

**INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE ROAD TRAUMA IN REGIONAL NSW CAUSED
BY SPEEDING, FATIGUE, DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING**

Organisation: Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.

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Action for Public Transport (N.S.W.) Inc.

Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney 2000
Submitted via inquiry website

P O Box K606
Haymarket NSW 1240
25 July 2025

Dear Secretary,

NSW Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety

Interventions to reduce road trauma in regional NSW

caused by speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving

Submission to inquiry

Introduction

Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc. is a transport advocacy group which has been active since 1974. We promote the interests of beneficiaries of public transport - passengers and the wider community alike.

Discussion of each term of reference

a. Research and data on regional NSW-specific factors, characteristics and demographics of road crashes

It is apparent to any observer of current road traffic and the vehicle market that the trend in people's cars / vehicles is towards 4WDs, utes etc that are larger, heavier, faster and consuming more fuel than can be justified by most people's travel requirements. The results are becoming apparent in crash statistics, urban design (from carparks to freeway lanes) and emissions. A reasonable strategy in response would include psychological / sociological study into consumer motives for these trends - e.g. aggression, feelings of inadequacy (particularly in males), competition and concern for safety as the proportion of such vehicles on the road increases. Public policy might then try to influence consumers' decisions towards a reduction in vehicle sizes and speeds and more concern for safe driving.

Another group to consider is people who, because they are old frail or disabled, are not confident drivers. They may feel obliged to drive in the absence of adequate public transport, thereby risking themselves and others.

b. Effectiveness of current strategies and programs to reduce speeding, fatigue, drink and drug driving in regional NSW

If there was a strategy to reduce the amount of car travel in regional NSW by extending and/or amplifying public transport services, it might be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of that strategy.

If there is any such strategy, we are not aware of it. However, we would be keen to see one implemented and relevant programs funded.

c. **Proposed measures to reduce road trauma in regional NSW**

We can see many opportunities to make public transport more attractive in regional NSW and thereby take many potential trauma targets off the road.

In no particular order:

- Building a new railway from Ballina to Gold Coast Airport, ideally with a connection to Lismore. Because it crosses the state border, it should be eligible for Commonwealth funding. It should be designed for fast travel, competitive with car travel, and therefore would need to be fairly straight. Hence it would probably run close to the coast and not necessarily through hinterland towns such as Bangalow, Mullumbimby and Murwillumbah.
- Straightening the South railway between Menangle and Mittagong, probably on a new alignment. This would speed-up passenger and freight services to Canberra and Melbourne and should therefore be eligible for Commonwealth funding.
- Straightening the South railway through the Cullarin ranges. This would speed-up passenger and freight services to Melbourne and should therefore be eligible for Commonwealth funding.
- Altering the economics of non-bulk freight cartage to encourage more use of rail freight instead of road haulage. The increased rail freight traffic would help warrant rail improvements. And taking trucks off the road could be expected to reduce regional road trauma.
- Altering the Brisbane XPT's timetable so that it reaches there at a more sensible hour than 3am.
- Building alignment improvements, duplication and electrification of the North Coast line Sydney - Newcastle - Brisbane to improve services - especially passenger - to serve this growing region.
- Introducing day-return train services to Sydney from more-distant centres: Wauchope / Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Orange / Dubbo, Wagga Wagga.
- Integrating orbital train or coach services Griffith - Wagga Wagga - Canberra or Cootamundra - Orange - Dubbo - Tamworth - Port Macquarie to facilitate travelling several sectors in a single day.
- Providing more seats on regional trains. Many train services on all routes have no spare capacity, particularly in busy seasons, denying travellers a safer alternative to driving. This would be done through a combination of lengthening trains and running more services, potentially extending services to Nyngan (beyond Dubbo) and running multiple daily rail services to Brisbane. Of course, more rolling stock would be needed than presently available or on order.
- Tightening train and coach connections at Cootamundra - i.e. making the down and up Melbourne XPTs pass each other closer to Cootamundra - so passengers changing between coaches need not wait more than 75 minutes. Note that coach drivers need to get their 60 minute logbook break.
- Increasing focus on coach-to-coach and coach-to-train connections at Grafton, Tamworth, Dubbo, Parkes-Lithgow belt and Cootamundra.
- Replacing of Burren Junction to Narrabri services with Walgett - Burren Junction - Narrabri - Tamworth services timed to connect with other services, increasing cross-regional connectivity.
- With the same logic, considering a Canberra - Gunning - Crookwell - Bathurst service, catering for day and extended trips.

d. **Implementation of relevant recommendations from the 2023 Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General, entitled 'Regional Road Safety', dated 30 November 2023, and**

The report mentioned public transport precisely once, in the Executive Summary:

Residents of regional areas face particular transport challenges. They often need to travel longer distances for work, health care, or recreation purposes, yet their public transport options are more limited than metropolitan residents.¹

Unfortunately, the Auditor-General's report made no attempt to present public transport improvements as a road safety measure. Therefore, there were no recommendations relevant to this submission.

e. **Any other related matters.**

We make no comment on this Term of Reference.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Committee carefully consider a proactive strategy for public transport infrastructure and services as a viable alternative to car dependence outside of Sydney, together with measures to shift intrastate and interstate freight to rail haulage.

Hearings

We would be pleased to appear at hearings if desired.

Footnote

¹ [FINAL REPORT - Regional road safety](#) - page 1.

Jim Donovan
Secretary
Action for Public Transport (NSW) Inc.
