

INQUIRY INTO INTER-REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Organisation: Planning Institute Australia
Name: Ms Robyn Vincin
Position: NSW Executive Officer
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16th May 2012

The Chair
State and Regional Development Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Email: stateregional@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir

Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division)
Submission Inter-Regional Public Transport Inquiry

The NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA NSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inter-Regional Public Transport Inquiry.

The Planning Institute of Australia is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,200 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues.

This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute.

Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised within the submission please contact the NSW Executive Officer, Robyn Vincin, on telephone number [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Robyn Vincin
NSW Executive Officer

Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division) Submission: Inter-Regional Public Transport Inquiry

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,200 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues. This submission has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute.

The NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA NSW) welcomes the opportunity to prepare a submission to the Inter-Regional Public Transport Inquiry. PIA NSW congratulates the NSW Government for undertaking this Inquiry and is pleased to make this submission.

PIA NSW is a membership based organisation representing members with a depth of knowledge on urban, land use and transport planning. This submission concentrates on those areas of expertise, rather than the details of the infrastructure or implementation or operation of transport in NSW.

Effective public transport is about serving customers where they live, work, study and play. Transport is a derived demand and it comes from the need to provide access to opportunities for exchange of people, goods, and services within and between regions of NSW.

A policy issue is to identify appropriate standards of transport accessibility for lower density, non-metropolitan Regions¹. Stanley and Barrett² recognise that “access opportunities cannot reasonably be expected to be the same everywhere”. For instance, Stanley and Barrett³ report research that the typical rural and regional dweller in Australia has much lower accessibility to services than those living in metropolitan areas, with core services typically available within a distance of 1.4 km in metropolitan areas, compared to over 30 km in rural Australia and townships.

Efficient access by public transport depends strongly on land use patterns providing sufficient potential patronage concentrated within easy access of the public transport services. This suggests in regional NSW:

- Strong regional centres with significant balanced populations and workforces;
- Some density around the centre to allow residents and workers to walk or cycle to or from their stop;

¹ A Proposal for Accessibility Planning NSW, Daniels and Mulley, 2010

² Stanley, J and Barrett, S. 2010. *Moving People: Solutions for a Growing Australia*. Melbourne: Australasian Railway Association, Bus Industry Confederation and International Association of Public Transport–UITP (p. 57)

³ Stanley and Barrett *as above* (p. 20)

- Not too many small dispersed developments to be served on the outskirts of towns, for example, to concentrate supermarkets, offices and aged care homes in CBD locations, not in the suburbs or in business parks;
- Accept that small dispersed towns will be better served by cars and taxis than expensive infrequent public transport, and operate on a hub and spoke feeder service to strong public transport hubs in regional centres;
- Urban and regional planning instruments that include support for public transport and appropriate density; and
- Mining is a major engine for growth in regional NSW. Mining proposals should be assessed on the basis of their ability to use and support existing and future public transport services. This might be a combination of encouraging bus services for daily commuting and travel to and from regions.

Effective public transport also depends of effective interchange between services. The NSW Government through Transport for NSW is currently engaged in the \$100 million Transport Access Program (TAP) to improve the performance of public transport interchanges, as detailed below⁴.

"The Transport Access Program is a new initiative to provide a better experience for public transport customers by delivering accessible, modern, secure and integrated transport infrastructure where it is needed most.

The program aims to provide:

- *Stations that are accessible to the disabled, ageing and parents with prams;*
- *Modern buildings and facilities for all modes that meet the needs of a growing population;*
- *Modern interchanges that support an integrated network and allow seamless transfers between all modes for all customers;*
- *Safety improvements including extra lighting, help points, fences and security measures for car parks and interchanges, including stations, bus stops and wharves;*
- *Signage improvements so customers can more easily use public transport and transfer between modes at interchanges.*
- *Other improvements and maintenance such as painting, new fencing and roof replacements."*

The emphasis of these programs so far has been in Greater Sydney, and not regional NSW. In the historic development of regional NSW, public transport interchanges were a community focus and source of pride in communities. Ports and ferry wharves at major towns such as Albury and Bourke, and railway stations at towns such as Wagga Wagga and Bathurst were notable landmarks that expressed the identity of the town and region. They were depicted on postcards. They influenced the land use around them, with hotels, accommodation, retail, commercial and often civic parks and gardens.

The transition to buses in the last half century has mostly neglected the ability to create a community focus based on public transport. Bus stations are often placed peripherally, or on spare land, and do not generate the surrounding land use or security that comes from an active central hub.

⁴ <http://www.transport.nsw.gov.au/projects-tap>

The capacity of public transport service, interchange and co-ordination is now ripe for revolutionary improvement through:

- Internet-based electronic timetables and information;
- Smart phone access to timetables, booking, payment and ticketing;
- Smart electronic ticketing such as the Opal Card is being introduced, with the capacity to offer seamless transfers across modes and services; and
- Taxis and demand-responsive bus services as an important ingredient to a complete service.

We would therefore recommend that the Committee considers means to:

1. Encourage land use density around public transport interchanges;
2. Require all regional plans to explicitly address density and public transport in cascading regional plans, local government/regional council planning schemes, local area and neighbourhood plans, and location-specific town plans, urban development plans, and CBD structure or master plans;
3. Require development assessment codes and processes for individual specific sites for major new development applications, including retail and mining projects, to identify how public transport and public transport interchange are supported; and
4. Extend the Transport Access Program to include all NSW regional centres, including government funding and incentives for private development investment to improve public transport interchange and the general design quality of transport hubs.

In the process of providing public transport decisions, the importance of integrating transport provision with land use planning is sometimes forgotten. However the State and Regional Development Committee should be in an ideal position to encourage appropriate regional development that is better suited to be served by public transport.

PIA NSW is very supportive of the initiative by the State and Regional Development Committee in conducting the Inter-Regional Public Transport Inquiry. PIA NSW would be pleased to discuss any aspect of the points raised in the Submission with the Committee. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised please contact the NSW Executive Officer, Robyn Vincin, on [redacted]

Planning Institute of Australia
(NSW Division)
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