

Submission to the Garnaut Review on its Issues Paper on
Transport, Planning and the Built Environment

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General comments

This Issues Paper discusses the contribution of transport to greenhouse gas emissions, but in general the paper considers the three elements transport, planning and the built environment as separate issues and does not analyse their fundamental interconnection and interaction sufficiently.

Within the paper, the transport section remains focused on individual car use and gives little attention to active travel and methods to encourage its widespread adoption in the population. The planning section focuses on transport planning, and does not look at how urban planning more generally could contribute to emissions reduction.

The section on the built environment discusses buildings, rather than the built environment. This is an omission, as the concept of the built environment was developed to articulate the interactions between geography, landform, built structures and their functions, transport systems, streets, and the people who use and experience these things. Transport is central to this interaction, as it facilitates the movement of people and goods between space, land and buildings. The paper needs to develop a broader concept of the built environment.

Active travel

The concept of active travel (walking, cycling and/or public transport, either separately or in combinations that suit people's needs and circumstances) has much to offer policymakers seeking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Moser and Dilling, 2007). Active travel has multiple environmental, health and social benefits which include:

- reduced car use and associated greenhouse gas emissions
- improved air quality
- less traffic congestion
- increased levels of physical activity
- increased social interaction and social capital

The Health Promotion Service of Sydney South West Area Health Service has been working on programs to increase active travel for some time, including conducting and evaluating **active travel to school programs with over 30 primary schools**. Key findings of this evaluative research are:

- The majority of primary school children are driven to and from school, but there is a high variation from school to school
- The factor most strongly associated with children being driven to school is their parents' car journey to work (Wen et al, 2007)
- Improvements in safety, amenity and walkability of walking routes to schools and better connectivity with and frequency of public transport are needed to encourage more students and parents to go to school and to work by active travel.

Active travel programs in Australia- issues for development

Major expansion and updating of public transport infrastructure

Significant expansion and updating of public transport infrastructure in Australia is urgently required. The Australian government should take a role in funding this process. People cannot reduce their car use if there is no or inadequate public transport to use.

Scale and quality of programs

The amount of funds and the scale of active travel programs in Australia to date have been very small (UrbanTrans, 2008). To substantially reduce emissions requires a significant expansion in program funds, quality of design, ambition and scale (Tribbia, 2007).

The Linked Trip

Most active travel programs, including those funded by the Australian Greenhouse Office and state governments via the Travelsmart program, have focused on individual commuters or workplaces or schools. Very few programs to date have focused on the linked trip (eg home to school to workplace, or workplace to shops to home) which is how many people, particularly parents, actually travel. Active travel programs can address this issue by funding combined or integrated programs that include, for example, workplaces and schools that linked by public transport corridors.

Funds for infrastructure that supports active and safe travel

In Australia, active travel programs generally, and Travelsmart programs specifically, have not included funds for improved infrastructure in their budgets. The focus has been on individual behaviour change rather than improved infrastructure or urban planning processes to support active and safe travel.

In countries such as USA and UK, programs on active and safe travel to school and other destinations include funds for infrastructure improvements (Center for Health Training, 2007, Sustrans, 2007). Active travel programs in Australia need to have funds for infrastructure, or the ability to access funds that may be in other budgets, to make programs more effective.

Collaboration across the multiple sectors that influence active travel

Many government and other agencies make decisions that influence the degree to which active travel is feasible for people. In NSW, there is complex and divided jurisdiction between multiple agencies, including the Roads and Traffic Authority, councils, public transport bodies, police, health agencies and others responsible for improving safety, walkability and amenity of environments, which complicates the process of addressing issues that are barriers to active and safe travel.

While other states may not have the same complexity or configuration of factors as NSW, it is likely that increased opportunities for collaboration between sectors (such as road safety, transport, education, health, planning, environment) in all states could strengthen active travel policies and programs.

Suggested directions for future developments

- The Australian and state governments need to jointly fund and develop a major updating and expansion of public transport infrastructure in Australia
- The Australian government should fund innovative community education programs, on climate change generally and active travel specifically
- National, state and local governments should collaborate within and across sectors and levels of government to systematically include in their decision-making processes ways to make physical environments more conducive to active travel.
- Government agencies should act as 'demonstration centres' and model to others how the organisation's emissions can be assessed, capped and reduced.

References

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