

**Submission
No 1**

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

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

7 June 2016

Submission to Committee on Community Services in Rural Areas.

The Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee Inc. plus many other associated organizations on the Central Coast of NSW, such as the Disabled Surfers Association of Australia Inc. and Camp Breakaway Inc., have been striving for greater access to public transport and infrastructure for many years.

In light of the Australian Bureau of Statistics findings that 18.4% of Australian's have a Disability, not including those with mobility issues such as new hips, knees or medical issues. The ABS has also found that 50.7% of those over 65years also have some form of Disability.

We can safely assume that the figure totals some 32% of Australian's having difficulty in accessing bus shelters, buses, train stations, trains and ferries to name a few. Australia has a population close to 24 Million and therefore again we can assume we have somewhere around 7,680,000 residents that find it hard to commute in any form, not to mention those living in rural and coastal areas.

Australia has seen an increase of 18% of those 65+ between 2008 -2013. Figures have dropped for those of 65+ living in Sydney by 8% (2013) to retire to coastal and rural areas. The Central Coast Regional Plan's projected growth of 20,000 over the next two decades looks well underestimated. That being a 20,000 extra population is approximately 6% and if growth continues at the same rate as over the past decade, we will surely have some further 33,311 residents.

Bus services, especially at the northern end of the Central Coast can be classified as third world. Very few residents over 65 yrs can access Wyee Station due to the number of steps (80) both up and down to the platform. We have in the past raised this issue with the Hon Gladys Berejiklian MP former Minister for Transport and have continued with the Hon Andrew Constance MP, current NSW Minister for Transport , the Hon Scot MacDonald MLC Parliamentary Secretary for Hunter and Central Coast and both Greg Piper MP and Yasmin Catley MP local members.

It is not just about access onto or off of Public Transport, it also includes appropriately placed Disability Parking and pathways leading to and from the station or bus shelter. Accessible spaces in shelters and Disability friendly toilet facilities in close proximity. It is about total inclusion as per the Disability Inclusion Act 2014. NSW Government Departments already needing to have Inclusion Plans in place and Local Governments needing plans by 2017.

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It is quite obvious that the NSW Government has tried to be seen to have concerns for the 32% of Australian's that have trouble with public services, yet it is also obvious that they have spoken to the wrong people or are incompetent in their duty.

We welcome the inquiry into Access Issues for the elderly, disabled and socio-economically disadvantaged groups, yet once again I reiterate that most government predictions of population growth have failed, especially those on the Central Coast and other rural areas. Town Planning continues with a "Spot development" mentality, there's a spot, so let's develop it, without any concern for public transport or access in the region.

Housing estates continue to be built in areas where there is little or no access to Public Transport. It is once again the Cart before the Horse, planning processes that has public transport going backwards and not being able to keep up with actual population growths, let alone government department predictions.

Access to buses has improved, yet infrastructure and timetables have not. Rail is another story, especially in rural or coastal areas. It is amazing that areas in some cases only one hour out from Australia's largest city, that public service can be so antiquated?

I look forward to the Committees findings....

Yours sincerely,

Gary Blaschke

Gary Blaschke OAM

N.L.D.T.P.C. Inc.

President

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