and the East-West Link;*

Although considerable attention has been given to the relative environmental benefits of public transport over road-based private transport, less attention has been paid to the social and health outcomes linked to investment in transport infrastructure.

Public transport can contribute to positive social outcomes by:

- **Enabling people to participate in society.** Over the course of a person's life, transport will influence their ability to stay healthy, be educated, find work, raise children, age with dignity, and stay connected with family and friends. Accessible and affordable public transport ensures these opportunities are available to all people, including those who are unable to drive and those who do not have access to a car. As our society ages, the role of public transport in facilitating an inclusive society will become even more important.
- **Reducing commuting times:** The time spent commuting has been found to correlate with lower reported life satisfaction¹ and well-being², physical inactivity³,

¹ Stutzer, A. and Frey, B. S. (2008) Stress that Doesn't Pay: The Commuting Paradox!, *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*. 110(2): 339–366.

² Crabtree, S. (2010) Wellbeing Lower Among Workers With Long Commutes Gallup. Retrieved 30 April 2012, from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/142142/wellbeing-lower-among-workerslong-commutes.aspx>.

³ World Health Organisation (2000) Transport, Environment and Health. Regional Office for Europe, Copenhagen.

fewer social connections⁴, and less time with family⁵. People who cannot afford to live close to employment opportunities are more likely to face longer commutes.

Both public transport and road infrastructure projects can also incur significant social, health and environment costs that should be taken into consideration when calculating the net benefits ensuing from investment in transport infrastructure.

Internationally, there is a growing body of evidence showing that the costs and benefits of transport investments are not evenly distributed across society, with people experiencing poverty and disadvantage more likely to be adversely impacted⁶. In the United States for example, low-income neighbourhoods are more likely to contain major arterials and four-way intersections, and are subject to traffic volumes 2.4 times greater than high-income neighbourhoods⁷. Children from low socioeconomic groups are between four⁸ and twenty-one⁹ times more at risk of being killed on the road than children from higher socioeconomic groups.

The full gamut of social, health and environmental outcomes – along with the distribution of these outcomes – should be given greater consideration in transport infrastructure decision-making. These issues have previously been over-shadowed by a narrow focus on transport as an economic concern.

➤ *The relationship between public transport and building well-functioning cities;*

Transport disadvantage and the social exclusion it causes can limit educational attainment and employment opportunities¹⁰, exacerbate poverty, and decrease emotional, mental and physical wellbeing¹¹.

Public transport plays a key role in overcoming transport disadvantage, and is therefore vital not only for individual well-being, but also for a community's overall health, prosperity and progress. A city that is affordable and accessible will support social inclusion and equality. A city that is planned to support social cohesion will be safer. In turn, the liveability of cities will contribute to their productive potential.

Research also shows that unless we tackle the problem of dependency on individual car ownership, the increasing price of oil will have major equity implications, and will exacerbate social divides along geographical lines¹². Public transport should play an important role in addressing this challenge into the future.

➤ *The decision of the Federal Government to refuse to fund public transport projects;*

We are disappointed by the Federal Government's decision not to fund public transport projects.

Historically, Government investment in transport at all levels has favoured car use and car

⁴ Putnam, R. (1995) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* Robert D. Putnam; New York: Simon, Journal of Democracy. January 19: 65-78.

⁵ Flood, M.& Barbato, C. (2005) *Off to work: Commuting in Australia*. The Australia Institute, April 2005.

⁶ Sustainable Development Commission (2011) *Fairness in a car dependent society*, London, England.

⁷ Patrick Morency, Lise Gauvin, Céline Plante, Michel Fournier, and Catherine Morency (2012) *Neighborhood Social Inequalities in Road Traffic Injuries: The Influence of Traffic Volume and Road Design*. *American Journal of Public Health*.

⁸ Desapriya, E., Sones, M., Ramanzin, T., Weinstein, S., Scime, G., and I. Pike (2011) *Injury prevention in child death review: child pedestrian fatalities*, *Injury Prevention*, 12 (Suppl 1), pp. i4 – i9

⁹ Edwards, P, Roberts et al, (2006) *Deaths from injury in children and employment status in family: analysis of trends in class specific death rates*, *British Medical Journal*, 333, pp 119–121

¹⁰ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the Connections: Final report on transport and social exclusion*, London.

¹¹ Delbosc and Currie (2011) *Transport problems that matter-social and psychological links to transport disadvantage*, *Journal of Transport Geography*. 19(1): 170-178.

¹² Dodson, J and Sipe, N (2005) *Oil Vulnerability in the Australian City*, Urban Research Program, Griffith University, Research Paper 6, p. 16

ownership¹³, and we have previously called on both the NSW and the Federal Government to rebalance the investment of public monies in favour of public transport^{14,15}.

Through its role in allocating infrastructure funding to State Governments, the Federal Government has an opportunity to show stronger vision and courage by investing in a transport system that will not just contribute to a stronger economy, but will also shape a fairer and more sustainable society. We sincerely hope the Federal Government will take this opportunity, and will reconsider its decision not to invest in public transport.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Peters
Chief Executive Officer

¹³ Australian Conservation Foundation (2011), *Australia's Public Transport: Investment for a Clean Transport Future*, Melbourne, Australia.

¹⁴ NCOSS (2012) [Response to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan Discussion Paper](#).

¹⁵ ACOSS (2012) Letter to the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Minister for Infrastructure and Transport