



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services

REPORT 1/56 – DECEMBER 2016

ACCESS TO TRANSPORT FOR SENIORS AND DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW

REPORTS
COMMITTEES

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The motto of the coat of arms for the state of New South Wales is “Orta recens quam pura nites”. It is written in Latin and means “newly risen, how brightly you shine”.

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Membership

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Terms of reference

That the Committee on Community Services inquire into and report on access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people (including but not limited to Aboriginal persons, persons with disability, and social housing tenants) in rural and regional NSW. Matters to be considered include:

- (a) Specific issues relating to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW;
- (b) Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW;
- (c) Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and timetabling generally;
- (d) Support that can be provided to seniors and disadvantaged people to assist with the costs of private transport where public transport is either unavailable or unable to meet the needs of these groups; and
- (e) Any other related matters.

The Committee was due to provide its report on 30 November 2016 but sought an extension until 22 December 2016.

Chair's foreword and summary

Poor transport can have a significant impact on the quality of people's lives. This is especially the case for disadvantaged people - including seniors, people with disability and Aboriginal people - living in rural and regional areas. Inquiry participants told us that poor or non-existent transport limits their ability to do basic things like shopping, banking and going to the doctor. It also isolates them from their communities by restricting their ability to see their friends and take part in sport and community activities. Poor transport can perpetuate disadvantage by limiting people's chances to find work and attend education and training.

The main issues that came up during our inquiry were poor coordination of rural and regional transport and the need for more flexible transport options and more accessible transport infrastructure. We also heard about the high cost of transport in rural and regional areas and the need for better information about services and transport concessions. Our recommendations have focused on these areas.

Better coordination and planning

People told us that transport in rural and regional areas is poorly coordinated, and often doesn't meet their needs. We heard that in many cases local organisations have vehicles available that are not being used, while people struggle to get where they need to go. We've recommended that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Education develop approval processes to make full use of underused transport assets, like local school buses.

Transport for NSW has appointed five new area managers across NSW and these positions should be able to improve the planning and coordination of transport in their areas. The managers will work with their local communities to procure services that are needed in their regions. We've recommended that the positions be evaluated in two years' time to make sure that Transport for NSW has the right organisational structures in place to improve rural and regional transport.

More flexible transport options

We heard that people want more flexible, on demand transport. Services with fixed and limited timetables often don't meet the needs of people in rural and regional areas. Transport for NSW told us that new bus contracts should allow more flexible services that respond to people's needs. For example, school buses will be able to pick up and drop off passengers during the day in between school runs. Bus contractors will also be able to work with point to point providers such as taxi drivers to provide more on demand services. Under the new contracts, fixed routes and timetables can be reassessed and changed to meet local needs.

New technology should also help to provide more flexible, better coordinated transport in rural and regional areas. Community transport providers have started using a new electronic booking system that tracks vehicles and allows people to book the service they need. The booking system provides real time information on where vehicles are and whether they can take more passengers. This will give Transport for NSW better information about the demand for services and make it possible to use vehicles more efficiently. While the system has potential to improve transport, we are mindful of the problems with internet coverage in many rural and regional areas. We've recommended that the booking system be evaluated in

two years, and that the impact of limited internet coverage be considered as part of the evaluation.

More accessible transport and information about services

People expressed frustration with the pace of access upgrades to transport infrastructure. It's often the case that buses and trains in rural and regional areas aren't accessible for seniors and people with disability. Many stations don't have lifts, and we heard that a lot of trains can't be safely accessed because boarding ramps are too short for rural stations where there is a big gap between the platform and the train. We recognise that work on access upgrades is underway, but we consider that the timeframe for the upgrades should be published and updated regularly. This way people will know when they can expect their local station to be accessible. We also recommend that longer ramps be made available at every rural train station so that people can safely access trains.

We heard that some rural areas have very few wheelchair accessible taxis and this limits transport options for the elderly and people with disability. The government's incentive program should help to increase the number of accessible taxis, but the program needs to be evaluated to make sure that more accessible taxis are made available in the areas where they are most needed.

Some people told us that lack of experience with public transport can be a barrier that stops them from using buses and trains. It can also be hard for people who aren't online to find information about transport services and concessions. We think that Transport for NSW should keep publishing travel information in hard copy, and make it available in places where it can be easily accessed, such as community and medical centres. We heard that travel training programs can help people who have never used public transport to become confident with using the service. We recommend that Transport for NSW's area managers make sure their local communities are aware about transport concessions and subsidies, and travel training services.

Support for remote and Aboriginal communities

In very remote areas private transport will continue to be the way that most people get around. We heard that the cost of fuel and difficulties with getting and keeping drivers' licences are barriers to people's access to private transport. Aboriginal people in particular have problems with getting their licences, because they find it harder to get identity documents and go through the testing process. Aboriginal people are also far more likely to have their licences suspended. Not being able to drive means they can't access medical and other services, and driving illegally can lead to imprisonment. The Driving Change program has had some success with overcoming the barriers that stop young Aboriginal people from getting their licences. We've recommended that the program be extended to more communities across NSW, once it has been evaluated.

To help with the cost of fuel, we've recommended that fuel cards be made available for people who live in very remote communities. Some communities will always be heavily reliant on private transport, as public and point to point transport may not be viable in very remote areas. Helping with the cost of fuel may be the most cost effective way to support access to transport in remote parts of NSW. We heard that petrol vouchers have been used as part of the Transport Access Regional Partnership Grants program, as well as in Western Australia through the Country Age Pension Fuel Card.

Improving subsidy schemes

The affordability of transport is a significant issue for disadvantaged people in rural and regional areas. Long distances mean that transport is more expensive in non- metropolitan areas. While there are many concessions and subsidies available, we think that they could be improved. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme partially reimburses the travel and accommodation costs of people who have to travel long distances to access specialist medical care. The Scheme has recently been improved, but we think that it needs to be better publicised by NSW Health. We also consider that the process for making claims under the Scheme could be improved, for example, to make it easier to verify attendance at medical appointments.

The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme subsidises half of the cost of taxi trips for people with disability, up to a maximum of \$60 per trip. There was support for the recent doubling of the maximum reimbursement under the Scheme. We think that the affordability of taxi travel for people with disability would be further improved if the Scheme was extended to ridesharing services such as Uber. The Point to Point Taskforce recommended that the Scheme be provider-neutral, and we support this recommendation.

Monitoring the effect of the NDIS

Many inquiry participants expressed concern about funding changes that are being brought about through the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care reforms. Community transport and disability service providers are unsure about how the changes will affect their funding and the demand for their services. While community transport funding in NSW has increased, it's clear that providers are concerned about their ability to meet future changes in demand. We recommend that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services monitor the impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care to make sure that people aren't disadvantaged in accessing transport services, once the funding changes are in place.

Progress report

During the inquiry we heard about recent changes that have the potential to improve access to transport for disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW. So that we can get an idea of how effective the changes are, we've asked Transport for NSW to give us a progress report on our recommendations in two years' time.

I want to thank the stakeholders who took the time to talk to Committee members on their visit to Armidale, Uralla and Walcha. We also very much appreciated the submissions we received, and the evidence we heard from witnesses who gave evidence at our hearings in Sydney.

I would like to thank the previous Chair of the Committee, Adam Marshall, for his work on the inquiry. I took over after the Committee's site visit and public hearings and I want to acknowledge Adam's contribution. I also want to thank the members of the Committee for their constructive work during the inquiry. Finally I thank the Committee staff who worked on the inquiry – Carly Maxwell, Kieran Lewis, Dora Oravec, Mohini Mehta and Ze Nan Ma.

Chris Gulaptis MP

Chair

List of findings and recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1	1
That Transport for NSW work with NSW Health and the Department of Education to develop structures and approvals to share transport assets.	
RECOMMENDATION 2	3
That Transport for NSW evaluate the effectiveness of the new area manager roles after two years.	
FINDING 1	4
Poor transport connections and timetabling have a significant impact on seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW. Lack of services and poor connections between local and longer distance services can increase the disadvantage.	
FINDING 2	7
The new rural and regional bus contracts allow for the provision of more flexible and customer-focussed transport services.	
FINDING 3	10
The introduction of the Centralised Trip Allocation and Booking System should assist in providing more efficient and coordinated transport services, and the data collected should improve long term planning of services.	
RECOMMENDATION 3	10
That Transport for NSW evaluate the rollout of the Centralised Trip Allocation and Booking System after two years. This evaluation should assess the impact that internet black spots in rural areas can have on the system.	
FINDING 4	12
The availability of point to point transport services, such as taxis and ridesharing, in rural and regional areas should increase following reforms to the point to point transport industry.	
RECOMMENDATION 4	16
That Transport for NSW publish the timeframe for the completion of all access upgrades to bus stop and train station infrastructure, with progress reports provided on a regular basis.	
RECOMMENDATION 5	16
That Transport for NSW evaluate ways that access to public transport can be improved for seniors and disadvantaged people with companion animals in rural and regional areas.	
RECOMMENDATION 6	19
That Transport for NSW make longer access ramps available at rural and regional train stations where there is a significant height difference between the platform and the train carriage, to ensure people using wheelchairs can safely get on and off trains.	
RECOMMENDATION 7	19

That Transport for NSW publish the timeframe for the introduction of the train access ramps, with regular progress updates.

RECOMMENDATION 8 _____ **20**

That Transport for NSW, NSW Health and Department of Family and Community Services staff dealing directly with customers receive training on the transport needs of seniors and people with disability in rural and regional areas so they can provide appropriate support when required.

RECOMMENDATION 9 _____ **23**

That Transport for NSW evaluate the wheelchair accessible taxi program to ensure that wheelchair accessible taxis are made available in areas where there is the greatest need.

RECOMMENDATION 10 _____ **25**

That Transport for NSW, subject to evaluation, expand the Driving Change program to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal people in rural and regional communities.

FINDING 5 _____ **27**

Transport services and support for Aboriginal people must be culturally sensitive to encourage greater use of services, especially for Aboriginal people living in more isolated locations.

RECOMMENDATION 11 _____ **30**

That Transport for NSW publish travel information in paper format. It should be in locations where it is easily available to people who do not have access to online information, such as community centres and doctors' surgeries in rural and regional areas.

RECOMMENDATION 12 _____ **30**

That Transport for NSW area managers inform people in each of their respective areas about the transport services and subsidies that are available, with information made available both online and in printed form.

RECOMMENDATION 13 _____ **32**

That Transport for NSW area managers work with the local communities and stakeholder groups within their areas to promote awareness of the First Stop Transport travel training service.

RECOMMENDATION 14 _____ **36**

That Transport for NSW consider introducing a fuel card system for people living in very remote locations where there is no access to public or point to point transport services.

RECOMMENDATION 15 _____ **38**

That Transport for NSW extend the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme to include other point to point transport providers such as Uber.

RECOMMENDATION 16 _____ **40**

That NSW Health further simplify the process of submitting claims under the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, particularly the way attendance at medical appointments is confirmed.

RECOMMENDATION 17 _____ **40**

That NSW Health make information about the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme widely available to ensure those who may be eligible to claim are aware of the scheme.

FINDING 6 _____ **43**

The community transport sector is experiencing a period of uncertainty due to funding changes as part of the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care.

RECOMMENDATION 18 _____ **43**

That Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services monitor the impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care to ensure that people are not disadvantaged when accessing transport services.

RECOMMENDATION 19 _____ **45**

That Transport for NSW provide a report by October 2018 to the Committee on Community Services detailing the progress made in implementing all of the Committee's recommendations.

Chapter One – Coordination

SHARING OF TRANSPORT ASSETS

RECOMMENDATION 1

That Transport for NSW work with NSW Health and the Department of Education to develop structures and approvals to share transport assets.

- 1.1 We heard that effective coordination and planning is needed to improve access to transport in rural and regional areas. An important part of this is ensuring that existing transport resources are fully utilised. Agencies need to work together to develop formal ways of sharing transport assets in rural and regional areas. Fully using vehicles will help to improve transport options and reduce transport disadvantage.
- 1.2 The need to break down silos and make better use of existing vehicles was a common theme during the inquiry. Many of the submissions we received argued that there are underused vehicles in rural and regional areas that could be used to fill transport gaps.¹ Local clubs, pubs and health services have vehicles that may be lying idle, while the needs of local residents are unmet. Community transport and school buses could also be better used to improve limited transport services. Ms Tracy Howe, CEO, NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), described the need to make better use of local transport infrastructure:
- ... across the State there is a need to make the most of the infrastructure and resources that currently exist and hence there is an opportunity to ensure that they are full and efficiently utilised, coordinated and accessible to all. In many cases, transport resources that could make a real difference already exist with embedded transport resources attached to clubs, churches, schools and community organisations and often lie idle or underutilised for much of the time.²
- 1.3 We heard that the contractual and regulatory limits applying to particular vehicles can mean they are not fully used. Service providers that may be able to help are prevented from providing services: 'Other service providers have capacity to meet demand and need within community however are prohibited either by virtue of the service contract resting with specific operators and/or their respective regulatory scope of service.'³
- 1.4 We heard that recent reforms should help to overcome contractual barriers and enable better use of existing vehicles. These reforms are discussed in the next chapter.

¹ For example: Submission 4, Mr William Bateman; Submission 10, Alzheimer's Australia NSW; Submission 11, Kiama Municipal Council Access Committee; Submission 27, BusNSW; Submission 30, Glen Innes Region; Submission 57, Maitland City Council; Submission 65, Community Transport Organisation Inc; Submission 66, Uniting; Submission 67, NCOSS

² Ms Tracy Howe, CEO, NCOSS, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p15

³ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p9

- 1.5 Some community transport organisations have attempted to access local vehicles and have found that private and community organisations can be reluctant to share their assets.⁴ The Chair of the Community Transport Organisation's Board, Ms Bethany Simmonds, explained that it can be difficult to negotiate the sharing of vehicles within regional communities:

... The silos that are occurring in rural and regional New South Wales are very complex and individual organisations can be reluctant to share assets and resources. We have found that when service providers have approached other service providers who may not be in the transport business but may be in the community services business, the disability field or aged care field, they are not eager to share their resources for a whole-of-community solution.⁵

- 1.6 The interaction between State and Commonwealth funded services can also hamper the coordination of existing transport resources. Transport for NSW delivers some Commonwealth-funded services, which can have strict eligibility criteria. According to Transport for NSW, this limits the use of Commonwealth-funded vehicles to fill gaps in rural and regional transport: 'The eligibility criteria are very tight on who can use their vehicles. The way they write their contracts appears—and the word is "appears"—to inhibit the ability to sell access to their vehicles or their services to other people.'⁶

- 1.7 In spite of these challenges we heard that both government and local communities are working to improve coordination and make better use of vehicles. Transport for NSW has negotiated to hire Commonwealth funded-vehicles: 'we have just cracked with the Commonwealth that we are allowed to hire their vehicles out as long as we recharge their funding for whatever it costs.'⁷ NCOSS gave an example of the sharing of vehicles to provide flexible local transport, noting that in Condobolin a bus attached to a medical centre can be used by an organisation that takes people with disability on outings, as well as by a local early childhood centre.⁸

- 1.8 There is clearly a need for a coordinated, collaborative approach across government to improve transport by making better use of existing assets. Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transport for NSW's Director of Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance, told us that there are enough buses to meet demand in regional NSW, and agencies must collaborate to break down government silos:

... The issue is how to distribute those assets across customer needs. ... In terms of authority, unfortunately no-one who works in Transport for NSW can direct someone in a health agency or in Family and Community Services [FACS] to release their asset. That is not possible. We must collaborate and communicate.⁹

⁴ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Director, Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance, Infrastructure and Services, Transport for NSW, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p3

⁵ Ms Bethany Simmonds, Chair, Community Transport Organisation Inc, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp24-25, p27

⁶ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p3

⁷ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p3

⁸ Ms Tracy Howe, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p20

⁹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p2

- 1.9 Mr Lee-Williams noted that Transport for NSW is negotiating with the Health and Education Departments to improve the efficiency of their vehicle fleets. He recognised the need for formal structures to facilitate co-operation between departments: 'It is a given that it would be very helpful if there was movement on that front to set up some cooperative structures with approvals so that people feel they have the authority to work together.'¹⁰
- 1.10 We agree that there is a need for structures that enable government agencies to work together to make full use of existing vehicles. We recommend that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Education work together to develop structures and approvals for sharing available vehicles.

TRANSPORT FOR NSW AREA MANAGERS

RECOMMENDATION 2

That Transport for NSW evaluate the effectiveness of the new area manager roles after two years.

- 1.11 We heard that recent structural changes within Transport for NSW could improve the coordination and planning of rural and regional transport. Five new area managers have recently been appointed. The area managers are located in large regional centres: Coffs Harbour, Tamworth, Dubbo, Queanbeyan, Wagga Wagga, covering the North Coast and mid-North Coast, New England, the South Coast, the Central West and Far West, and the Murrumbidgee respectively. The managers have a support officer assisting them; Transport for NSW is attempting to recruit Aboriginal people as support officers to improve communication with Aboriginal communities.¹¹
- 1.12 The manager's role is to work with their communities to identify regional transport needs and find the required services through a contract manager. The aim is to provide services based on an assessment of local needs, rather than relying on individual transport operators to make decisions about the services required: 'It fills a gap that we have had for quite some time where operators themselves determined what the need was in the community and then determined what service they would provide.'¹²
- 1.13 We heard that the area managers could achieve significant improvements in rural and regional transport, if the roles are appropriately resourced and supported. NCOSS emphasised that Transport for NSW should ensure the positions are able to deliver improvements in regional transport:

... Transport for NSW should strengthen rural and regional delivery and the role of positions called regional officers. These officers need to be better resourced and more proactive in taking a visible lead in local communities and identifying opportunities to broker and build partnerships within this existing infrastructure.¹³

¹⁰ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p3

¹¹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p1

¹² Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p1

¹³ Ms Tracy Howe, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p16

- 1.14 We consider that the newly appointed area managers are key to driving better coordination of transport in rural and regional NSW. In order to ensure the roles fulfil their potential, we recommend they be evaluated in two years' time to gauge their effectiveness. We heard that the previous regional transport coordinator roles failed to achieve improvements in regional transport, because they lacked the authority to procure transport services and weren't able to oversee all transport types.¹⁴ Given the key role they play, the revised positions need to be assessed so they are meeting Transport for NSW's objectives.
- 1.15 Effective coordination and planning, and collaboration with local stakeholders, are vital to ensuring that local transport services meet rural and regional communities' needs. Evaluation of the area manager role will help to determine whether Transport for NSW has the right structures in place to improve regional transport.

IMPACT OF POOR TRANSPORT SERVICES

FINDING 1

Poor transport connections and timetabling have a significant impact on seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW. Lack of services and poor connections between local and longer distance services can increase the disadvantage.

- 1.16 Many submissions called for better timetabling, and more services outside peak times and school hours. In some cases, services are not run at convenient times, for example, key regional services do not connect with local linking services. We heard that many people are not able to attend appointments and return home on the same day, because of the scheduling of regional services. This results in additional accommodation costs and lost time. We were also told that routes and timetables are not connecting with the needs of local communities, including medical centre opening hours, TAFE hours, court sessions and community and sporting events. Families, friends and volunteers are often called on to fill the gaps in transport services.¹⁵
- 1.17 The centralisation of many services in regional centres means that poor transport has a greater impact, as some people need to travel longer distance to access essential services. Poor transport limits rural residents' access to medical treatment, and reduces education, employment and training opportunities. Everyday tasks such as shopping, banking and recreation are made more difficult. Limited access to transport creates social isolation by reducing people's ability to participate in community life and social activities. We also heard that a lack of

¹⁴ Mr Roy Wakelin-King, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Taxi Council, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp26-27

¹⁵ Submission 6, Oxley Community Transport; Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, pp4-5; Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW & ACT, p6; Submission 67, NCOSS, p12; Submission 75, Coalfields NeighbourCare, p1; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p14; Submission 80, NSW Government, p9; Submission 82, Tablelands Community Transport, p1

transport options can make it more difficult for women and families who are experiencing domestic violence to leave their homes.¹⁶

- 1.18 The case studies below show the impact of limited access to transport on seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional areas.

Case study 1: Accessing services from a town with no public transport¹⁷

Delegate is a small town with approximately 350 residents, with no form of public transport. The town's population is "stable but ageing."

If a resident of Delegate wants to access health facilities, they have to travel 38 kilometres to the nearest town centre near Bombala which has pathology and X-ray services provided once a week. If they have a serious illness or injury, the person would need to be sent from Bombala to Canberra, Bega or Cooma. With older residents becoming less able to drive long distances, the residents are dependent on public transport.

The lack of transport coordination places greater financial and emotional burden on residents.

"If a traveller is going to Canberra or Cooma for a medical appointment a long tedious, bus trip is not going to enhance their medical condition. Because of the increased travel time the bus schedule is too tight for an appointment on that day in Canberra and then a return trip so now an overnight stay in Canberra is necessary, adding considerably to the financial burden of a pensioner. Residents travelling from Delegate have to depend upon the goodwill of neighbours or family to take them into Bombala at 6am and to collect them from the bus at 4pm. This becomes particularly onerous in winter."

¹⁶ Submission 24, Bega Valley Shire Council; Submission 29, Northern Rivers Social Development Council; Submission 30, Glen Innes Region; Submission 31, Disability Council NSW; Submission 47, Illawarra Forum; Submission 62, Tweed, Byron and Ballina Community Transport; Submission 66, Uniting

¹⁷ Submission 15, Delegate Progress Association

Case study 2: Social and financial impacts of limited access to transport¹⁸

Paul lives in Merimbula. He lives alone and although he has a driver's licence, his disability pension doesn't allow him to buy and maintain a car. Limited access to public transport means that he relies on friends to drive him to the places he needs to go. Being without regular access to any form of transport leaves him feeling isolated and detached from his community.

Paul described the lack of public transport options and the financial implications it can have:

"There are only about four taxis in Merimbula, but at any one time on weekdays there are usually only two in operation, and taxis generally do not operate after midnight.

If I want to go to the shops on a Sunday, I have to ask a friend to drive me. If I have to go to hospital on a Sunday, I have to call an ambulance or pay the \$100 taxi fare to get to the South East Regional Hospital in Bega. The closest hospital in Pambula no longer accepts emergency patients."

Case study 3: Financial hardship for families forced to rely on private transport¹⁹

John is in his late 20s and lives with his partner and three young children in Sanctuary Point.

He has been unemployed since he left school at 17 but was fortunate enough to secure fulltime employment as a factory hand with a company in South Nowra. The only bus which travels out of Sanctuary Point early in the morning is at 6:35am, but by the time the bus arrives in South Nowra, John doesn't have enough time to walk 20 minutes to the worksite before the start of his shift.

John has no choice but to drive his family's only car for the 60 kilometre round trip. Because of his tight budget and low wage, he is often unable to buy enough fuel for the week. As a result he has to spend some nights in his car rather than drive home, in order to save fuel.

The lack of transport has impacted on Paul's family, who miss not having him home. It also leaves them feeling trapped at home without a viable form of transport.

¹⁸ Submission 31, Disability Council NSW

¹⁹ Submission 47, Illawarra Forum

Chapter Two – Flexibility

NEW RURAL AND REGIONAL BUS CONTRACTS

FINDING 2

The new rural and regional bus contracts allow for the provision of more flexible and customer-focussed transport services.

2.1 In 2016 Transport for NSW implemented 647 new contracts for bus operators providing services in areas outside of Sydney and the Outer Sydney Metropolitan area.²⁰

2.2 The main feature of the new eight year contracts is the emphasis on flexible customer focussed transport services. This has been made possible by the removal of the exclusivity arrangements that were a restrictive feature of previous contracts. Under the new contracts there is no longer a distinction between school bus services and regular passenger services.²¹

2.3 The previous contracts gave transport providers the exclusive right to provide public transport services within their region and Transport for NSW had limited say in how services were provided.²² This resulted in transport operators themselves deciding what services they would provide.²³

2.4 The new contracts reflect the acknowledgement by Transport for NSW that a more 'layered approach' is needed to address transport disadvantage in rural and regional areas.²⁴ Regular fixed route services remain but there is now greater flexibility to provide services that respond to demand. We were informed by Mr Terry Lee-Williams that under the new contracts, Transport for NSW:

... can buy whatever we need for the public in the most efficient way. What we are planning to do is look at whether we even need to run fixed route bus services for a lot of areas. The demand is so low and so sporadic that we may actually be attempting to provide a service in a way that does not meet customer need...²⁵

2.5 Instead of setting vehicles aside for single specific transport services, the same vehicle will now be used to transport different passengers at different times of the day. We heard how Transport for NSW can now use one bus to provide both a daily school run for students and a five-day week return service for fee-paying adult passengers between two regional towns. We were informed that this will be achieved by:

... taking a school bus in a regional area that runs from town A to town B and doing the reverse run, town B to town A, carrying fee-paying adult passengers. Then we go

²⁰ Submission 80, NSW Government, p17

²¹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

²² Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

²³ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p1

²⁴ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

²⁵ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

back again in the afternoon and take the school kids back. We are now able to provide a five-day-a-week, day-return service to the nearest town at no cost...²⁶

- 2.6 This more flexible approach was further illustrated by the example of towns serviced by NSW TrainLink coach services. Often these services run with no passengers or just one passenger. Where there is only one passenger, a taxi has been provided for that passenger as a cheaper and more convenient option. Under the new contractual arrangements, Transport for NSW can now expand this kind of arrangement to cover more services.²⁷
- 2.7 The increased emphasis on improving services for rural and regional passengers is reinforced by the establishment of the Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance Branch within Transport for NSW. The branch is responsible for managing the delivery of bus services to ensure that they are flexible, customer focussed and provide value for money.²⁸
- 2.8 We also heard that that Transport for NSW has recently appointed a principal manager of regional service planning. This newly created position will review the transport supply and demand in regional areas to create a long term strategy.²⁹
- 2.9 Bus contractors have welcomed the new contractual arrangements. They recognise the contracts now make it easier to put in place services that are responsive to the needs of their customers. Services can be added or changed as needed and the rates to be paid for those services have already been agreed.³⁰
- 2.10 Mr Darryl Mellish, representing BusNSW, advised us about how the new contracts allow bus operators to use their vehicles for more flexible services. He stated:
- The contract holders in our environment can use the buses when they are not being used for the services required by Transport for NSW, which I think is an important message. This could include flexible demand services in partnership with other organisations, including community transport and taxis.³¹
- 2.11 Mr Mellish went on to state how this will benefit people who experience transport disadvantage in their communities:
- The advantage is that the vehicles and the drivers are already there. The accreditation standards are met. If we can get coordination in carrying people then there is an opportunity to achieve value for money for seniors and the transport disadvantaged.³²
- 2.12 The removal of restrictive contractual arrangements was also identified by several non-government organisations as enabling more flexible services. Shelter

²⁶ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p2

²⁷ Mr Anthony Wing, Executive Director, Transport Policy, Transport for NSW, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p6

²⁸ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp15, 27

²⁹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p1

³⁰ Mr Darryl Mellish, Executive Officer, BusNSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p22

³¹ Mr Darryl Mellish, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p22

³² Mr Darryl Mellish, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p22

NSW advised that contractual obligations should not limit the provision and flexibility of services.³³ Local Government NSW noted that rigid policies restrict the ability of all transport providers to provide better customer focussed services.³⁴ In its submission, the Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA) was critical of the inflexibility of previous transport contracts and the adherence to a fixed timetable and specific areas of operation.³⁵

- 2.13 This sentiment was shared by others who made submissions to the Inquiry. NCOSS noted that this inflexibility meant a large number of people, including older people, the unemployed and people receiving income support have difficulty accessing the transport services they need.³⁶
- 2.14 Smaller rather than larger vehicles are an important part of providing flexible transport services. Narrabri Shire Council suggested using smaller buses to provide a more comprehensive service, covering a greater number of bus stops, to overcome transport disadvantage.³⁷ Bega Valley Shire Council also suggested that using smaller buses allows for the provision of more frequent services.³⁸
- 2.15 The timetabling of services to allow enough time to attend to appointments and return home on the same day was highlighted as a major impediment to overcoming social isolation. Berrigan Shire Council stated that local residents cannot use public transport to travel to a regional centre to conduct more than one hour of business and return home on the same day.³⁹ The need to be away from home for a prolonged period during the day to attend just one appointment is also tiring for those suffering from ill health.⁴⁰
- 2.16 The adherence to fixed timetables and routes means services are often infrequent, preventing people from travelling at times that are convenient for them. The Community Transport Organisation noted that flexible and adaptive transport solutions are important to ensuring that Aboriginal communities are able to access transport services.⁴¹ Part of overcoming transport disadvantage in Aboriginal communities includes providing flexible schedules that are responsive to the cultural needs of community members.⁴²

³³ Mr Adam Farrar, Senior Policy Officer, Shelter NSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p20

³⁴ Ms Leodelia San Jose, Senior Policy Officer, Ageing and Disability, Local Government NSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p35

³⁵ Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW, p8

³⁶ See for example: Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW, p8; Submission 66, Uniting Ability Links, pp6-7; Submission 67, NCOSS, p10

³⁷ Submission 36, Narrabri Shire Council, p2

³⁸ Submission 24, Bega Valley Shire Council, p3

³⁹ Submission 56, Berrigan Shire Council, p1

⁴⁰ Submission 75, Coalfields NeighbourCare, p1

⁴¹ Submission 65, Community Transport Organisation Inc, p4

⁴² Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p3

NEW TECHNOLOGY

FINDING 3

The introduction of the Centralised Trip Allocation and Booking System should assist in providing more efficient and coordinated transport services, and the data collected should improve long term planning of services.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That Transport for NSW evaluate the rollout of the Centralised Trip Allocation and Booking System after two years. This evaluation should assess the impact that internet black spots in rural areas can have on the system.

- 2.17 In addition to new contractual arrangements, investment in new technology should improve the availability of transport services. In early 2016, Transport for NSW began rolling out the Centralised Trip Allocation and Booking System (CTABS) to community transport providers. The aim of the \$8 million roll-out of CTABS, due for completion by 2018, is to provide a comprehensive state-wide transport booking system.⁴³
- 2.18 The intent of CTABS is to have transport providers provide a more efficient and coordinated service to meet increasing customer demand.⁴⁴ Its aim is to maximise the capacity and use of all available vehicles. The new system removes manual processes and gives transport providers real-time information on the location of vehicles and the available passenger capacity.⁴⁵ It also helps community transport providers compete against taxis and rideshare services.⁴⁶
- 2.19 We were told that the new system allows people to book the service they need that is available in the system. It tries to address barriers that have prevented the provision of transport, such as knowing what and where services are available and how to procure them.⁴⁷ CTABS can identify the nearest vehicle that is best able to provide a service.⁴⁸ We heard an example from Transport for NSW of how the new technology will benefit passengers and transport providers:

Someone who owns a bus might need it to transport their client at a particular time of day. If we take that bus away to do something else, they will not be able to carry their client. We will now have the capacity to say, "We can carry your client, because we have a car available. That will be a cheaper option, and you will pay less to access it. We will pay you to take the bus because we have 20 people we want to carry at the same time."⁴⁹

⁴³ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p2; Submission 80, NSW Government, p27

⁴⁴ Submission 80, NSW Government, p27

⁴⁵ Transport for NSW, *Centralised Trip Allocation & Booking System: What is the CTABS project?*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/b2b/lact/ct-fact-sheet-ctabs-nov-2015.pdf> accessed 11 November 2016

⁴⁶ Submission 80, NSW Government, p27

⁴⁷ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p2

⁴⁸ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p2

⁴⁹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p3

- 2.20 As well as providing better coordination by matching passengers with the transport service that best meets their needs, the journey and usage data that CTABS collects will inform the planning of future transport services.
- 2.21 Having a state-wide system allows for the detailed collection and analysis of service information. Information on how services are delivered, the areas of demand, and what capacity is required, all provide transport planners with detailed information that has previously been lacking.
- 2.22 Armed with this information Transport for NSW should be able to make informed decisions on how to introduce more flexible and responsive services. It should also be able to better understand the cost of providing services based on the distance travelled. This should lead to more equitable funding for rural and regional community transport providers.⁵⁰ In its submission the NSW Government stated that CTABS:
- ... will provide better management of resources via increased transparency and enable distance-based calculation of costs which had not been previously possible. It will also create a more equitable allocation of funding for rural and regional community transport. CTABS has the potential to support flexible transport operations where they can be identified to provide new access opportunities for customers.⁵¹
- 2.23 While CTABS is still in the roll-out phase, we heard that it has already led to improved service delivery and efficiencies and that significant improvements are predicted. We were informed at the public hearing on 23 September that Transport for NSW has 'already had about a 15% increase in the number of kilometres we can provide with existing assets in the areas in which CTABS has been rolled out. We are aiming for 40% over the next five years.'⁵²
- 2.24 Transport for NSW will provide training in the CTABS system and support to transport providers during the roll-out phase, as well as ongoing support once the system is up and running. Training will be tailored for each transport provider, with paid employees and volunteers receiving onsite training.
- 2.25 A customer support website with information about how to use the software, common practice and up-to-date training documents will be made available. Telephone support and self-help resources such as a bulletin board and training videos will also be available. Transport for NSW staff will also be trained in CTABS and will be available to provide support. There are also plans for an annual user conference to keep transport providers up-to-date on software developments.⁵³
- 2.26 The implementation of CTABS will not be without issues. During our visit to Armidale, Uralla and Walcha we spoke with community transport providers about CTABS. The providers were in favour of the system but noted the

⁵⁰ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p6

⁵¹ Submission 80, NSW Government, p27

⁵² Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, pp2-3

⁵³ Transport for NSW, *Centralised Trip Allocation & Booking System FAQs*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/b2b/lact/ct-fact-sheet-ctabs-faqs-dec-2015.pdf> accessed 14 November 2016

importance of ensuring transport providers are adequately trained to use the system. It was noted that CTABS will only be as good as the information entered into the system in the first instance. If transport providers fail to use the service correctly and don't enter route and vehicle details, other providers won't know what services are available.

- 2.27 CTABS works using digital technology. Each vehicle is fitted with a mobile tablet device that sends and receives information, including satellite tracking. The system relies on digital technology and access to the internet.⁵⁴
- 2.28 To ensure the state-wide effectiveness of CTABS it must have consistent and reliable digital connection. The prevalence of internet blackspots in rural and regional areas has been documented. This issue was raised by inquiry participants, including the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW who were also concerned about online communication in rural areas.⁵⁵
- 2.29 During our visit to Armidale, Walcha and Uralla we were informed that outside rural and regional centres of population, access to reliable internet and mobile phone communication is a problem.
- 2.30 We heard from Transport for NSW that when the tablet in each vehicle loses its internet connection it continues to record information. This information is then automatically updated once the tablet is back within signal range.⁵⁶ However, we consider that the evaluation of CTABS should assess the impact of poor internet connectivity on the system.

POINT TO POINT TRANSPORT REFORMS

FINDING 4

The availability of point to point transport services, such as taxis and ridesharing, in rural and regional areas should increase following reforms to the point to point transport industry.

- 2.31 Reforms to point to point transport also support efforts to provide more flexible transport services. Point to point transport includes taxis, hire cars, community transport, rideshare services, such as Uber, and tourist services.⁵⁷
- 2.32 In July 2015 the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure established the independent Point to Point Transport Taskforce to investigate the sustainability of taxis, hire cars and rideshare services.⁵⁸ In response to the Taskforce's recommendations, the NSW Government introduced reforms to taxi, hire care

⁵⁴ Transport for NSW, *Centralised Trip Allocation & Booking System FAQs*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/b2b/lact/ct-fact-sheet-ctabs-faqs-dec-2015.pdf> accessed 14 November 2016

⁵⁵ Ms Ellis Blaikie, Senior Policy Adviser, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

⁵⁶ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p6

⁵⁷ Transport for NSW, *Point to point transport*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/programs/point-to-point> accessed 15 November 2016

⁵⁸ Transport for NSW, *Point to point – the reform process* <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/programs/point-to-point/reform> accessed 15 November 2016

and rideshare providers under the *Point to Point Transport (Taxis and Hire Vehicles) Act 2016*.

- 2.33 The intent of the reforms is to remove regulations that limit the flexibility and availability of on demand transport services. The reforms aim to give customers greater choice and safety when accessing services. They also aim to allow traditional and emerging point to point transport providers to expand and compete with each other in a fair and competitive marketplace.⁵⁹
- 2.34 Under the new framework, customers choose from a wide range of service providers, where driver and vehicle safety standards are set. Increased competition also means fares are competitively priced. Customers will be informed of the estimated fare prior to confirming their booking.⁶⁰
- 2.35 In addition to public and community transport providers, the point to point transport reforms see taxi services becoming part of the transport 'supply chain'. Being more actively involved in the provision of transport services will provide taxi services with additional business, particularly in smaller communities where financial viability is an issue.⁶¹ We were informed by Mr Brian Wilkins, President, NSW Taxi Industry Association, that in many towns the underuse of taxis is a concern.⁶²
- 2.36 We were given an example of how flexible and affordable point to point transport services can be made possible through CTABS technology. Mr Terry Lee-Williams outlined how the use of taxis rather than a bus provides passengers with a more efficient service and gives them the most direct route to their destination.
- ... if the train comes into Broken Hill—I think it is at 3.40 am—currently we have to put a bus service on to meet that, that is our customer charter, and then that bus has to go within 400 metres of 90% of the homes in Broken Hill. You might only be going two kilometres but you will have to go 10 kilometres to get there, and it proves to be not a very popular service. What we would rather do is people tell us when they get off the train that they need transport, pay the same \$2.50 when they get in the taxi, and the taxi then takes them to their home directly. They might take four people. It is called an optimisation in CTABS ...⁶³
- 2.37 As well as a more flexible service for passengers and additional business for taxi providers, such a service is also cost effective. According to Mr Lee-Williams, 'we pay the taxi operator what he would have on the meter. It is still cheaper than us running a bus because we do not have to pay for an entire shift, which is a minimum of four hours, for a bus to operate.'⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Transport for NSW, *Point to point transport*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/programs/point-to-point> accessed 15 November 2016

⁶⁰ Transport for NSW, *Point to point transport*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/programs/point-to-point> accessed 15 November 2016

⁶¹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p6

⁶² Mr Brian Wilkins, President, NSW Taxi Industry Association, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p26

⁶³ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p6

⁶⁴ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p6

- 2.38 The taxi industry has welcomed the point to point reforms and efforts to increase the number of taxis, especially wheelchair accessible taxis, in rural and regional areas. However, we heard that further reforms, particularly in relation to compulsory third party insurance, are needed to ensure the taxi industry remains competitive.⁶⁵ Community transport providers have also expressed their support for the point to point reforms.⁶⁶
- 2.39 Increasingly, ridesharing services are offering an affordable and competitive service. We heard how Uber is expanding from the Sydney metropolitan area. In April 2016 the company expanded to include Newcastle and the Central Coast and is considering expansion to other locations such as Wollongong and Byron Bay.⁶⁷
- 2.40 In addition to expanding to large population centres such as Newcastle and Wollongong we were heard that Uber is considering expansion to rural and regional areas.⁶⁸ We were particularly interested to hear if there are limits on the ability of Uber to operate in more remote areas, such as the Far West of New South Wales, with small population centres and large distances. In response, Mr Henry Greenacre, Uber City Lead-NSW/ACT, advised that:
- There is no limit on it.
- This is not full-time work for a very large proportion of people on the platform. This is part-time work. In places like Newcastle, the Central Coast—and Narrabri, we predict—it is great for schoolteachers who knock off early and want to log on and do a few trips in the evening. They know it will be busy at the weekend, so they earn some extra money then. The part-time element of the income is greater the more regional the area.⁶⁹
- 2.41 However, there are concerns about the ability of Uber to operate in rural areas where there are smaller populations. We were advised by Mr Terry Lee-Williams that Uber’s business model makes it unlikely that it can operate in areas with a population of less than 15,000 people.⁷⁰
- 2.42 Given the travel distances in rural areas, there is concern about the financial viability of Uber drivers travelling longer distances to collect passengers. Uber advised that it is aware of the need to provide drivers in rural areas with an incentive to travel greater distances to collect passengers. We were informed that Uber could offer drivers an incentive via the Uber app.⁷¹
- 2.43 Despite concerns about the ability of Uber to service smaller populations, we heard that other ridesharing services could operate in smaller markets. Such providers, currently operating in Europe and the United States, have less

⁶⁵ Mr Roy Wakelin-King, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp23, 25

⁶⁶ Ms Bethany Simmonds, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p22

⁶⁷ Mr Henry Greenacre, Uber City Lead-NSW/ACT, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p31

⁶⁸ Submission 69, Uber, p5

⁶⁹ Mr Henry Greenacre, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p32

⁷⁰ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p10

⁷¹ Mr Henry Greenacre, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p33

expensive infrastructure to pay for. This allows them to operate in smaller communities, such as those in rural New South Wales.⁷²

- 2.44 Reform of point to point transport services and the overall focus on providing flexible transport is still in the early stages of implementation. It will take time before the full impact of the measures discussed can be assessed. However, we are encouraged that the measures currently being implemented have the potential to produce positive results.

⁷² Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p10

Chapter Three – Accessibility

ACCESS TO BUS STOPS AND TRAIN STATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 4

That Transport for NSW publish the timeframe for the completion of all access upgrades to bus stop and train station infrastructure, with progress reports provided on a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That Transport for NSW evaluate ways that access to public transport can be improved for seniors and disadvantaged people with companion animals in rural and regional areas.

- 3.1 Many inquiry participants raised the accessibility of rural and regional transport services. A lack of access to bus stops and train stations can stop seniors and people with disability from using public transport. While we recognise that work to improve access to bus stops and train stations is underway, we think that more information should be made available on the timeframe for this work.
- 3.2 Many inquiry participants described how difficult it can be to access rural and regional train stations, with platforms only being accessible via stairs, and heavy doors to access station waiting rooms being difficult to open.⁷³ It was noted that inaccessible bus and coach stops and buses are a significant barrier for seniors and people with disability.⁷⁴ We were also told that people with mobility issues can find it hard to access toilets on coaches and trains due to issues such as the weight and width of toilet doors.⁷⁵
- 3.3 We heard that the built environment also makes it more difficult for seniors and people with mobility issues to access transport. Examples include a lack of footpaths or uneven or broken footpaths, and a lack of toilets, lighting and seating in public places such as bus stops and train stations.⁷⁶ The Council on the Ageing noted that a journey can involve finding timetable information, travelling to a bus stop, waiting, getting on and off the bus and walking to a destination.

⁷³ Submission 9, Blue Mountains City Council, p2; Submission 12, Mr Tim Herbert, pp2-3; Submission 33, Mr Greg Piper MP, pp2-3; Submission 42, Southlakes Carers, p1; Submission 48, Physical Disability Council of NSW, pp6-7; Submission 57, Maitland City Council, p2; Submission 71, Settlement Services International, p3

⁷⁴ Submission 27, BusNSW, p2; Submission 29, Northern Rivers Social Development Council, p3; Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p5; Submission 35, Lithgow City Council, p5; Submission 48, Physical Disability Council of NSW, pp3, 6; Submission 55, Port Macquarie Hastings Council, pp1-2; Submission 67, NCOSS, p20; Submission 71, Settlement Services International, p4

⁷⁵ Submission 35, Lithgow City Council; Submission 66, Uniting, p9; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Associations of NSW, p13

⁷⁶ Submission 1, Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee, p1; Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW; Submission 67, NCOSS, p18; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p13

Therefore, 'transport needs to be supported by good walkways, footpaths, good seating, lighting and toilets in public spaces.'⁷⁷

3.4 The following case studies describe the impact of inaccessible transport.

Case study 4: Train stations that are difficult to access⁷⁸

"Wyee has a central platform that can only be accessed by a pedestrian bridge over the rail lines via steep stairs on either side. Access for people in wheelchairs is impossible, and significant difficulties are created for older people and anyone less mobile. I believe these accessibility issues are also deterring people from using public transport. Regular users of the station report that many people have come to grief on the stairs, which are not covered and provide no protection from the rain.

There is no doubt in my mind that these accessibility issues are having a profound impact on the numbers of people using Wyee and Dora Creek stations."

Case study 5: How poor wheelchair access affects people with disability⁷⁹

Christine lives on the South Coast, two and a half kilometres from town. A lack of public transport options and transport infrastructure has left her feeling isolated with a sense of hopelessness. Christine recalled her experiences using public transport and the personal consequences of a lack of wheelchair accessibility:

"The last two years have been very difficult because of the lack of access to transport. We live two and a half kilometres from town, which I would be able to push in, but there is no safe place for me to travel. The track on the side of the road is sandy which makes it impossible to negotiate in a wheelchair.

I have to say that part of one's recovery from a life changing event is to get back to some sense of normal activities. Social isolation does not help this at all and in fact, makes it even more difficult. Social isolation is an extremely difficult and debilitating situation to deal with, particularly when there is no solution in sight."

3.5 The government told us that there are various programs underway to improve access. The Transport Access Program is a four year program to improve access to transport facilities that began in 2012. The program had initial funding of \$770 million to 2016; it will continue with an extra \$890 million funding over the following four years. The work includes upgrades to train stations to provide lift access, accessible toilets, 'kiss and ride' zones and parking for people with disability. Four hundred and fifty projects are underway or have been completed under the program in the Illawarra, Hunter Valley, Western NSW, South East NSW and the North Coast. As at February 2016, 43 NSW TrainLink stations were accessible and work was underway at four more stations.⁸⁰

3.6 The Country Passenger Transport Infrastructure Grants Scheme subsidises work on bus stops owned and maintained by local councils. The scheme aims to improve the accessibility and quality of transport infrastructure in rural and

⁷⁷ Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW, pp4, 9, 10

⁷⁸ Submission 33, Mr Greg Piper MP, p2

⁷⁹ Submission 66, Uniting, p5

⁸⁰ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp16-17

regional areas. Over three million dollars in funding is available biennially through the scheme from July 2016, with the priority being to help councils meet accessibility targets in the *Disability Standards for Accessible Passenger Transport 2002* (Cth) of 90% compliance by December 2017 and 100% by 2022.⁸¹

- 3.7 In terms of trains and buses, we were told that all Oscar, Endeavour, XPT and XPLOER trains are accessible. Thirty five million dollars has been allocated to plan for the replacement of 30 year old XPT trains with accessible diesel trains. Portable boarding ramps are carried on all diesel trains and are available at every Intercity station.⁸² We discuss boarding ramps further in the next section.
- 3.8 According to Transport for NSW, all TrainLink coach services are accessible and coach suppliers must provide two wheelchair spaces for coaches that have at least 41 seats, or one wheelchair space for coaches with at least 18 seats. There are also projects underway to design accessible coaches (low-floor, with ramp access and accessible toilets) rather than retro-fitting existing vehicles; and to procure accessible buses to replace school buses, so that they can be used more outside school hours.⁸³
- 3.9 We heard that there should be timeframes for accessibility upgrades. The Physical Disability Council of NSW told us that Transport for NSW should have an implementation schedule for bus operators and make sure that people with disability are aware of improvements to accessible public transport.⁸⁴
- 3.10 NCOSS argued that there is 'no clear and concrete long term schedule' and a lack of transparency around rural and regional train station upgrades. This discourages elderly people from using transport, and causes problems for local councils, as they don't have a long term schedule to use as a basis for their upgrades to surrounding infrastructure.⁸⁵
- 3.11 NCOSS recommended that Transport for NSW publish the schedule for upgrades of train stations, coach and bus stop infrastructure, to 'support long term planning by local governments and communities regarding their own connecting infrastructure, and assist older people and people with disability to make longer term life decisions about accommodation, employment and treatment.'⁸⁶
- 3.12 We recognise the work that is being done to improve access to transport, and we agree that timeframes for the work should be publicly available to improve transparency.

⁸¹ Submission 80, NSW Government, p16 and Disability Standards for Accessible Passenger Transport 2002, Parts 3 and 4. The standards for bus stops relate to access paths; handrails and grab rails; manoeuvring areas; stairs; passing areas; symbols; ramps; signs; waiting areas; tactile ground surface; indicators; boarding; lighting; allocated space; street furniture; surfaces; and information.

⁸² Submission 80, NSW Government, pp29-30

⁸³ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp16-17, 26

⁸⁴ Submission 48, Physical Disability Council of NSW, p5

⁸⁵ Submission 67, NCOSS, p18

⁸⁶ Submission 67, NCOSS, p18

RECOMMENDATION 6

That Transport for NSW make longer access ramps available at rural and regional train stations where there is a significant height difference between the platform and the train carriage, to ensure people using wheelchairs can safely get on and off trains.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That Transport for NSW publish the timeframe for the introduction of the train access ramps, with regular progress updates.

- 3.13 We heard that access ramps used at rural and regional train stations aren't safe, because of the height difference between the platform and the train carriage.⁸⁷ The ramps are too short, which makes it hard for station staff to help people in wheelchairs board trains. As a result, people with disability feel unsafe when getting on and off trains at some stations, and are prevented from travelling. We recommend that longer ramps be stored at every rural and regional station that has a substantial gap between the platform and train.
- 3.14 We note Transport for NSW's advice that they have considered options to fix this problem and have decided to obtain longer ramps to be stored at affected stations. The timeframe for the longer ramps is the next financial year.⁸⁸
- 3.15 We consider that the timeframe for the availability of the longer boarding ramps should be published and updated if there are any delays. On our visit to Armidale we heard that Transport for NSW had agreed to provide a longer ramp for Armidale station, but the ramp was not available by the promised date.⁸⁹ Concrete timeframes will increase the confidence of people with disability and help Transport for NSW to plan for the introduction of more suitable ramps at regional stations.
- 3.16 The following case study describes Steve Austin's experience with the ramp at Armidale station.

⁸⁷ Submission 6, Oxley Community Transport Service; Submission 83, Mr Steve Austin

⁸⁸ Submission 80, NSW Government, p7

⁸⁹ Submission 83, Mr Steve Austin

Case study 6: Unsafe boarding ramps at Armidale station⁹⁰

Steve is wheelchair dependent and relies on a portable moulded ramp to get on and off the train at Armidale station. For six years, he has raised concerns that the current ramp doesn't provide safe access to the train from the platform.

"The current moulded portable ramp on the train is not up to the current standards to provide safe access on or off the trains as the height difference between the station platforms and the floor of Carriage "D" which has an accessible toilet and an area for two people in wheelchairs.

The current ramp is approximately 1500 mm long and the slats making up the ramp are about 30mm thick which I have nearly pushed off the carriage floor when reversing out to get off the train.

Since this incident that not only concerned me, it also startled the train attendant who was trying to keep the ramp from falling from under my chair, it also had my wife Mary very concerned as she thought that I would easily fall out of the chair if the ramp came off the carriage floor at the time.

This is very dangerous as I'm unable to see behind me and the ramp is only just wide enough for my chair to fit on."

Since the incident, Steve has remained concerned for his safety and has lost the confidence to travel on the train until a safer ramp is provided.

TRAINING FOR TRANSPORT AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

RECOMMENDATION 8

That Transport for NSW, NSW Health and Department of Family and Community Services staff dealing directly with customers receive training on the transport needs of seniors and people with disability in rural and regional areas so they can provide appropriate support when required.

- 3.17 We recommend that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services train their staff on the needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional areas. Better training could overcome some of the barriers that stop people from using public transport, and limit their access to services.
- 3.18 National Disability Services observed that while physical access and infrastructure are the main barriers for people with disability there are also social and psychological barriers, and 'one negative experience can cause a person to lose confidence in the transport system.'⁹¹
- 3.19 We heard that it is important for disadvantaged people to be able to get assistance from trained staff who understand their needs. Older people who do not travel on public transport need individual assistance and information to build their confidence and competence: 'a relationship centred approach'. A lack of properly trained and approachable staff means that seniors and disadvantaged people find it hard to get help with boarding and getting off trains, setting up

⁹⁰ Submission 83, Mr Steve Austin

⁹¹ Submission 64, National Disability Services, p9

ramps, asking for directions, carrying luggage, and opening heavy doors. Training for taxi drivers was also suggested: 'taxi services' employees may be inadequately trained to work with these target groups, and therefore unable to sensitively respond to their needs.⁹²

- 3.20 Many inquiry participants stressed the need for staff at rural and regional train stations, and supported the government's decision to retain staff at some stations. We were told that keeping staff at rural and regional train stations and bus interchanges will mean that disadvantaged people can get help with using public transport. Seniors feel safer if staff are present and value their help with ticketing and general information; people with disability also need staff assistance when using public transport.⁹³ It was noted that staff should be available at stations with frequent night connections.⁹⁴
- 3.21 The following case study shows how important it is for people with disability to have help from staff.

Case study 7: The importance of having staff to help people with disability⁹⁵

Carol lives in Lithgow and uses a wheelchair to help her with mobility. Her ability to access the train is dependent on the availability of station staff to help her board and depart from the train. She often has difficulty finding staff to assist her with the ramp.

While Lithgow station has adequate platform wheelchair accessibility, most Blue Mountains stations do not have wheelchair accessibility and a lack of available staff has restricted Carol's independence in attending appointments or events.

- 3.22 Inquiry participants supported disability awareness, cultural competency and sensitivity training for public and private transport providers, to help them understand the needs of older people, people with disability and mobility issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and people with dementia.⁹⁶ The following case study gives an example of staff that lack understanding of the needs of people with disability.

⁹² Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p6; Submission 57, Maitland City Council, p3; Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW, p8; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p13

⁹³ Submission 31, Disability Council NSW, p9; Submission 57, Maitland City Council, p2; Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p7; Submission 63, Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC, p2; Submission 67, NCOSS, p14

⁹⁴ Submission 25, Nambucca Shire Council, p1

⁹⁵ Submission 66, Uniting, p9

⁹⁶ Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p7; Submission 10, Alzheimer's Australia NSW, p8; Submission 47, Illawarra Forum, p7; Submission 31, Disability Council NSW, p9

Case study 8: Staff need to be aware of the needs of people with disability⁹⁷

Mary has lived with a disability since birth and has worked hard to develop life skills to be able to live independently. She is unable to drive and uses a walking frame at all times to help with her mobility.

While attempting to board the bus, Mary was injured. The bus driver hadn't stopped close enough to the curb to allow her to step onto the bus. Instead, she had to step down into the gutter, put her walking frame on the bottom step and try to pull herself onto the bus. She fell and injured herself, resulting in a trip to hospital.

This wasn't a one-off incident. On many occasions, bus drivers were reluctant to put the ramp down so she could board the bus, or help her up the stairs. If the drivers were running late, they would often verbally hurry her, making her feel "more flustered and worsen her mobility".

Mary feels that bus drivers don't understand her needs and should have education and disability training so they are better able to support people with mobility issues.

- 3.23 We heard it is important that staff in centralised service locations are aware of the transport difficulties faced by people living in rural and regional areas. Shelter NSW informed us that clients contacting a centralised homelessness telephone service were frustrated with the 'perceived lack of understanding of the practicalities of travelling in areas outside metropolitan Sydney'. For example, a young person from Lake Macquarie who was looking for crisis accommodation was referred to a service in Maitland, which would have meant a one and a half hour journey by car and around three hours by public transport.⁹⁸
- 3.24 We also heard that medical appointments are sometimes scheduled at inconvenient times for people travelling from rural and regional areas. According to Lithgow City Council, medical professionals and their staff book appointments for seniors at inconvenient times, without checking how the person will get to and from the appointment. The Council called for consideration of the needs of people who may have to wait one to three hours for public transport and have a three hour train ride home: 'Older people who have little money and no family support and live 30-60km from Countrylink or a train station, with no other local public transport after 6pm between Mon-Fri face many challenges indeed.'⁹⁹
- 3.25 We heard that there should be a review of practices for making appointments for people travelling over 100 kilometres. The Glen Innes Region suggested that regional health professionals and associations be consulted on a policy for scheduling rural and remote consultations, which aligns with transport options. It was noted that some medical practitioners offer appointments to rural and remote clients on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month, and take return travel times into consideration.¹⁰⁰
- 3.26 While we recognise that safety and customer service training is given to Transport for NSW staff,¹⁰¹ it is important that NSW Health and Family and

⁹⁷ Submission 47, Illawarra Forum, p4

⁹⁸ Submission 14, Shelter NSW, p2

⁹⁹ Submission 35, Lithgow City Council, p3

¹⁰⁰ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p6

¹⁰¹ Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p10

Community Services staff are also aware of the needs of disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW. Given the centralisation of services, staff need to understand the issues faced by people living in rural and regional areas when they are making bookings for medical and other services.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE TAXIS

RECOMMENDATION 9

That Transport for NSW evaluate the wheelchair accessible taxi program to ensure that wheelchair accessible taxis are made available in areas where there is the greatest need.

- 3.27 A number of inquiry participants made the point that more wheelchair accessible taxis (WATs) are needed in rural and regional areas. In our view, it is important that the WAT incentive program is targeted towards regional areas with the greatest need, rather than oversupplying areas that already have an adequate number of these taxis.
- 3.28 We heard that there aren't enough WATs in rural and regional areas. NCOSS told us that 'in rural and regional NSW, particularly outside a few major regional centres, there are still serious issues with the availability of accessible taxis'.¹⁰²
- 3.29 Seniors and people with disability rely on WATs, as there are often no other accessible forms of transport available. A lack of WATs can mean that people with disability cannot find employment, and access medical treatment and other basic services and support.¹⁰³ It was also noted that too few WATs in rural and regional areas limits the value of the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme for people in these areas. The long distances involved in rural and regional travel mean that, even with the subsidy, taxi transport is often not affordable.¹⁰⁴
- 3.30 We heard that the number of WATs varies depending on the area. The Physical Disability Council of NSW informed us that the proportion of WATs per standard taxis is 19.8% in rural and regional locations and 24% in Greater Sydney, but the proportion varies substantially depending on location. There are few WATs in some areas such as the Blue Mountains, compared to other areas where the proportion of WATs is quite high, for instance the Port Macquarie area.¹⁰⁵ It was noted that there is only one WAT operating in the Lake Macquarie region.¹⁰⁶
- 3.31 Transport for NSW runs a program to increase the number of WATs and the incentives and rebates have been increased:
- The incentive payment for WAT drivers to carry passengers in wheelchairs is \$15 for each wheelchair passenger carried.

¹⁰² Submission 67, NCOSS, p22

¹⁰³ Submission 67, NCOSS, p22

¹⁰⁴ Submission 20, Carers NSW, p5

¹⁰⁵ Submission 48, Physical Disability Council of NSW, pp7-8

¹⁰⁶ Submission 66, National Disability Services, p10

- The WAT interest free loans scheme helps with the cost of buying and retrofitting vehicles. Loans of up to \$100,000 are available from a pool of \$5 million every year for the next four years.¹⁰⁷
- Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme covers 50% of the fare (with a \$60 cap) for trips made by people who can't use public transport because of a disability.
- The \$1,000 taxi licence fee has been removed for WAT licences in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong.¹⁰⁸

3.32 While the incentives were supported by many inquiry participants, the Taxi Council told us that the program needs to be overseen to make sure that extra vehicles are made available in areas that are most in need of WATs:

What we are seeing starting to emerge is the market responding, in my view in an unintended way, where those incentives are actually going to towns which already have a high supply of wheelchair accessible taxis. ... we need to ensure that Government has positive oversight of the wheelchair incentive allocations so that we do not see a disproportionate allocation elsewhere, in areas of lower need.¹⁰⁹

3.33 Transport for NSW told us that the criteria for assessing applications to the WAT loan fund include consideration of which areas need more accessible vehicles, and areas that don't have WATs are prioritised: 'we will have more applications than we have funding, but we want to target extra places that are underserved.'¹¹⁰

3.34 Wheelchair accessible taxis are essential for people who require wheelchairs. Measures to increase the supply of WATs are welcome, but they should be targeted to increase the availability of WATs in rural and regional areas that have a limited number of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

3.35 We heard that other point to point services could increase transport options for people with disability, if they are made available in rural and regional areas. The previous chapter discussed changes that will enable the point to point industry to operate in rural and regional areas.

3.36 Uber has developed a platform (UberASSIST) for people to request wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs). Drivers are trained on the needs of people with disability and mobility issues. Ten per cent of Uber rides are available as UberASSIST rides. Currently the service is only available in metropolitan areas.¹¹¹

3.37 The case study below describes Uber's trial of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

¹⁰⁷ Transport for NSW advised that around 60 loan applications had been received, 20 to 30 of which were from regional areas: Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

¹⁰⁸ Submission 80, NSW Government, p25 and Transport for NSW, *Wheelchair accessible taxis*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/operators/taxis/wheelchair-accessible-taxis> and *Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme*, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/community/concessions-and-schemes/taxi-transport-subsidy-scheme> accessed 16 November 2016

¹⁰⁹ Mr Roy-Wakelin-King, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p29

¹¹⁰ Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p9

¹¹¹ Submission 69, Uber, pp4-5, 14

Case study 9: Trial of accessible on demand transport¹¹²

In October 2015, Uber undertook the first peer to peer WAV trial in Australia. For the duration of the NDIS 2015 conference, Uber had two UberWAVs on their app. They partnered with local drivers with modified vehicles to provide rides for people attending the conference.

The pilot covered the Brisbane Exhibition and Conference Centres, the surrounding hotels and Brisbane Airport. During the three day conference, 32 UberWAV trips were requested with an average waiting time of five minutes for a ride. The pilot study received “overwhelmingly positive” feedback.

Kathryn Lyons and her mother Vicki shared their experience:

“The uberWAV vehicle was like a happy prestige service. The driver was simply amazing and informative. From the moment we got in he asked us how he could make the trip comfortable, he offered water and mints. He listened to his client and was absolutely lovely. He also went the extra mile, waiting to make sure we were inside. We never feel comfortable in a taxi, but with Uber we felt safe as the driver is used to his vehicle, he had a real understanding of the struggles of travelling with a disability, and he was more cautious.”

DRIVING CHANGE PROGRAM FOR ABORIGINAL DRIVERS

RECOMMENDATION 10

That Transport for NSW, subject to evaluation, expand the Driving Change program to provide more opportunities for Aboriginal people in rural and regional communities.

- 3.38 We recommend that Transport for NSW expand the Driving Change program to ensure that more Aboriginal people can obtain and retain a driver’s licence. We heard praise for the program and there was support for its expansion. Given the significant impact a lack of access to private transport can have on remote Indigenous communities, it is important that programs such as Driving Change be continued and expanded.
- 3.39 Limited access to public and private transport particularly affects Aboriginal people. Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in remote areas with limited transport – around 21% of older Aboriginal people live in remote or very remote areas, while only 2% of older non-Indigenous people live in these areas.¹¹³
- 3.40 Aboriginal adults are also less likely to have access to private transport: 36% of Aboriginal people have never had a driver’s licence, and only 46% currently hold a licence compared to 88% for the rest of the population.¹¹⁴
- 3.41 We also heard that lack of transport has a significant impact on the health of people living in rural communities.¹¹⁵ The NSW Government observed that access to transport ‘is essential to help close the gap in Indigenous health and welfare’.

¹¹² Submission 69, Uber, p16

¹¹³ Submission 80, NSW Government, p3

¹¹⁴ Submission 80, NSW Government, p9

¹¹⁵ Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p2

Older Aboriginal people have poorer health and higher rates of disability than other older Australians and are more likely to need help with self-care, mobility or communication tasks.¹¹⁶

- 3.42 For younger Indigenous people living in remote areas, the lack of a valid drivers' licence contributes to unlicensed driving and imprisonment. Aboriginal people are three times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to have their licence suspended for fine defaults. According to the NSW Government, 'driving while disqualified has major impacts on Aboriginal people, accounting for 15% of imprisonments between 2001–2008, and the Habitual Offenders scheme has resulted in decades-long driver disqualifications.'¹¹⁷
- 3.43 We were informed that it can be harder for Aboriginal people to get a driver's licence, because of a lack of identity documents, the cost of getting and keeping a licence, literacy and numeracy barriers, a lack of supervising drivers, accessing test facilities and vehicles for lessons and practice, and unpaid debts.¹¹⁸
- 3.44 Given the limited transport options in rural and remote areas, an inability to drive safely and legally means that Aboriginal people 'are effectively unable to access key services'.¹¹⁹
- 3.45 There are some programs that help Aboriginal people get their licences. The Driving Change program, led by the George Institute, is partly funded by Transport for NSW. The program was developed and run in partnership with Aboriginal community organisations around the state. It finished in September 2016 and is now being evaluated by a scientific committee.¹²⁰
- 3.46 As part of the program 12 youth workers helped young Indigenous people obtain their driver licences in various sites around NSW. More than 400 Aboriginal people got their licence through the program.¹²¹
- 3.47 The government's Driver Licensing Access Program aims to reduce barriers that prevent Aboriginal and disadvantaged people from getting their licences. It focuses on literacy, numeracy and computer skills; licensing enrolment support; learner driver mentoring and supervision; access to roadworthy vehicles; debt negotiation and management; and road safety education and coaching. Thirteen service providers will run the program in 2016-17, with funding of \$1.2 million. Providers include community colleges, Aboriginal Corporations, and TAFEs in

¹¹⁶ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp3, 8

¹¹⁷ Submission 80, NSW Government, p9; Submission 67, NCOSS, p23

¹¹⁸ Submission 67, NCOSS, p23; Submission 80, NSW Government, p9

¹¹⁹ Submission 80, NSW Government, p9; Submission 67, NCOSS, p23

¹²⁰ The following organisations ran the program: Tribal Warrior Redfern, Shellharbour Aboriginal Community Youth Association, Griffith Aboriginal Lands Council, Wiradjuri Condobolin Corporation, Dubbo Aboriginal Lands Council, Taree Indigenous Development and Employment, Red Cross Wagga, AB Central Campbelltown, Mallee Family Care Dareton, Kempsey Neighbourhood Centre, Raymond Terrace PCYC and Bourke Justice Reinvestment Program: Answers to supplementary questions, NSW Government, p1

¹²¹ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p1; The George Institute, 'Funding boost for Driving Change', Media release, 12 August 2016, <http://www.georgeinstitute.org.au/media-releases/funding-boost-for-driving-change> accessed 22 November 2016

locations including Shellharbour, the Illawarra, New England, the Central Coast and Western Sydney.¹²²

- 3.48 The NSW Aboriginal Driver Licensing Interagency Committee is working on more strategies to increase the number of Aboriginal people with a driver's licence. According to the NSW Government there has been some progress - in the 10 years to 2013 there was a 125% rate of growth of Aboriginal driver licence holders compared with 35% growth for non-Aboriginal licence holders.¹²³
- 3.49 We heard support for a continuation and expansion of the Driving Change program. NCOSS recommended that the government provide \$2.5 million funding for a five year expansion of the program to Western NSW, the Far West and Murrumbidgee. NCOSS argued that while there are other driver training programs, Driving Change is 'more holistic and recognises the range of factors that often impede Aboriginal people in rural communities from getting their license.' It was noted that a review of the program's implementation indicated significant success in helping young Aboriginal people in rural and regional communities to get their licenses and become more independent.¹²⁴
- 3.50 We consider that the Driving Change program should be continued. While it is under evaluation, there have been positive signs about the impact of the program on young Aboriginal people's ability to get their licences. Access to private transport is critical to rural and remote Aboriginal communities, and to reducing the disadvantage experienced by many people in these communities.

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE TRANSPORT SERVICES

FINDING 5

Transport services and support for Aboriginal people must be culturally sensitive to encourage greater use of services, especially for Aboriginal people living in more isolated locations.

- 3.51 We heard that transport services for Aboriginal people need to take into account their cultural and social needs. Inquiry participants emphasised that flexible transport services that are culturally appropriate and involve Aboriginal people can help to overcome barriers that limit access to transport.¹²⁵
- 3.52 Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services (HART) outlined some of the elements of culturally appropriate transport services, including: employing Aboriginal staff; providing support to obtain appropriate vehicle licences; involving elders and community members; encouraging self-determination through a holistic, flexible approach; having flexible schedules that accommodate 'Sorry Business' and cultural needs; and using buses decorated in art designed by community members, to foster pride and ownership. HART provides a community transport service in the Northern Rivers region, and works with

¹²² Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p2

¹²³ Submission 80, NSW Government, p31

¹²⁴ Submission 67, NCOSS, p23

¹²⁵ Submission 65, Community Transport Organisation Inc, p5; Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p3; Submission 13, Intereach, p7; Submission 63, Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC, p2

Aboriginal communities to provide a culturally appropriate service. It employs drivers from local communities and its Steering Committee is made up of community members.¹²⁶

- 3.53 We heard that Aboriginal people may not be aware of what transport services are available because of a lack of community engagement and promotion of services to the Aboriginal community. It was argued that transport providers need to build relationships with Aboriginal communities and local organisations should work to make communities aware of available services.¹²⁷
- 3.54 We recognise that Transport for NSW has sought to improve Aboriginal communities' access to culturally appropriate transport. The department employs an Aboriginal Service Development Officer to work with community transport providers and consult with Aboriginal people. The Officer and community transport providers are expected to consult with Aboriginal communities about the services they need. Service providers are also encouraged to attend Koori Interagency meetings and be in regular contact with Aboriginal networks to build on identified community needs. In addition, Transport for NSW runs an Aboriginal Cultural Education program for service providers.
- 3.55 We also heard that Transport for NSW provides funding for disadvantaged Aboriginal people to travel to their country for funerals, which are highly culturally significant. Aboriginal people can obtain full refunds of public transport costs, 50% refunds of bus hire, and fuel vouchers. The program is managed by an Aboriginal Service Development Officer who has ties to community representatives across New South Wales.¹²⁸
- 3.56 On our visit to Armidale, we heard that services that aren't culturally appropriate may not be used by members of the Aboriginal community. The Glen Innes region also referred to the potential for underuse of available services, caused in part by service providers 'lacking a connection to culture, or reluctance to accommodate companion travellers, which stifles accessibility for some people'.¹²⁹
- 3.57 Providing culturally appropriate services to Indigenous communities is a key part of improving access to transport for Aboriginal people in rural and regional areas. Services providers should ensure that they provide culturally appropriate services that recognise and meet Aboriginal people's needs.
- 3.58 The case study below shows the benefits of culturally appropriate transport services.

¹²⁶ Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p3

¹²⁷ Submission 13, Intereach, p2

¹²⁸ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, pp2-3

¹²⁹ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p6

Case study 10: Culturally appropriate services can improve transport access for Aboriginal people¹³⁰

"[Dubbo] Council collaborated with the Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council and Transport for NSW to attract clients from Aboriginal backgrounds. Extra funding was received to create a bus wrap for one of the buses. A local Aboriginal artist was commissioned to paint an Aboriginal painting, which symbolised Wellington, to reduce barriers and increase community ownership. The Aboriginal community now uses the bus for cultural tours, regional events and local funerals."

¹³⁰ Additional information provided by Local Government NSW, p2

Chapter Four – Information

DIGITAL AND NON-DIGITAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION 11

That Transport for NSW publish travel information in paper format. It should be in locations where it is easily available to people who do not have access to online information, such as community centres and doctors' surgeries in rural and regional areas.

RECOMMENDATION 12

That Transport for NSW area managers inform people in each of their respective areas about the transport services and subsidies that are available, with information made available both online and in printed form.

- 4.1 Providing access to transport information is just as important in addressing transport disadvantage as providing accessible, flexible and affordable transport services.
- 4.2 Transport for NSW has enhanced the content on its website – transportnsw.info – to give customers more information when planning their journeys. The website's trip planner feature now includes all TrainLink train and coach services and more than 475 other regional bus and ferry services. The inclusion of this information allows customers to use one website when planning their journeys to and from any location in New South Wales.¹³¹
- 4.3 Other improvements to the website include ensuring the online wayfinding icons, line colours and network names correspond with those in the physical environment; displaying interactive maps; and better layout of trip planner and next departure results. Further enhancements are planned, including the use of smart technology to improve customer safety across the train and coach network. Third party travel apps can also be updated to include rural and regional transport services.¹³²
- 4.4 Despite an increasing amount of information being provided online, including the ability to make reservations, there continues to be a need for more traditional forms of communication. Across rural and regional areas there remains a preference for transport information to be available in print format. We were told by Ms Lisa Langley, Policy Manager, Council on the Ageing NSW, that the Council's research shows that many people in rural and regional areas lack the ability to access the internet and miss not having access to printed material.¹³³
- 4.5 This sentiment was shared by the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, who told us that the focus on online information is seen by

¹³¹ Submission 80, NSW Government, p19

¹³² Submission 80, NSW Government, pp19, 29

¹³³ Ms Lisa Langley, Policy Manager, Council on the Ageing NSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

- those who are not online as an indication that their needs are not important.¹³⁴ For those who know how to access the internet, a lack of reliable internet coverage can impact their ability to get the information they need.¹³⁵
- 4.6 Without easy access to information it is difficult for people to know what transport services are available in their area. This can add to the disadvantage and vulnerability already experienced by some sections of the community, such as older people, Aboriginal people and social housing tenants.¹³⁶
- 4.7 People living in areas with reasonable transport services can be unaware of the services available because they do not know where to look for the information. Sandy Regan provided us with the example of bus services operating in their local area that are not widely publicised and therefore underused. Sandy noted that increased awareness about the services could lead to greater patronage, benefiting both the public and the bus operator.¹³⁷
- 4.8 It is important that printed material is available in locations that are regularly frequented by the local community. Information should also include advice on available subsidies and other financial supports that are available. We were informed that many people are not aware of subsidies and financial support that they may be entitled to receive.¹³⁸ Making this information available in locations such as GP/medical centres, community centres, aged care services and to community groups and local councils ensures a broad range of people access the information.¹³⁹
- 4.9 Ms Illana Halliday, Chief Executive Officer, Aged and Community Services NSW, noted that the information can often be presented in a very simple way. Fridge magnets with messages such as 'Transport difficulties? Call this number' or 'If you need help, here's something you can call' is a good way of informing people about how and where to access information.¹⁴⁰ Ms Halliday also noted that people are more likely to take notice of information they receive from a trusted source, such as their GP or aged care provider.¹⁴¹
- 4.10 In addition to being able to access printed information, customers also value being able to speak to another person about the availability of transport services.¹⁴² Transport for NSW provides a telephone reservation and general enquiry services for people who want to speak with an individual about their

¹³⁴ Ms Ellis Blaikie, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

¹³⁵ Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p13

¹³⁶ See for example: Submission 13, Intereach, p2; Submission 19, Council of the Ageing NSW, p8; Ms Lisa Langley, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

¹³⁷ Submission 49, Sandy Regan

¹³⁸ See for example: Submission 10, Alzheimer's Australia NSW, p9; Submission 82, Tablelands Community Transport, p1

¹³⁹ Ms Lisa Langley, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

¹⁴⁰ Ms Illana Halliday, Chief Executive Officer, Aged and Community Services NSW, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

¹⁴¹ Ms Illana Halliday, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p6

¹⁴² Ms Ellis Blaikie, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p5

travel plans. Telephone services are also available for customers who are hearing impaired or may need an interpreter.¹⁴³

- 4.11 We were also told how important it is for customers to be able to talk face to face with transport staff. This was particularly evident in submissions we received about the importance of having staff at railway stations and major coach stops. It was noted that customers feel reassured at stations that are staffed. Customers appreciate having a staff member available when purchasing tickets, and to answer their queries and provide assistance as needed. Customers also feel safer when getting on and off trains if a staff member is there to assist them.¹⁴⁴
- 4.12 Ensuring that information is available to all rural and regional communities must be an important and ongoing function of the Transport for NSW area managers. We were informed that the areas managers will 'collaborate and communicate' with their local communities to identify transport needs and then work to procure the services that meets that need.¹⁴⁵ Part of this process must include increasing public awareness of transport services and subsidies.

TRAVEL TRAINING FOR PASSENGERS

RECOMMENDATION 13

That Transport for NSW area managers work with the local communities and stakeholder groups within their areas to promote awareness of the First Stop Transport travel training service.

- 4.13 Residents of rural and regional New South Wales have a greater reliance on private vehicles than those in metropolitan areas. In some areas this reliance is as high as 90%.¹⁴⁶ People with limited experience of using public transport, such as older people and people with disability, can lack the ability to confidently use public transport.
- 4.14 HART Services informed us that their research identified barriers that people see as preventing them from using public transport. These barriers included: not knowing where or when to catch a bus; a belief that all buses have steps; and too far a distance to a bus stop.¹⁴⁷ Other issues include being unfamiliar with how to use ticket vending machines.¹⁴⁸ People can be afraid for their physical safety, fearing they will fall over when the bus moves off before they take their seat. There can be concern about how to access timetable information, how to transfer between services or fear for personal safety in crowded locations. Sometimes, one bad experience can lead to an ongoing reluctance to use a

¹⁴³ Transport for NSW, *Contact us*, <http://www.transportnsw.info/en/contact-us/index.page>? accessed 22 November 2016

¹⁴⁴ See for example: Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p7; Submission 63, Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC, p3; Submission 67, NCOSS, p13; Submission 72, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, p3; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p13

¹⁴⁵ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, pp1-2

¹⁴⁶ Submission 67, NCOSS, p7

¹⁴⁷ Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p4

¹⁴⁸ Submission 35, Lithgow City Council, pp2-3

service. Often the barriers to using public transport can be perceived rather than actual.¹⁴⁹

4.15 The First Stop Transport travel training service offered by Transport for NSW is designed to promote independent and safe use of public transport. The training is for people who lack the experience or confidence to use public transport. The training gives people information they can use to try and overcome the barriers, real or perceived, that prevent them from accessing services.¹⁵⁰

4.16 The training program covers a range of topics including:

- Getting to and from public transport
- Using timetables and online trip planners
- Types of tickets
- Identifying accessible services
- Being safe throughout the trip
- Where to ask for help.¹⁵¹

The training is provided to individuals or groups using information sessions, activities, simulations, or real practice sessions using public transport.¹⁵² A dedicated online tool – firststop.transportnsw.info – has been created. The website provides information for people interested in attending the training. Resources are also available for those who wish to become travel trainers to learn how to deliver the training.¹⁵³

4.17 The groups who can benefit most from the training include older people, people with disability or limited mobility, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The training program recognises that being active and independent is an important part of maintaining good health and wellbeing, and that having the confidence to access transport helps overcome social isolation.¹⁵⁴

4.18 There is broad recognition of the need to inform people in rural and regional areas on how to become confident and competent users of public transport. National Disability Services informed us of the need to invest in 'local initiatives that enable independent use of public transport'.¹⁵⁵ Maitland City Council and Newcastle City Council noted the need to provide information that informs

¹⁴⁹ See for example: Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p4; Submission 13, Intereach, pp5-6; Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p2; Submission 35, Lithgow City Council, p1; Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p6; Ms Jessica Lobo, Senior Sector Development Officer, National Disability Services, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p13

¹⁵⁰ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, pp4-5

¹⁵¹ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

¹⁵² Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

¹⁵³ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

¹⁵⁴ Transport for NSW, *First Stop Transport – Travel Training*, <http://firststop.transportnsw.info/travel-training.html> accessed 21 November 2016

¹⁵⁵ Submission 64, National Disability Services, p13

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INFORMATION

people about the transport options available and the benefits of using public transport.¹⁵⁶ It was also noted that increased confidence in using public transport could prompt people to consider other transport options they may have previously considered unsuitable for their needs.¹⁵⁷

- 4.19 Transport for NSW informed us that the First Stop Transport resources are relevant to all NSW residents, including rural and regional residents. From July 2016 it has made funding available over the next two years to provide travel training in Sydney, the Central Coast and Newcastle.¹⁵⁸
- 4.20 There are calls for the training to be made available in rural areas where transport disadvantage is more acute. We were informed that funding is available to run the program in rural and regional areas subject to an unsolicited expression of interest process.¹⁵⁹
- 4.21 We heard that HART Services has been selected to provide First Stop Transport travel training in the Northern Rivers area. HART Services told us that the project could be used as a blueprint for the roll-out of the program to other rural areas.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ See for example: Submission 57, Maitland City Council, pp3-4; Submission 61, Newcastle City Council, p4

¹⁵⁷ Submission 13, Intereach, p5

¹⁵⁸ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

¹⁵⁹ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

¹⁶⁰ See for example: Submission 7, Home Assistance and Regional Transport Services, p4; Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p5

Chapter Five – Affordability

TRANSPORT DISCOUNTS AND SUBSIDIES

- 5.1 There are several concessions and subsidies to improve the affordability of transport for people living in rural and regional areas. Public transport concessions include:
- \$2.50 Country Pensioner Excursion fare for TrainLink regional services for eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/widowers.
 - \$2.50 Regional Excursion Daily ticket for all-day travel on rural and regional bus services for eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/widowers.
 - \$2.50 Opal Gold Card fare for all-day travel on all public transport in Sydney, Newcastle, the Hunter, Central Coast and Blue Mountains for eligible seniors, pensioners and war widows/widowers.
 - Half fares on TrainLink regional services for pensioners and seniors.
 - Travel vouchers for eligible pensioners and war widows/widowers for two return or four free single trips on TrainLink regional services every year.
 - Free travel for World War One veterans, and their wives/widows, and eligible former Defence Forces members with service-related disabilities.¹⁶¹
 - Free travel for assistants of Companion Card holders and assistance animals accompanying a person with disability.
 - Half fares for Vision Impaired Person's Pass holders on TrainLink regional services and one return or two single free economy class intrastate TrainLink trips every year. Free travel for VIP pass holders' assistants.
 - Free travel for authorised carers and Royal Far West support for regional customers travelling for medical care.¹⁶²
- 5.2 The following private vehicle concessions and subsidies are available:
- Private Vehicle Conveyance subsidy for all or part of a student's (including TAFE) journey to school in a private vehicle in rural or regional areas where there is no public transport.¹⁶³
 - School Student Transport Scheme provides free public transport for eligible children between home and school.

¹⁶¹ Former Defence Force members with disabilities are entitled to three return or six single journeys on TrainLink services every year if they live outside Sydney and Newcastle: Submission 80, NSW Government, pp33-35

¹⁶² Submission 80, NSW Government, pp33-35

¹⁶³ The subsidy is based on daily attendance and paid after the end of Term 2 and Term 4 once attendance has been audited and confirmed by the school or TAFE college: Submission 80, NSW Government, pp33-35

- Isolated Patient Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme subsidises travel costs for people who must travel at least 100 kilometres one way or 200 kilometres during a week for specialist medical appointments. Accommodation costs are also subsidised.¹⁶⁴
- Aboriginal Funeral Transport for isolated and disadvantaged Aboriginal communities to travel to their country for funerals, fully reimburses public transport costs, and reimburses 50% of bus hire and fuel vouchers.¹⁶⁵
- Centrelink or Department of Veterans' Affairs pension concession card holders get free registration for one car used mainly by the pensioner.
- Eligible pensioners are exempt from fees for driver licences; driving tests (except computer driving tests); riding skill tests; heavy vehicle competency based assessment log book and guide; replacement learner driver log book; NSW Photo Cards.¹⁶⁶

5.3 The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme subsidises taxi trips (capped at \$60 per trip) for people who can't use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability.¹⁶⁷ We were also told that rural and regional taxi networks have local initiatives to support seniors and the transport disadvantaged, including discount services for seniors in Wagga and Tamworth, discount services to club members in Griffith and culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal communities in Casino.¹⁶⁸

FUEL CARD FOR REMOTE AREAS

RECOMMENDATION 14

That Transport for NSW consider introducing a fuel card system for people living in very remote locations where there is no access to public or point to point transport services.

5.4 We consider that a fuel card should be made available for people who live in very remote areas. Public transport and point to point transport are far less likely to be available in these areas, and there should be more support available to help people in remote areas with the costs of private transport.

5.5 Inquiry participants told us that the high cost of petrol is a burden on disadvantaged people in rural and regional areas: 'where private transport is the only available/known option, many individuals struggle to meet the costs, an added burden.'¹⁶⁹ This is a significant issue in remote areas where there is no

¹⁶⁴ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp10, 33-35; HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS Frequently asked questions*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/faqs#A11>; *IPTAAS: information for patients*, http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/281189/EnableNSW_IPTAAS_Info_for_Patients_factsheet.pdf accessed 25 September 2016

¹⁶⁵ Submission 80, NSW Government, p32

¹⁶⁶ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp10, 33-35

¹⁶⁷ Submission 80, NSW Government, p25

¹⁶⁸ Submission 78, NSW Taxi Council, p12

¹⁶⁹ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p4

- public transport and people have to use their cars to access services and take part in their community.¹⁷⁰
- 5.6 We heard that support with the cost of petrol would help people in rural and regional areas who have limited access to transport.¹⁷¹ Inquiry participants suggested discounts, through vouchers or petrol cards, to help disadvantaged people such as pensioners in rural and regional areas where there are few public transport options.¹⁷²
- 5.7 We were informed that in Western Australia aged pensioners living in rural and remote areas receive a Country Age Pension Fuel Card to help meet the fuel costs of private cars or taxis.¹⁷³ The Country Age Pension Fuel Card allows cardholders to buy up to \$575 of fuel and taxi travel from participating providers. Applicants must live in non-metropolitan areas and don't need to have a driver's licence or own a car - the Fuel Card can be used by a nominated person to transport the cardholder. Eligible pensioners are entitled to one card each financial year (couples also get one card) and can get a new card every year if they are still eligible.¹⁷⁴
- 5.8 While there was support for assistance with fuel costs, we also heard that petrol card schemes should be overseen to prevent fraud and ensure the scheme's integrity.¹⁷⁵ It was suggested that the scheme should be administered along with other services by a centralised agency and have clear eligibility guidelines.¹⁷⁶
- 5.9 We heard from Transport for NSW that there was 'potential for fraud and the trading of fuel cards' and costs involved in making sure that public money 'goes where it is meant to go'. However, Mr Terry Lee-Williams told us that petrol cards are more effective in remote communities: 'In terms of efficiency, it depends on where you are doing it but in more remote communities it is much easier. In more populated communities they tend to become a tradeable asset.'¹⁷⁷
- 5.10 A number of government programs have used fuel cards. The Department of Family and Community Services' Aboriginal flexible respite scheme has annual funding of \$233,000, half of which is spent on transport, mostly with Caltex fuel cards. We heard that 'it is a highly efficient way of helping families to get from remote locations down to regional centres or Sydney.'¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁰ Submission 10, Alzheimer's Australia, p7; Submission 13, Intereach, p2; Submission 20, Carers NSW, p3

¹⁷¹ Submission 5, Mr Roger Hilton; Submission 82, Tablelands Community Transport

¹⁷² Submission 19, Council on the Ageing NSW, pp7, 12; Submission 25, Nambucca Shire Council Access Committee, p2; Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p7; Submission 13, Intereach, p6; Submission 56, Berrigan Shire Council, p2

¹⁷³ Submission 10, Alzheimer's Australia, p13

¹⁷⁴ Concessions WA, *Country Age Pension Fuel Card - Travel Assistance in Western Australia*, <http://www.concessions.wa.gov.au/Concessions/Pages/Country-Age-Pension-Fuel-Card--travel-assistance-in-Western-Australia.aspx>, accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁷⁵ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p7

¹⁷⁶ Submission 30, Glen Innes Region, p7

¹⁷⁷ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, pp13-14

¹⁷⁸ Ms Jo Lawrence, District Director, Western NSW, Department of Family and Community Service, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2015, p13. The respite program provides support to Aboriginal people who are caring for a family member with disability in the Western Region of NSW:

- 5.11 Transport for NSW also uses petrol cards through its Transport Access Regional Partnership Grants Program, which provides funding of \$900,000 each year to fill gaps in transport services in rural and regional areas.¹⁷⁹ Below are case studies of projects under the Grants Program that have used fuel vouchers.

Case study 11: Helping with fuel costs in remote communities¹⁸⁰

Wellington Courtesy Bus

The project aimed to enable isolated and disadvantaged youth in the Central West of NSW to attend after school, weekend or school holiday activities, so that they could be a part of the community and not get involved in anti-social behaviour. The PCYC provided transport using a community transport vehicle; Transport for NSW met the cost through fuel subsidies.

All Aboard Louth

This project will provide transport to residents of Louth in Western NSW by subsidising fuel costs of a number of local, privately owned vehicles. Louth Public School's parents and community association will manage the funding. Everyone in the community will have access to subsidised trips, through carpooling, for just over one trip a month. Destinations will include Bourke, Cobar, Broken Hill and Dubbo, and one trip to Sydney. Fifteen to 21 residents will have access to transport on each trip.

Move to Safety

This project operates across five safe houses in the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett LGAs. It is aimed at women and children escaping violence; money is reimbursed for one vehicle at a time.

TAXI TRANSPORT SUBSIDY SCHEME

RECOMMENDATION 15

That Transport for NSW extend the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme to include other point to point transport providers such as Uber.

- 5.12 The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme provides a fare subsidy for people who are unable to use public transport because of a disability. The scheme is designed to allow them to make their own choices about where they want to travel.¹⁸¹
- 5.13 The scheme is not means tested but participants have to meet eligibility criteria. They must be over school age and a permanent resident of Australia living in New South Wales. Their disability must be severe and permanent, and they can't be a

http://www.adhc.nsw.gov.au/individuals/support/getting_respite/aboriginal_flexible_respite accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁷⁹ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, pp13-14. The grants program provides funding for people who have limited or no access to private transport, and difficulty accessing public transport due to limited access to a car or regular public transport (eg. people in isolated towns, people without a licence); lack of mobility; and socio-economic circumstances: <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/operatorscommunity-transport-operators/transport-access-regional-partnerships-grants-program>, accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁸⁰ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, pp8-9

¹⁸¹ Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p9

member of a similar scheme in another State or Territory. People on an aged, invalid, blind or any other pension don't automatically qualify for the subsidy.¹⁸²

- 5.14 In July 2016 the Government increased the subsidy from \$30 to \$60 for each taxi journey. The subsidy covers 50% of the total fare with \$60 being the maximum subsidy per journey. Participants receive a book of travel docket. The subsidy is claimed by the participant completing the docket and giving it to the taxi driver at the end of the journey. For example, if the total fare is \$80, the participant uses a docket to pay \$40 towards the fare and pays the remaining \$40 from their own funds. If the total fare is \$140, they use a docket to pay \$60 (maximum subsidy) and pay the remaining \$80 from their own funds.¹⁸³
- 5.15 The incentive paid to drivers of wheelchair accessible taxis was also doubled to \$15 per journey, to encourage taxi drivers to take more bookings from people with limited mobility.¹⁸⁴ Measures to increase the number of wheelchair accessible taxis are discussed in more detail in chapter three.
- 5.16 The improvements to the scheme have been welcomed but we heard that more needs to be done. The NSW Taxi Council noted the increase was overdue and will assist in addressing transport disadvantage. The Council also observed that the subsidy scheme 'remains an integral part of the taxi service offering for rural and regional communities.'¹⁸⁵
- 5.17 The Disability Council referred to the longer distances residents in rural and regional areas have to travel. While welcoming the increase to \$60, the Council noted that this amount may still not be enough to reduce the financial burden of long taxi journeys for people living in isolated areas.¹⁸⁶
- 5.18 National Disability Services also welcomed the increased subsidies for both passengers and wheelchair accessible taxi drivers. However, they noted that due to a lack of taxis in rural and regional areas, taxis are not always a convenient or reliable means of transport. This is particularly the case for wheelchair accessible taxis.¹⁸⁷
- 5.19 We were told by Uber that expanding the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme to include ridesharing services could lead to greater efficiencies. Uber noted that in the 2014/15 financial year, the subsidy cost almost \$25 million, and the cost is likely to increase over time.¹⁸⁸ Uber believe their cheaper fares, around 30% less than traditional point to point transport providers, could allow for 'significant cost savings for scheme users and the Government'.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Transport for NSW, Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/community/concessions-and-schemes/taxi-transport-subsidy-scheme> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁸³ Transport for NSW, Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme, <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/community/concessions-and-schemes/taxi-transport-subsidy-scheme> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁸⁴ Submission 80, NSW Government, p25; Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p5

¹⁸⁵ Submission 78, NSW Taxi Council, pp5-6

¹⁸⁶ Submission 31, Disability Council NSW, p11

¹⁸⁷ Submission 64, National Disability Services, p10

¹⁸⁸ Submission 69, Uber, p8; Mr Henry Greenacre, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p33

¹⁸⁹ Mr Henry Greenacre, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p33

5.20 We asked Transport for NSW whether it intends to extend the subsidy scheme to cover ridesharing providers like Uber. We were informed that the Government has accepted the recommendation of the Point to Point Transport Taskforce to consider changing the subsidy scheme. We were also told the Government intends to:

... examine the viability of wheelchair accessible services given the higher capital and running costs associated with providing these services and the effectiveness and adequacy of passenger subsidies and other incentives for the provision of services to all people with disabilities.

The Review will begin in the coming months.¹⁹⁰

5.21 In addition to calls for the subsidy scheme to include ridesharing services, we also received suggestions that the scheme include community transport services.¹⁹¹ Carers NSW noted that taxi fares, even with the subsidy, can be expensive. To overcome this, Carers NSW suggest community transport providers be allowed to register their vehicles as wheelchair accessible taxis. This would allow participants in the scheme to use the more accessible and cheaper community transport services, particularly over longer distances.¹⁹²

ISOLATED PATIENTS TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME

RECOMMENDATION 16

That NSW Health further simplify the process of submitting claims under the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, particularly the way attendance at medical appointments is confirmed.

RECOMMENDATION 17

That NSW Health make information about the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme widely available to ensure those who may be eligible to claim are aware of the scheme.

5.22 The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) is a financial assistance scheme for patients who travel long distance to attend specialist medical treatment. Assistance is provided to help patients with their travel and accommodation costs. It is a subsidy rather than a full reimbursement of costs.¹⁹³

5.23 Eligibility criteria includes patients being a resident of New South Wales and having a Medicare card. Patients must live more than 100 kilometres from their

¹⁹⁰ Answers to supplementary questions, Transport for NSW, p6

¹⁹¹ See for example; Submission 20, Carers NSW, p5; Submission 57, Maitland City Council, p4

¹⁹² Submission 20, Carers NSW, p5

¹⁹³ Submission 80, NSW Government, p34

treating specialist or have a combined trip to and from their specialist in excess of 200 kilometres per week.¹⁹⁴

- 5.24 The expenses claimed must be incurred for medical reasons and certified by a medical practitioner. Patients make a co-payment of \$30 and this is capped at \$120, or four co-payments, per financial year. Those holding a pension or healthcare card do not make a co-payment.¹⁹⁵
- 5.25 Claims can be made for travel using a private vehicle or public transport. In certain instances air travel can also be claimed. Costs for accommodation can also be claimed. In some circumstances, financial assistance can also be claimed for the cost of having an escort/carer accompany the patient.¹⁹⁶
- 5.26 In September 2015 a number of improvements to the scheme were implemented. The subsidy for travel by private vehicle increased from 19 cents to 22 cents per kilometre. In addition, the subsidy for patients and their escort when staying in for-profit accommodation increased on an incremental scale, depending on the number of nights claimed per financial year. The previous subsidy was a flat rate regardless of the number of nights claimed.¹⁹⁷
- 5.27 From February 2016, the subsidy for patients and their escort staying in not-for-profit accommodation also increased on an incremental scale, depending on the number of nights claimed per financial year. Prior to February 2016 the subsidy was a flat rate regardless of the number of nights claimed. For profit accommodation providers are those that do not have charitable status. Not-for-profit accommodation providers are those that are registered as a charity in the Australian Business Register.¹⁹⁸
- 5.28 Since February 2016 the scheme has allowed patients travelling to specialised allied health clinics to claim for travel and accommodation. This is aimed at assisting patients who need regular access to highly specialised services that are only available in limited locations.¹⁹⁹
- 5.29 While the improvements to the scheme have been welcomed, we heard calls for further improvements. It was noted that the scheme is difficult to understand, and people can be confused about whether or not they are eligible. We were informed that the scheme's administrative processes are complex. The website supporting the scheme is not user friendly, and it can take a long time for claims to be processed.

¹⁹⁴ HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance – Eligibility for IPTAAS*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁹⁵ Submission 80, NSW Government, pp34-35; HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/faqs#A19> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁹⁶ HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/faqs#A19> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁹⁷ HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/faqs#A19> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁹⁸ HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance: Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/faqs#A19> accessed 28 November 2016

¹⁹⁹ HealthShare EnableNSW, *IPTAAS – Travel Assistance: What's new*, http://www.enable.health.nsw.gov.au/home/iptaas/whats_new accessed 28 November 2016

- 5.30 This lack of understanding and confidence in the scheme creates a barrier that prevents people from using it. There were also calls for the rebate covering private and public transport to be extended to community transport, to give patients more affordable transport options.²⁰⁰
- 5.31 We were interested to know if IPTAAS could be changed to an up-front subsidy scheme where money is paid in advance of attending an appointment. This could be helpful in situations where large costs are involved and people may not have the money to meet those costs. We were informed by Ms Tish Bruce, Executive Director, Health and Social Policy Branch, Ministry of Health, that in 'cases of financial hardship, there are opportunities to discuss whether some or all of the costs can be paid in advance.' However, Ms Bruce also stated that:
- In the majority of cases, the plan to go to up-front payments is not supported because individuals' plans for their health, their capacity to attend an appointment, even the appointment itself can change, so then we would have to go back into a rebate system and reabsorb that money back through the people.²⁰¹
- 5.32 We were also interested to know if the reimbursement process could be streamlined by verifying attendance at medical appointments electronically via Medicare records. This would replace the current system of having health practitioner's complete paperwork confirming the patient's attendance. The patient then submits their paperwork for manual processing.
- 5.33 We were told by Ms Bruce that there is an acknowledgement that more can be done to improve the scheme's administrative processes and website. We were further informed that NSW Health is currently working to simplify the IPTAAS policy. Once the policy has been simplified, administrative processes and system changes can then be implemented to accommodate the new policy. Mr Dan Hunter, Chief Executive, HealthShare NSW, also told us that they:
- ...will be working on simplifying that policy in the next six to 12 months, and hopefully we can simplify the application process and the reimbursement process greatly. That is what we are wanting to achieve because there is a recognition that that verification piece takes a little while at the moment.²⁰²
- 5.34 During our visit to Armidale we met with members of Armidale Regional Council's Access Advisory Committee. While the members knew about IPTAAS not all of them were aware of the recent improvements to the scheme. It was also noted in submissions to the inquiry that there is a lack of public awareness of IPTAAS.²⁰³ The need to better inform medical practitioners was also identified, as they are well placed to connect patients with the scheme.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ See for example: Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p3; Submission 53, Local Government NSW, p7; Submission 67, NCOSS, pp15-16; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p18; Ms Tracy Howe, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp17-18

²⁰¹ Ms Tish Bruce, Executive Director, Health and Social Policy Branch, Ministry of Health, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p13

²⁰² Mr Dan Hunter, Chief Executive, HealthShare NSW, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p13

²⁰³ See for example: Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p3; Submission 67, NCOSS, p15; Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p17

²⁰⁴ Submission 67, NCOSS, pp15-16

- 5.35 While IPTAAS has limitations it does offer some financial support to those who may need it at a time of particular stress and vulnerability. A scheme that is not sufficiently promoted means people could miss out on much needed help. It is important that residents in rural and regional areas know about IPTAAS. It is also important that improvements to the scheme are widely publicised. This should help address a lack of confidence that people may have in the scheme. Such awareness campaigns should include printed material, and medical practitioners should be included in the campaigns.
- 5.36 We recognise that IPTAAS is primarily a subsidy scheme. We were interested to hear that under certain circumstances people can receive an upfront payment. We consider that greater awareness of this option could benefit people who are unable to access treatment due to the costs of travelling long distance to attend treatment.

FUNDING OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

FINDING 6

The community transport sector is experiencing a period of uncertainty due to funding changes as part of the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care.

RECOMMENDATION 18

That Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services monitor the impact of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and My Aged Care to ensure that people are not disadvantaged when accessing transport services.

- 5.37 We recommend that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services monitor the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and My Aged Care, to ensure that people do not experience transport disadvantage because of changes under the schemes.
- 5.38 We heard that community transport providers and other organisations are concerned about future funding for transport services following the introduction of the NDIS and My Aged Care.²⁰⁵ The schemes will mean a move from block funding of community transport providers to individualised funding.
- 5.39 According to National Disability Services, the NDIS funds transport that is directly related to a person's disability. So, if a person goes to a doctor to access treatment for their functional capacity (such as occupational therapy, speech pathology, physiotherapy, or specialist behaviour interventions) they could use their core NDIS funding for transport by negotiating with their service provider

²⁰⁵ My Aged Care is a centralised Commonwealth service (website and call centre) that helps people access aged care and home care services. The service has a web portal that can be used by clients, service providers and assessors who conduct assessments of eligibility for Commonwealth programs: Department of Health, About My Aged Care, <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/programs-services/my-aged-care/about-my-aged-care> accessed 29 November 2016

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under the scheme. But if they used transport for general diagnosis or treatment not related to their disability, they would not be able to use their NDIS funding.²⁰⁶

- 5.40 People eligible for the scheme can get an allowance for transport if they can't use public transport without substantial difficulty due to their disability. They manage the allowance themselves and decide how they will spend it. The transport allowance ranges from \$1,750 to \$3,455 annually (\$33 to \$66 a week).²⁰⁷
- 5.41 Under the scheme, service providers have to operate transport services on a cost-recovery basis. They deduct the cost of transport from NDIS participants' core funding or invoice them for the cost from their transport allowance. National Disability Services told us that providers operating in the NDIS Hunter trial site charge around \$0.78 per kilometre for transport.²⁰⁸
- 5.42 We heard that the long distances travelled in regional areas mean that the cost of transport would be high for regional NDIS recipients. For example, a return trip from Maitland to John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle would cost \$90 using community transport. Ms Jessica Lobo from National Disability Services told us that 'if you look at the price of that \$90 round trip just for one hospital visit, it does not leave much for a trip to access the community to be part of social activities.'²⁰⁹
- 5.43 There is uncertainty and concern about how changes in funding will affect disability service providers and community transport providers. We heard that there would be a 'diminishing capacity of disability support services to provide transport under the NDIS' due to limits on transport options for people with disability.²¹⁰
- 5.44 The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association argued that the change to individualised funding has 'impacted the viability of many regional community transport providers as it has restricted the eligibility criteria for accessing community transport.'²¹¹
- 5.45 Inquiry participants told us that changes to eligibility criteria under the NDIS and My Aged Care could mean that some people will not be able to use community transport: 'There is significant concern that some people are falling through the cracks, such as those who have been assessed as ineligible for NDIS (because their disability is predicted to improve over time) but who still require transport now to get to and from activities/community events.'²¹²

²⁰⁶ Submission 60, National Disability Services, p6

²⁰⁷ Funding is indexed annually. The funding levels are based on whether participants are working, studying or attending day programs; participants can receive higher funding if they are able to work or live in very remote areas: see National Disability Insurance Scheme, *Participant transport funding information*, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/document/participant-transport-funding-informati.html> accessed 30 November 2016 and Ms Jessica Lobo, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp10-11

²⁰⁸ Submission 79, National Disability Services, p4

²⁰⁹ Ms Jessica Lobo, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, pp10-11

²¹⁰ Ms Jessica Lobo, Transcript of evidence, 19 September 2016, p8

²¹¹ Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p16

²¹² Submission 79, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, p16; Submission 32, Aged and Community Services NSW and ACT, p4; Submission 63, Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC, p63

- 5.46 We were also told that there is confusion about NDIS recipients' eligibility for other subsidies and concessions. According to National Disability Services, it's not clear whether the Private Vehicle Conveyance subsidy²¹³ can be used for students with a disability.²¹⁴ Carers NSW were aware that some NDIS participants may not be eligible for a Companion Card, and said that 'as with a number of other services and entitlements in NSW, it is unclear whether all current users will be eligible for equivalent support under the NDIS.'²¹⁵
- 5.47 In response to concerns about the impact of the NDIS, we were told that funding for community transport has increased. In the past four years Commonwealth funding has increased by 30% and state funding has increased by 300%. Mr Terry Lee-Williams told us that 'even with the trading out of the total funding that is going to NDIS they are still on average about 35% more greatly funded than they were just four years ago. So in terms of viability I think it would be a stretch to say that that will make or break them.'²¹⁶
- 5.48 Some inquiry participants said that new transport initiatives could help meet people's needs under the NDIS. Mr Anthony Wing from Transport for NSW observed that giving people choice about how they spend their money will affect demand for some services and 'one of the ways of responding to this is going to be with some of the flexible transport schemes we just talked about'.²¹⁷
- 5.49 We heard that providers will have to adapt their services to people's needs: 'the challenge for community transport is that they have to provide services people want to procure when they are buying it of their free will rather than being forced to go through that service'. Mr Terry Lee-Williams said that while there will be lower demand for some services, community transport providers could have capacity to provide other services that have a higher demand.²¹⁸
- 5.50 It's clear that the transition to the NDIS and My Aged Care is creating uncertainty for transport providers. Until the changes are in place, it won't be possible to predict the impact on disadvantaged people's access to transport. We recognise that Transport for NSW is working with community transport providers to help manage the transition, and providers have received more funding. We recommend that Transport for NSW, NSW Health and the Department of Family and Community Services monitor the impact of the funding changes on people's ability to access transport.

PROGRESS REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION 19

That Transport for NSW provide a report by October 2018 to the Committee on Community Services detailing the progress made in implementing all of the Committee's recommendations.

²¹³ The PVC subsidises transport if there is no public transport for an eligible student to travel to school.

²¹⁴ Submission 64, National Disability Services, p7

²¹⁵ Submission 20, Carers NSW, pp5-6

²¹⁶ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p12

²¹⁷ Mr Anthony Wing, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p12; Submission 24, Bega Valley Shire Council, p3

²¹⁸ Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Transcript of evidence, 23 September 2016, p12

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES
AFFORDABILITY

- 5.51 We recommend that Transport for NSW report back to us in two years about how our recommendations have been implemented. The report should give us an indication of whether the changes we discussed in this report have improved transport in rural and regional areas.
- 5.52 In two years' time it may be possible to judge what has changed for disadvantaged people in rural areas as a result of measures such as new bus contracts and the point to point reforms. We are also hopeful that more bus and train stations and surrounding areas will be fully accessible for people with disability, and there will be a clear timetable for the work still to be done.
- 5.53 The success of transport reforms will also depend on rural and regional communities being aware of changes to make transport better. Transport for NSW's area managers have an important role in assessing what services are required in each of their regions and making their community aware of new transport options.
- 5.54 While we heard that some transport initiatives will take time to have a measurable impact, we think that a progress report will be a useful way to assess what has changed and consider whether further reforms are needed. It will also improve transparency about what has been done to improve transport for people living in rural and regional communities.
- 5.55 We were encouraged to hear about the initiatives that are being put in place to improve rural and regional transport services. We look forward to receiving a progress report that will allow us to judge how transport has improved for disadvantaged people in rural and regional communities.

Appendix One – Conduct of inquiry

Terms of reference

Former Deputy Premier the Hon Troy Grant MP referred the inquiry to the Committee on 1 June 2016.²¹⁹ On 2 June 2016, the Committee resolved to adopt the inquiry, with terms of reference to inquire into and report on:

- Specific issues relating to the transport needs of seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW;
- Accessibility of current public transport services in rural and regional NSW;
- Potential strategies to improve access, including better alignment between different modes of transport, available routes and timetabling generally;
- Support that can be provided to seniors and disadvantaged people to assist with the costs of private transport where public transport is either unavailable or unable to meet the needs of these groups; and
- Any other related matters.

Submissions

The Committee called for submissions by issuing a media release and writing to key stakeholders inviting them to make a submission. Submissions closed on 21 July 2016.

The inquiry received 83 submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, including members of the public, local councils, organisations and advocacy groups. A full list of submissions can be found at Appendix Two. The published submissions are available on the Committee's website.

Site visit

On 6 September 2016, the Committee conducted a site visit to Armidale, Uralla and Walcha to better understand the needs and concerns of stakeholders in rural and regional New South Wales. The Committee met with the local Access Advisory Committee, Tablelands Community Transport and representatives from the Glen Innes region. A site visit report can be found at Appendix Four.

Public hearings

On 19 and 23 September 2016, the Committee held two public hearings at Parliament House. On 19 September, witnesses representing transport organisations, the taxi industry, social services bodies, and disability and aged care organisations gave evidence. On 23 September the Committee heard from NSW Government agencies. A full list of witnesses is available at Appendix Three.

The transcript of evidence taken at the hearing can be found on the [Committee's webpage](#).

²¹⁹ LA Votes and Proceedings, 2 June 2016, No 14, p731

Appendix Two – List of submissions

1	Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct
2	Ms Sarina Sharp
3	Reverend Arthur Hall
4	Mr William Bateman
5	Mr Roger Hilton
6	Oxley Community Transport Services Inc
7	Home Assistance & Regional Transport Services (HARTS)
8	Professor Corinne Mulley
9	Blue Mountains City Council
10	Alzheimer's Australia NSW
11	Ms Beryl Batten
12	Mr Tim Herbert
13	Intereach
14	Shelter New South Wales
15	Delegate Progress Association
16	Mrs Natalie Armstrong
17	Mr Robin Spragg
18	Northern NSW Local Health District
19	Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW)
20	Carers NSW
21	Mr Milton Trott
22	Confidential
23	Mr Steven Yates
24	Bega Valley Shire Council
25	Nambucca Shire Council Access Committee
26	Mr William (Bill) McPhillips
27	BusNSW
28	South Lake Macquarie Public Transport Action Group
29	Northern Rivers Social Development Council
30	Glen Innes Region
31	Disability Council NSW

32	Aged and Community Services NSW & ACT
33	Mr Greg Piper MP
34	Ms Beth Shelley
35	Lithgow City Council
36	Narrabri Shire Council
37	Mr Alan McGregor
38	Ms Margaret Van Kleef
39	Mr Peter Westheimer
40	Mr Chris Dunkerley
41	Ms Bronwyn Stephens
42	Southlakes Carers
43	Mr Trevor Duffie
44	Mr Martin Stautner
45	Ms Catherine Smith
46	Eurobodalla Shire Council
47	Illawarra Forum Inc
48	Physical Disability Council of NSW
49	Sandy Regan
50	Northern Rivers Guardians Inc
51	Ms Susan Stock
52	Ms Jillian Spring
53	Local Government NSW
54	Mr Glen Aspinall
55	Port Macquarie-Hastings Council
56	Berrigan Shire Council
57	Maitland City Council
58	Ms Lydia Kindred
59	Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc
60	Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc
60a	Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Inc
61	Newcastle City Council
62	Tweed, Byron & Ballina Community Transport
63	Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC
64	National Disability Services

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES
LIST OF SUBMISSIONS

65	Community Transport Organisation
66	Uniting
67	NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
68	Mr Caleb Bond
69	Uber
70	Ms Margaret Newbould
71	Settlement Services International
72	Guide Dogs NSW/ACT
73	Ms Betty Moore
74	Mrs Gloria Cotterill
75	Coalfields NeighbourCare
76	Mr Philip Laird
77	Parkes Shire Council
78	NSW Taxi Council
79	Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc
80	NSW Government
81	The Law Society of NSW
82	Tablelands Community Transport
83	Mr Steve Austin

Appendix Three – List of witnesses

Monday 19 September 2016, Macquarie Room, Parliament House

Witness	Organisation
Ms Lisa Langley, Policy Manager	Council on the Ageing NSW
Ms Illana Halliday, Chief Executive Officer	Aged and Community Services NSW
Ms Ellis Blaikie, Senior Policy Adviser	Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW Inc
Mr Paul Zeller, Member	Disability Council NSW
Ms Jessica Lobo, Senior Sector Development Officer	National Disability Services
Ms Jordana Goodman, Policy Officer	Physical Disability Council of NSW
Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer	NSW Council of Social Service
Mr Adam Farrar, Senior Policy Officer	Shelter New South Wales
Mr Darryl Mellish, Executive Director	BusNSW
Ms Bethany Simmonds, Chair of the Board	Community Transport Inc
Mr Roy Wakelin-King, Chief Executive Officer	NSW Taxi Council
Mr Brian Wilkins, President	NSW Taxi Industry Association
Mr Henry Greenacre, City Lead – NSW/ACT	Uber
Ms Donna Rygate, Chief Executive	
Ms Dee Dee San Jose, Senior Policy Officer, Ageing and Disability	Local Government NSW
Ms Margaret Kay, Strategy Manager, Social and Community	

Friday 23 September 2016, Macquarie Room, Parliament House

Witness	Organisation
Mr Anthony Wing, Executive Director, Transport Policy	
Mr Terry Lee-Williams, Director, Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance, Infrastructure and Services	Transport for NSW
Ms Jo Lawrence, District Director, Western NSW	
Mr Dominic Schuster, Director, Government Relations	Department of Family and Community Services
Mr Dan Hunter, Chief Executive, HealthShare NSW	
Ms Tish Bruce, Executive Director, Health and Social Policy Branch	NSW Ministry of Health

Appendix Four – Site visit report

Tuesday 6 September

Meeting with representatives of Tablelands Community Transport, Tablelands Community Support and the Uralla Shire Mayor

The following issues were discussed:

Coordination

- The need for better use of existing and underutilised local transport assets such as buses owned by local clubs and organisations.
- Better coordination between public and private transport services would allow more convenient connections with long distance services. Poor coordination means people often have to wait a long time, which makes same day return journeys difficult.

Flexibility

- Using smaller vehicles gives transport providers the opportunity to provide more flexible services. Smaller vehicles are accessible for passengers.
- The Centralised Trip Allocation Booking System (CTABS) is welcomed. For the system to work effectively providers must enter all their trip details so other providers can see what resources are deployed and where. As CTABS relies on digital technology, internet blackspots in rural areas could impact the system's effectiveness.

Accessibility

- A lack of adequate bus stop infrastructure such as footpaths, seating and shelters limits people's access to public transport.
- Patronage of community transport services by Aboriginal people is generally low. Aboriginal Funeral Transport provides financial assistance to Aboriginal people who need to travel long distance to attend funerals.
- The aims of 'ageing in place' were supported but access to regular and affordable transport is important. Older people regard the My Aged Care system as overly complex.

Affordability

- The change from block funding to individualised funding for people under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) could impact the commercial viability of community transport, as providers may not be able to offer subsidised fares. Community transport providers rely on volunteer drivers to provide services.
- The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) should allow patients to claim for travel on community transport.

Meeting with representatives of Tablelands Community Transport, Tablelands Community Support and the Walcha Community Care Coordinator

The following issues were discussed:

Coordination

- Walcha has no public transport or taxi service. Vehicles operated by local clubs and organisations are underused and could be used for community transport services. Tablelands Community Transport negotiates with a local school to use their bus during school holidays. Walcha Community Care and Tablelands Community Transport share resources to provide the best service they can to their local communities.

Accessibility

- Ongoing consultation with Aboriginal communities is needed to ensure services are culturally appropriate. The appointment of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to the area will help identify the transport needs of the Aboriginal community and should improve their access to services. Walcha Community Care organises social outings and gatherings for local Aboriginal people, and these have been well received.

Information

- There is a need for better awareness of community transport services as many people are not aware of services in their area. Elderly people can be reluctant to use the service as they don't want to be perceived as frail or immobile, while men can view the service as being more orientated to the needs of women.

Affordability

- The Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme (TTSS) is valued by people in rural areas as it allows them to access a service that would otherwise be unaffordable.
- Replacing community transport vehicles is expensive, particularly modifications to new vehicles to make them more accessible. Vehicles are usually replaced every eight years.
- Concerns were raised about the viability of community transport following the shift to individualised funding under the NDIS and My Aged Care.

Meeting with members of Armidale Regional Council's Access Advisory Committee, and representatives from Ability Links NSW and CareWest

The following issues were discussed:

Coordination

- Planning and coordination of transport services must include consultation with local communities.
- Community transport could provide a wider range of transport for residents but regulations and contractual obligations prevent them from offering more services.
- Community transport tends to be local government area specific, with no coordination or sharing of resources across LGAs. Sharing resources could lead to service improvements but some providers do not have extra capacity or resources to share.

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES
SITE VISIT REPORT

- When patients are discharged from hospital their transport home should be considered. Community transport providers are not contacted by local health districts when patients are discharged.

Accessibility

- People who don't have access to regular transport can be socially isolated, negatively impacting their physical and mental health.
- Unsuitable portable access ramps at rural and regional train stations pose a safety risk. Safe portable access ramps should be available on every country rail service or at every country train station.
- Staff on trains provide a high level of assistance to seniors and people with disability, helping them access catering and toilet facilities; however TrainLink policy is that assistance not be provided.
- New rail carriages should cater for the needs of seniors and people with limited mobility by including seating areas for wheelchair users, toilet access, and storage for mobility scooters. The gap between the train carriage and platform should be eliminated.
- Bus journeys from Armidale to Sydney and Brisbane can be tiring for older people and people with limited mobility. It is difficult to use on board toilets, passengers are not allowed to eat or drink on board, and rest stops can be too short to eat and use toilet facilities. TrainLink buses only have space for one wheelchair.
- Where there is limited or no public transport, community transport could assist victims of domestic violence to leave during crisis situations.
- Aboriginal communities in rural areas are even more isolated as they can be far from main population centres. This makes access to transport even more difficult. Aboriginal people can find it hard to access taxi vouchers.

Affordability

- Increases in the IPTAAS and TTSS subsidies were welcomed, but need to be promoted. The IPTAAS claims process should be improved; attendance at medical appointments could be verified by electronic checks with Medicare. The TTSS should cover more people on limited incomes.
- The NDIS funding model will mean community transport may have to operate on a full-cost recovery model and passengers could pay more to use the service.
- A fuel card/subsidy could be open to abuse.

Appendix Five – Extracts from minutes

MINUTES OF MEETING No 2

1:30pm, Thursday, 2 June 2016
Room 814-815

Members present

Mr Marshall (Chair), Mr Conolly, Ms Doyle, Mr Greenwich, Mr Harris

Apologies

Mr Notley-Smith, Ms Petinos

Officers in attendance

Jason Ardit, Mohini Mehta

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded Mr Greenwich, that the minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2015 be adopted.

2. Inquiry into Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional Areas

The Committee considered the letter received from Hon Tory Grant MP, Deputy Premier, 1 June 2016, concerning the initiation of a new inquiry. Discussion ensued.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded Ms Doyle that:

- the Committee conduct an inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW in accordance with the Minister's letter of referral and draft terms of reference;
- the Committee call for submissions to be received by 21 July 2016 and agree by email circulation to a targeted list of stakeholders that Committee staff will contact directly;
- the Chair issue a media release announcing the Inquiry and place details of the inquiry on the Committee's webpage.

3. ***

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 1:38pm until a time and place to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING No 3

1.47pm, Wednesday, 3 August 2016
Room 1254

Members present

Mr Marshall (Chair), Mr Conolly, Ms Doyle, Mr Notley-Smith, Mr Greenwich, Mr Harris

Apologies

Ms Petinos

Officers in attendance

Carly Maxwell, Dora Oravec, Kieran Lewis, Mohini Mehta, Ze Nan Ma

1. ***

2. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded Ms Doyle, that the minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2016 be adopted.

3. Inquiry into Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional Areas

3.1 Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from:

- The Department of Premier and Cabinet, 1 July 2016, seeking an extension for the NSW Government submission to the inquiry
- BEST Employment Ltd, 12 July 2016, expressing support for the submission received from Ms Betty Moore.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, seconded Mr Greenwich, that the Committee write to the Deputy Premier advising that the Committee requires an extension to the inquiry's reporting date.

3.2 Consideration of submissions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Doyle, that the Committee receive and authorise the publication of submissions made to the inquiry as below:

- That submissions 1 to 7, 9 to 21 and 23 to 79 be published on the Committee's website with signatures and direct contact details redacted.
- That submissions 8 and 22 be kept confidential to the Committee and not be published.

3.3 Site visit arrangements

The Committee discussed options for two site visits to regional areas.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Doyle, seconded by Mr Conolly, that the Committee seek approval from the Speaker for funds to allow Committee members and committee staff to visit Armidale and Wagga Wagga to consult with relevant stakeholders and obtain further information relevant to the inquiry.

The Committee requested Committee staff to contact their offices regarding their availability for two one day site visits during the week beginning September 5.

3.4 Public hearing arrangements

The Committee discussed arrangements for holding one and a half days of hearings in Sydney and witness selection.

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 2.07pm until a time and place to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING No 4

1.46pm, Thursday 25 August 2016

Room 1043

Members present

Mr Marshall (Chair), Mr Conolly, Ms Doyle, Mr Notley-Smith, Mr Greenwich, Mr Harris, Ms Petinos

Officers in attendance

Dora Oravec, Kieran Lewis, Mohini Mehta, Ze Nan Ma

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded Mr Greenwich, that the minutes of the meeting of 3 August 2016 be adopted.

2. Inquiry into Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantaged People in Rural and Regional Areas

2.1 Consideration of submission

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, seconded by Mr Greenwich, that submission 80 be received by the Committee and published on the Committee's website with signature and direct contact details redacted.

2.2 Briefing note

The Committee noted the briefing note on the key issues raised by submission makers.

2.3 Site visit arrangements

The Committee discussed arrangements for the Armidale site visit, scheduled for 6 September.

2.4 Public hearing arrangements

Resolved on the motion of Ms Doyle, seconded by Ms Petinos, that the Committee take evidence from representatives of the Council on the Ageing NSW, Aged and Community Services NSW, Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW Inc, Disability Council NSW, National Disability Services, Physical Disability Council of NSW, NSW Council of Social Service, Shelter NSW, BusNSW, NSW Taxi Council, Community Transport Organisation Inc, Uber and Local Government NSW at a public hearing on 19 September 2016.

3. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 1.56pm until Monday 19 September 2016.

MINUTES OF MEETING No 5

10.20am, Monday 19 September 2016

Macquarie Room

Members present

Mr Marshall (Chair), Mr Conolly, Mr Notley-Smith, Mr Greenwich

Apologies

Ms Petinos, Mr Harris, Ms Doyle

Officers in attendance

Jason Arditi, Dora Oravec, Mohini Mehta, Ze Nan Ma

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded Mr Notley-Smith, that the minutes of the meeting of 25 August 2016 be confirmed.

1.2 Consideration of submissions

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, seconded Mr Greenwich, that the amended version of submission 8, and submissions 60a, 81, 82 and 83, be authorised for publication and placed on the Committee's website.

1.3 Media orders

Resolved on the motion of Mr Greenwich, seconded Mr Conolly, that the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 19 September 2016, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

1.4 Answers to questions taken on notice

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, seconded Mr Greenwich, that witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded to the witnesses.

2. Public hearing: Inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW

Witnesses and the public were admitted. The Chair opened the public hearing at 10.31am and after welcoming the witnesses made a short opening statement.

Ms Lisa Langley, Policy Manager, Council on the Ageing NSW and Ms Illana Halliday, Chief Executive Officer, Aged and Community Services NSW, were sworn and examined.

Ms Ellis Blaikie, Senior Policy Adviser, Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of NSW, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Langley, Ms Halliday and Ms Blaikie made brief opening statements.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The Committee took a short adjournment at 11.10am and resumed the public hearing at 11.45am.

Mr Paul Zeller, Member, Disability Council NSW, was sworn and examined.

Ms Jessica Lobo, Senior Sector Development Officer, National Disability Services and Ms Jordana Goodman, Policy Officer Physical Disability Council of NSW, were affirmed and examined.

Mr Zeller, Ms Lobo and Ms Goodman made brief opening statements.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The Committee adjourned at 12.38pm and resumed the public hearing at 1.48pm.

Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Council of Social Service and Mr Adam Farrar, Senior Policy Officer, Shelter NSW, were affirmed and examined.

Ms Howe and Mr Farrar made brief opening statements.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Darryl Mellish, Executive Director BusNSW, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Bethany Simmonds, Chair of the Board, Community Transport Organisation, Mr Roy Wakelin-King, Chief Executive Officer, NSW Taxi Council and Mr Brian Wilkins, President, NSW Taxi Industry Association, were sworn and examined.

Mr Mellish, Ms Simmonds and Mr Wakelin-King made brief opening statements.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Henry Greenacre, City Lead - NSW/ACT, Uber, was affirmed and examined.

Mr Greenacre made a brief opening statement.

The Committee commenced questioning the witness. Evidence concluded and the witness withdrew.

Ms Donna Rygate, Chief Executive, Local Government NSW and Ms Dee Dee San Jose, Senior Policy Officer, Ageing and Disability, Local Government NSW, were sworn and examined.

Ms Margaret Kay, Strategy Manager, Social and Community, Local Government NSW, was affirmed and examined.

Ms Rygate made a brief opening statement.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 4.42pm.

The meeting adjourned at 4.42pm until Friday 23 September 2016.

MINUTES OF MEETING No 6

10.39am, Friday 23 September 2016
Macquarie Room

Members present

Mr Marshall (Chair), Mr Conolly, Mr Notley-Smith, Mr Greenwich, Mr Harris

Apologies

Ms Petinos, Ms Doyle

Officers in attendance

Jason Arditi, Dora Oravec, Mohini Mehta, Ze Nan Ma, Kieran Lewis

1. Deliberative meeting

1.1 Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded Mr Greenwich, that the minutes of the meeting of 25 August 2016 be confirmed.

1.2 Media orders

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded Mr Conolly, that the Committee authorises the audio-visual recording, photography and broadcasting of the public hearing on 23 September 2016, in accordance with the Legislative Assembly's guidelines for the coverage of proceedings for parliamentary committees administered by the Legislative Assembly.

1.3 Answers to questions taken on notice

Resolved on the motion of Mr Greenwich, seconded Notley-Smith, that witnesses be requested to return answers to questions taken on notice and supplementary questions within 1 week of the date on which the questions are forwarded to the witnesses.

2. Public hearing: Inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW

Witnesses and the public were admitted. The Chair opened the public hearing at 10.42am and after welcoming the witnesses made a short opening statement.

Mr Dan Hunter, Chief Executive, HealthShare NSW, Mr Anthony Wing, Executive Director, Transport Policy, Transport for NSW, Mr Dominic Schuster, Director, Government Relations, Department of Family and Community Services, were sworn and examined.

Ms Tish Bruce, Executive Director, Health and Social Policy Branch, NSW Ministry of Health, Mr Terry-Lee Williams, Director, Rural and Regional Service Delivery and Performance, Infrastructure and Services, Transport for NSW, Ms Jo Lawrence, District Director, Western NSW, Department of Family and Community Services, were affirmed and examined.

The Committee commenced questioning the witnesses. Evidence concluded and the witnesses withdrew.

The public hearing concluded at 12.08pm.

3. Deliberative meeting

3.1 Publication of transcript

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, that the corrected transcripts of public evidence given on Monday and today be authorised for publication and uploaded on the Committee's website.

3.2 Site visit

The Committee discussed the site visit proposed for October 10. The Committee agreed not to go ahead with the site visit on the basis that sufficient evidence had been obtained during the Armidale site visit and the public hearings held in Sydney.

The meeting adjourned at 12.13pm until a date to be determined.

MINUTES OF MEETING No 8

2.02pm, Thursday 15 December 2016
Room 1043 and via telephone

Members attending via telephone

Mr Gulaptis (Chair), Mr Conolly, Mr Notley-Smith, Mr Harris, Mr Greenwich, Ms Doyle

Apologies

Ms Petinos

Officers in attendance

Carly Maxwell, Dora Oravec, Kieran Lewis, Ze Nan Ma, Mohini Mehta

1. Confirmation of minutes

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Mr Conolly, that the minutes of the meetings of 23 September 2016 and 13 October 2016 be adopted.

2. Inquiry into access to transport for seniors and disadvantaged people in rural and regional NSW

2.1 Answers to questions taken on notice, supplementary questions and further material

Resolved on the motion of Ms Doyle, seconded by Mr Notley-Smith, that the Committee authorise the publication of:

- Additional material from the Physical Disability Council of NSW and Local Government NSW
- Answers to questions on notice from National Disability Services and Transport for NSW
- Answers to supplementary questions from Transport for NSW.

2.2 Consideration of Chair's draft report

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Ms Doyle, that the Committee consider the report chapter by chapter.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Mr Notley-Smith, that Chapter One be agreed to.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Notley-Smith, seconded by Ms Doyle, that Chapter Two be agreed to.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Greenwich, seconded by Mr Notley-Smith, that an additional recommendation be included in Chapter Three with the words 'That Transport for NSW evaluate ways that access to public transport can be improved for seniors and disadvantaged people with companion animals in rural and regional areas.'

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES
EXTRACTS FROM MINUTES

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded by Ms Doyle, that Recommendation 5 be amended by deleting the word 'all' after the words 'access ramps available at' and that the words 'where there is a significant height difference between the platform and the train carriage' be inserted after the words 'rural and regional train stations'.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Harris, seconded by Mr Notley-Smith, that Chapter Three, as amended, be agreed to.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Doyle, seconded by Mr Notley-Smith, that Chapter Four be agreed to.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Conolly, seconded by Ms Doyle, that Chapter Five be agreed to.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Greenwich, seconded by Ms Doyle, that:

- The draft report, as amended, be the report of the Committee and that it be signed by the Chair and presented to the House.
- The Chair and Committee staff be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors.
- Once tabled, the report be posted on the Committee's website.

3. General business

The members thanked Committee staff for their work and support.

4. Next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 2.27pm until a time and place to be determined.