

INQUIRY INTO PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

Organisation: City of Newcastle

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30 March 2022

Ms Abigail Boyd
Committee Chair
Portfolio Committee No. 6 - Transport
Legislative Council
NSW Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Submitted online

Dear Ms Boyd,

RE: INQUIRY INTO THE PRIVATISATION OF BUS SERVICES

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission with regards to the privatisation of bus services, in particular the impact on the commuting public, the transition to an electric bus fleet and supporting infrastructure and the economic, social, safety, employment and environmental implications of bus privatisation.

The City of Newcastle believes privatisation of public transport, where a reduction of service results, is not in the public interest, and does not align with our strategic vision for a connected and integrated multimodal transport network for our city.

As a local government entity leading a thriving, emerging global city, City of Newcastle (CN) has an advocacy role on behalf of the Newcastle community, to other levels of government for improvements in transport in the city and funding to meet transport needs.

The Newcastle community has indicated that they want a connected city, in which walking, cycling and public transport are viable options for the majority of our trips. CN, in its capacity as a roads authority, approves the location of transport stops and at its discretion, provides infrastructure such as seating and shelters. While other local councils are able to access grant funding assistance from the NSW Government to provide such infrastructure, CN has been deemed ineligible to apply for funding to upgrade seating and shelters, and is another example of cost-shifting from the NSW Government onto CN. An opportunity exists for the NSW Government to provide adequate funding to CN to significantly upgrade these important public assets and ensure equality of access to state government funding streams.

Of particular concern to many Novocastrian seniors, is the ineligibility to access the \$250 Regional Seniors Travel Card. We are in the situation where neighbours on one side of the street in the Lake Macquarie City Council Local Government Area (LGA) are eligible for the significant rebate, while residents in the City of Newcastle LGA cannot access the subsidy. It is deeply unfair that the NSW Government does not allow Newcastle Seniors to access this subsidy, particularly as many are on fixed incomes, and are being particularly impacted by the sharp rise in the cost of living.

As recently as this month, CN endorsed its priorities in light of the upcoming Federal Election highlighting the needs of the local community and broader region.

Included therein were relevant items such as the expansion of Newcastle Light Rail, the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor, funding of the Newcastle Interchange Ferry Terminal as well as upgraded pathways, cycleways and an Active Transport Infrastructure Program, all designed to provide greater liveability to the local community and alleviate the reliance on private transport modes.

CN believes transport infrastructure should be considered holistically to deliver an integrated transport solution, with the inclusion of 'park and ride' and 'end of trip' facilities, in addition to an increased timetable for public transport.

In 2021 CN welcomed the NSW Government's decision to designate an Australian-based electric bus manufacturer as an official supplier in support of its aim to decarbonise the NSW bus fleet by 2030. Newcastle has a long history as a manufacturing hub, specialising in advanced manufacturing with clean tech credentials in batteries, renewable and traditional energy, and has a connection to the CSIRO Energy Centre and University of Newcastle as a hydrogen hub. However, we were disappointed when the NSW Government ultimately chose to design, manufacture and assemble the NSW electric bus fleet in Western Sydney. We would still welcome the opportunity of an electric bus fleet manufacturing and maintenance facility in Newcastle, to assist with the rapid electrification of the NSW transport network and the ongoing maintenance required for such public transport assets and infrastructure.

Crucially, the City of Newcastle has long advocated for the expansion of the Newcastle Light Rail. This would provide significantly improved public transport connectivity between the City Centre, and 'Catalyst Precincts' such as Hunter Park at Broadmeadow, the John Hunter Hospital and Newcastle Airport, as identified in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036. As further background to the position of CN, please see our ['Connecting Newcastle - 2017 update: An expanded light rail network'](#).

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this submission on behalf of the CN. Should you require any further information on this matter please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Yours faithfully



Cr Nuatali Nelmes

LORD MAYOR OF NEWCASTLE