

**Submission to the Garnaut Climate Change Review
Issues Paper – Forum 5
Transport, Planning and the Built Environment**



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1. About NCOSS

NCOSS is an independent non-government organisation and is the peak body for the non-government human services sector in NSW. NCOSS works with its members on behalf of disadvantaged people and communities towards achieving social justice in New South Wales.

It was established in 1935 and is part of a national network of Councils of Social Service, which operate in each State and Territory and at Commonwealth level.

NCOSS membership is composed of community organisations and interested individuals. Affiliate members include local government councils, business organisations and Government agencies. Through current membership forums, NCOSS represents more than 7,000 community organisations and over 100,000 consumers and individuals.

2. Introduction

NCOSS welcomes the Garnaut Climate Change Review and supports the Government's commitment to looking at the issues of climate change. Climate change is one of the major issues facing not only Australia but the world and NCOSS believes that it is an issue that needs to be addressed effectively.

However, NCOSS urges Governments' to ensure that the costs of dealing with climate change are equitably distributed in a way that doesn't exacerbate existing disadvantage including taking a "whole of society" approach rather than an "individual household" approach. Often decisions made to address climate change appear to be based on the assumption that people can afford to make changes, without looking at the underlying reasons for people's choices. A "whole of society" approach would ensure that issues are addressed in a way that will benefit all rather than causing further disadvantage.

It should also be noted that transport and energy costs make up a significantly higher proportion of household costs for low income households. Therefore "market based" solutions may have outcomes that have significant negative social outcomes.

NCOSS believes that those people who may already face disadvantage in their access to transport and environmentally sustainable housing need to be involved in the discussion about these issues. That is a 'social inclusion' model of consultation and implementation needs to be adopted.

3. Transport and Planning

3.1 Introduction

Significant geographic distance between housing, services, employment and education is a defining characteristic for many regions in Australia. Many members of rural and regional communities frequently travel long distances to access basic services or participate in employment, while in outer metropolitan and suburban areas frequent trips using private motor vehicles to access jobs and services is the norm.

Poor urban and service planning tied to significant under investment in public transport has led to an over reliance on private motor vehicles in order to 'bridge the geographic' divide between people and jobs and services.

3.2 What are the key barriers to the adoption of cost-effective and low-emissions mode use in the passenger transport sector? How might these be addressed effectively and efficiently by government policy?

Although NCOSS accepts that funding for public transport services will largely remain the responsibility of States and Territories, there is an opportunity for the Federal Government to invest strategically in public and community transport service. NCOSS believes that public and community transport services are particularly important for people who do not have access to private motor vehicle transport or as a means of improving access to these types of services.

Opportunities for investment in this area include funding for feeder services that link local communities to national transport corridors, and seed and recurrent funding for public and community transport services that link isolated communities to services and employment.

NCOSS also believes that funding to support infrastructure and maintenance costs for regional passenger rail services would also be beneficial.

NCOSS believes that tying investments in road expenditure to expansion of other passenger transport modes is another way the Government can address the need for low-emissions mode of transport. Where appropriate, the Australian Government should look at long term strategies to encourage alternative modes of transport, such as walking or cycling.

However, while mode shares are important too often we allow debates about transport to be just about crude mode shares. Mode shares and greenhouse emissions are not the same thing. Total vehicle kilometres travelled also needs to be considered.

3.2.1 Removing tax incentives for non-sustainable fuel use.

Current fringe benefits tax arrangements create a 'perverse incentive' for the increased use of private motor vehicle transport and fuel. On the other hand there are a few incentives available for promoting public transport use. NCOSS is concerned that the current Australian Government tax incentives promote increased car usage, and work at cross purposes to government and community efforts to encourage more environmentally and socially sustainable forms of transport. The current tax incentives also come at a significant cost to the Australian Government in the form of tax revenue foregone. NCOSS urges the Australian Government to review current tax incentives for private vehicle use.

3.3 What policies would be suitable to address barriers to the uptake of more fuel efficient passenger vehicles?

NCOSS agrees that there is a need to encourage the development of more fuel efficient private motor vehicles. However, this is only one part of the solution and one that favours those on higher incomes.

For NCOSS, the question that the Garnaut Change Review needs to answer is:

How do you discourage excessive and lengthy trips by people with adequate access by public or active transport to specific destinations (such as parents who drive their children to school) without hurting those for whom satisfactory options are not as available (such as people who live where there are no train services or who work at night)?

3.4 How can land-use planning and the built environment be managed more effectively to lower reliance on high emission patterns of transport behaviour?

There is a need to develop public transport infrastructure in areas with high recent or current population growth (e.g. North West and South West Sydney) and concentrate new population growth around designated hubs rather than continue the sprawl on the fringes or allow infill development in every suburban street.

There is also need to move some trip generators (jobs, universities, hospitals, places of recreation) closer to the people rather than always focusing on better ways of transporting people to the trip generators.

3.5 What policies could support cost-effective emissions reductions in the freight sector?

Freight transport is important, particularly freight passing through so-called economic gateways such as ports and airports. There are advantages to establishing intermodal terminals to and from which freight can be moved by rail to these gateways. This requires a far more extensive rail freight system than we have.

4. Transport Disadvantage

NCOSS is particularly concerned about suggestions for using price to change people's behaviour in choice of transport. While this may be an option for those that are well-off many people live in areas of socio-economic disadvantage with

- (a) poor access to public transport
- (b) where they are constrained from using public transport due to cost or inappropriateness of the options available
- (c) they are unable to afford new fuel-efficient vehicles

This is also applicable to people living in rural and remote areas.

Therefore following are key issues around transport disadvantage that the Garnaut Climate Change Review must consider when considering transport options and addressing barriers to using alternate means of transport.

4.1 Aboriginal Communities¹

Isolation from transport services and infrastructure is a defining characteristic for many Aboriginal communities in NSW. The barriers experienced by many Aboriginal people in gaining transport can make existing problems accessing employment, education, services, and recreation worse.

Some of the transport issues faced by Aboriginal communities are historical in nature, and trace back to the segregation of Aboriginal communities that began in the mid to late 19th century. Segregation laws dislocated Aboriginal people from jobs and services, often expressly forbidding Aboriginal communities from taking these opportunities. As a result geographic isolation (and thus transport problems) was created, shifting Aboriginal communities away from services, employment and training.

4.1.1 Isolation from Services

Many Aboriginal communities are physically isolated from public and community transportation. Frequently, isolation from services reflects the historical segregation of Aboriginal people from services and jobs, with poor connections between isolated Aboriginal communities and towns / regional centres. Isolation from services can also occur in an urban setting. This results in an increasing reliance on motor vehicles, which will not be addressed through the use of pricing to change behaviour.

4.1.2 Discrimination

Many Aboriginal people report that they have experienced discrimination in their use of existing services, including transport services. Across Australia, Aboriginal people are routinely being refused bus, taxi or other services on the basis of unfair discrimination. This issue also needs to be addressed if Aboriginal people are to have greater access to and usage of public transport.

4.1.3 Inflexible / Culturally Inappropriate services.

Existing services are frequently unable to respond flexibly to the particular needs of Aboriginal communities. For example in some Aboriginal communities there can be difficulties organising transport to funerals, often because there are a lack of public or community transport options, and no prioritisation for these journeys. Therefore, changing patterns of transport use is not just about accessing employment or leisure activities. There are many culturally specific needs for transport and these issues must also be considered.

4.1.4 Poor Coordination of Services to Aboriginal Communities.

Frequently there is poor coordination between local, public and community transport providers, which can either make existing services difficult to use, or fail to take opportunities to share resources in order to solve community problems. The long travelling times mean that many people who do not have access to a motor vehicle are discouraged from attending medical appointments.

¹ This was put together by the NSW Aboriginal Transport Network, a group made up of Aboriginal workers from across NSW who are active in transport and community development.

4.1.5 Affordability

Affordability of services is an important issue, particularly for low income Aboriginal people. Frequently services can be expensive, particularly for people who don't have access to concession public transport fares. Other transport costs, such as maintaining a motor vehicle, can be high for people living in isolated communities.

4.2 All Communities

“Transport poverty,” “Transport Disadvantage,” or “Transport Stress” can be defined as involving difficulties accessing transport – either because of factors of cost, availability of services or poor physical accessibility – which leads to isolation from jobs, health and treatment, as well as social and recreational activity. The UK Social Exclusion Unit state that “problems with transport and the location of services contribute to social exclusion by preventing people from participating in work or learning, or accessing healthcare, food shopping and other local activities.”ⁱ

While this is true, transportation concerns frequently lay outside of the core priorities of social policy work. As a result transport planning, infrastructure and funding issues do not receive the same attention from the welfare and community sector as traditional human service areas. The March 2004 Senate Report on Poverty and Hardship is evidence of this: of the 95 recommendations of the final report, there were no recommendations dealing explicitly with transport while only 2 recommendations actually mentioned transport.ⁱⁱ

There are a number of identifiable characteristics for individuals and households who experience transport poverty:

4.2.1 High Transport Costs

Transport expenses for disadvantaged communities can be high, with transport costs typically consuming a greater proportion of expenditure for low-income households. Because of poor availability of public transport services, many low income people rely on private motor vehicle transport. This mode of transport is expensive and can disproportionately impact upon the weekly budgets of low income people. Information from the Victorian Coalition for People's Transport indicates that “car ownership costs consume 13 per cent of average incomes, but 28 per cent of the incomes of low-income earners.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Transport expenses for low income households without a car can also be expensive, particularly where unaffordable forms of public transport are used. NCOSS has recently estimated that in NSW alone, between 15 and 20% of taxi trips are made by low income people. Indeed, there been a steady increase in the use of taxi transport by low income people reported in other countries,^{iv} which has arguably also occurred in parts of Australia as a consequence of the dislocation of communities from public transport routes and increasing demand for flexible transport alternatives.

Public transport expenses can also be high for low income people who do are not entitled to a concession fare. There exist a number of gaps in the provision of concession fares across Australian jurisdictions, including, for example, the lack of transport concession for Aboriginal people who participate in Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP).

4.2.2 Poor Availability of Public Transport Services

Australia is characterised by largely low density development (particularly in suburban, outer metropolitan and country areas) large geographic distances between home, education, jobs and services, and a heavy reliance on private motor vehicles to carry the passenger transport task (in urban areas cars account for 93% of passenger transport^v).

A disproportionate investment by governments in roads has led to poor availability of public transport services, particularly in rural and regional areas. In isolated and remote regions there is often a limited mix of transport options, and frequently a school bus service is the only form of public transportation. Community transport services do exist across Australia, but these are often poorly funded and are not able to easily respond to all people who experience transport disadvantage.

4.2.3 Inability to Access Jobs and Services

A key characteristic of transport poverty is that transport becomes a factor in gaining and maintaining employment. For example the UK Social Exclusion Unit indicates that 38% of jobseekers cite transport as a barrier to getting a job.^{vi}

Importantly, transport is often a reason that low income people do not access basic health treatment. In 2003 NCOSS released a report on transport to residential aged care facilities which found that a large number of residents typically had less than \$10 per week to spend on transport, and that many residents routinely missed health related appointments because of transport difficulties.^{vii}

4.2.4 Isolation of Communities

Transport Poverty generates geographic and social isolation. This can have different characteristics for different population groups. People with disability, for example, often experience isolation as a result of the poor physical accessibility of transport modes. Children and young people can experience isolation as a result of transport policy and public attitudes that are largely antagonistic to young transport users (for example media campaigns against young drivers or tough policing of young commuters).

4.2.5 Some Solutions

Firstly, Federal, State and Local governments must all accept their responsibilities in addressing transport poverty. This means developing decent planning processes for services at a local level, improved funding for public transport services from state and territory governments, and responsibility at a Federal level for passenger transport programs. *Secondly*, we need to improve the research that is available on the links between transportation and poverty, and improve our understanding of how to incorporate solutions within our Anti-Poverty strategies. By doing this Government will also respond to issues around greenhouse gas emissions by providing affordable, appropriate, accessible and usable public and community transport options.

5. Buildings

BASIX in NSW has shown that it is feasible using existing technology to reduce water and energy use in most settings except for high rise apartments. More work is needed on reducing energy use in high rise apartments through means such as co-generation. Whilst

substantial renovations now come under BASIX, it will be a long time before the general housing stock is retrofitted. The Garnaut Climate Change Review also needs to consider how to drive change in the existing housing stock.

Other trends, however, are moving in the wrong direction e.g. ever more air conditioners and swimming pools are being installed. Paradoxically climate change itself makes air conditioning more attractive, which means we need more baseload electricity etc. We probably know less than we should about what is driving some of these trends and thus how to influence behaviour.

Any discussion about changing dwelling stock and appliances needs to recognize that 30% of the population are tenants. (It must be said that not all tenants are poor). As the paper notes, tenants have no way of forcing their landlords to retrofit their premises or install better hot water systems etc but end up paying any increased user charges. As well social housing providers are generally marginal businesses, with most public housing agencies effectively running at a loss on their rental operations. They will thus continue to find it difficult to obtain the necessary capital to invest in new hot water systems, refurbishments etc. These considerations need to be factored into the agenda.

6. Conclusion

NCOSS welcomes the Garnaut Climate Change Review and the changes that it is trying to make in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, there are a range of issues, as discussed in this submission, that need to be seriously and thoroughly considered before any recommendations are decided upon.

ⁱ Social Exclusion Unit, "Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion," Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, February 2003, p9.

ⁱⁱ Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, "A Hand Up not a Hand Out: Renewing the Fight Against Poverty," March 2004.

ⁱⁱⁱ Victorian Coalition for People's Transport, *The Place to be on PT: A Vision for Greater Melbourne's Transport*, 2004, p5.

^{iv} SEU, "Making the Connections," p23.

^v Department of Transport and Regional Services, *AusLink White Paper*, June 2004, p4.

^{vi} SEU, "Making the Connections," p9.

^{vii} Council of Social Service of NSW, *On the Road, Again: The Transport Needs of People in Residential Aged Care*, December 2003