

Australian Greens' Additional Comments

1.1 The Australian Greens are committed to building clean, rapid and reliable transport infrastructure that serves the needs of all in the community efficiently and effectively, while eliminating our dependence on oil and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

1.2 The committee report is an excellent summary of the role of public transport in delivering productivity outcomes, and is a clear exposition of the superior economic, social and environmental benefits that investment in appropriate public transport as a rule has compared with major new road infrastructure.

1.3 It is clear from the evidence presented to the committee that that large sections of Australia's rail and public transport networks require substantial upgrades and mass transit services in most urban areas are so poor that driving is the only option for many people. Current investment in public transport does not match the projected increase in the urban public transport task, which the report notes is growing at a rate that outstrips population growth.¹

1.4 Clear themes of serious concern have emerged from the evidence provided, including the legacy of an imbalance between funding for motorways and public transport. The recommendations contained in the committee report do not reflect the full extent of the relative value of investment in public transport over large road projects when these road projects are proposed to largely to serve passenger travel, particularly commuter travel.

1.5 We note the superior economic and social benefits and efficacy in reducing congestion that investment in appropriate public transport as a rule has, compared with major new road infrastructure.

1.6 The Australian Greens support the recommendation that Australian Government should fund transport including road and public transport projects on a mode neutral basis. However we also consider that decisions on which projects to fund should be made in the context of the legacy of underinvestment in public transport in comparison with major road infrastructure projects in Australian cities over the last 30 years. Because of this underinvestment and the significant social, economic and environmental benefits of investing in public transport, the Australian Greens consider that urban public transport should be prioritised for consideration for funding by the Australian Government.

1.7 While we support the recommendations contained in the report, the Australian Greens feel that stronger emphasis needs to be placed in order to take into account the issues noted in these comments. We propose the following recommendations in addition to those included in the report.

1 Moving People 2030 Taskforce, Moving Australia 2013: A Transport Plan for a Productive and Active Australia, 2013, p.40.

Recommendation 1

1.8 Given the productivity cost of capital city congestion, the Australian Greens recommend that all levels of government should take action to reduce congestion.

Recommendation 2

1.9 We recommend that transport infrastructure projects being considered for funding by the Australian Government must have a comparative benefit cost analysis undertaken, in particular comparing major proposed road projects with other options available to address the identified transport needs. These options should include mobility management and public transport options.

Recommendation 3

1.10 The Australian Greens recommend that smaller cost projects, involving the more efficient use of existing infrastructure and more efficient integration of routes and modes, be prioritised according to the positive benefits they produce. This would include mobility management measures which provide people with real choices in the way they travel, and encourage the use of modes of transport other than single occupancy private vehicle use.

Recommendation 4

1.11 The Australian Greens recommend that investments in public transport should be prioritised for consideration for funding by the Australian Government, given the legacy of underinvestment over the last 30 years.

Senator Janet Rice
Australian Greens