

**Submission
No 63**

**INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE PUBLIC
TRANSPORT NEEDS IN WESTERN SYDNEY**

Organisation: Sweltering Cities
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Portfolio Committee No.6 – Transport and the Arts
Legislative Council
Parliament of NSW

Submission to the Inquiry into current and future public transport needs in Western Sydney

Sweltering Cities¹ is a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) that advocates and campaigns for improved and equitable living conditions in communities across Australia. We operate at the grassroots level, striving for sustainable cities, and improving health in the face of climate change inequity. Having started in Western Sydney, we understand the disproportionate impacts of climate change and notably, heat and heat-related illness, on the people of Western Sydney.

We would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Current and Future Public Transport Needs in Western Sydney (The Inquiry) and highlight that future transport infrastructure in the region must maintain health and well-being at the forefront.

Our Busted Bus Stop² campaign involves the development of tools that can be applied across the country, including addressing energy-inefficient infrastructure, heat shelters, hot pedestrian intersections, and hot suburbs. Part of our campaign has included community-led research and monitoring of temperatures at bus stops during summer. Of 596 bus stop measurements in our first sample of the area covered by the state electorate of Penrith, 70% of stops had no shade, no shelter, or no seat. Only 18% of stops had a shelter and a seat.

This has serious implications on the health and well-being of the public. We have heard directly from members of the Western Sydney community that waiting for a bus at an unsheltered stop on a hot day can lead to dehydration, sunburn and exhaustion. As summers get hotter, they are anxious that on some days catching the bus will be dangerous.

Extreme heat is a public health crisis that directly impacts many of our most vulnerable and marginalised communities. Heat impacts our physical and mental health. Some of the most vulnerable community members are older people, people with disabilities, and young children. There is also evidence that exposure to high temperatures results in an increase in miscarriages and stillbirths and other maternal and neonatal complications. We can prevent heat related diseases including dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stress and heat stroke by implementing cooling infrastructure.

During hot days, a lack of shade and cooling infrastructure can cause heat-related illnesses in those who use public transport. This is especially prevalent in Western Sydney. The community of Western Sydney is severely underrepresented in terms of

¹ <https://swelteringcities.org>

² <https://swelteringcities.org/busted-bus-stops/>



frequent and reliable public transport services, equitable access to services, and transport that meets the needs of the community (particularly during summer). During a heatwave or a very hot day (over 35 degrees), it is impractical and unsafe for local residents to be waiting for a bus at a bus stop without shelter or shade – however, this is a reality for many living in Western Sydney.

The population of Western Sydney is increasing exponentially, with the population of Parramatta alone set to increase by 140,000 people in the next two decades. Yet, Western Sydney LGAs consistently rank at the bottom in terms of access to public transport. The Funding Infrastructure of Tomorrow report highlighted that areas of greater entrenched community disadvantage correlate to lower infrastructure provision. However, studies show that reliable and accessible infrastructure actually addresses regional disadvantages by improving access to jobs, reducing the cost of living pressures, facilitating learning and skill-building, supporting health, and allowing participation in culture and society.

Proximity to public transport is one measure of access, as well as the frequency of services and the time taken to travel to work. These measures are all linearly correlated with inequity, with access across all measures reducing as socioeconomic disadvantage increases.

Evidently, more investment in infrastructure, increased services, and more staff to meet these service demands is needed for Western Sydney. Where to apply this investment should be determined through a holistic and stringent process of engagement with the community of Western Sydney. Engaging with local residents, community leaders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives, and local grassroots organisations can help elucidate key areas to address.

From our work with Western Sydney communities we would like to make the following specific recommendations:

- Funding should be provided to significantly increase the number of bus stops in Western Sydney with shelter and a seat. Currently, councils such as Penrith City Council and Blacktown Council have funding to provide 4-5 new shelters per year. The burden of addressing these gaps should not fall on Council budgets to the detriment of other services, and can be provided by the State Government as an investment in the health, safety and sustainability of Western Sydney.
- Standards for accessible bus shelters should be developed in cooperation with community members, experts and civil society representatives. The standards should consider how the seat and shelter are constructed in order to provide shade and avoid contact burns from hot metal surfaces in summer.

Research should also be commissioned by the government to understand the feasibility of public transport access across Western Sydney, particularly during the summer months. Many local residents have provided their personal stories of waiting for buses in 40 – 45 degree heat.



Below, we have attached a series of comments that were submitted to us by community members as they assisted in mapping thousands of unsheltered stops across the city. We encourage you to read these comments and consider them in your report.

We commend the committee once again for conducting this Inquiry and for the opportunity to provide a submission. Should you like to discuss the submission, our Busted Bus Stop Campaign, or any other information, please do not hesitate to contact me at

Yours sincerely,

Emma Bacon

Sweltering Cities
Executive Director

Community Comments

The following comments were submitted to us by community members as part of our bus stop mapping project:

Tim

Baking hot in summer. The bus stop is accessible but with no shade anywhere near this bus stop it is unusable in hot weather, sunny weather or inclement weather.

Ben

Very busy and well used bus stop - people always on and off here. Bakes in the sun. I've seen people sitting on the ground waiting for the next bus before. Horrible spot.

Helen

On a main highway, lots of traffic passing constantly, emissions adding to the heat and poor air quality

Jasmine

The bus stop is right in front of a house. Just a pole, with no shelter or sitting. And no wheelchair/pram access.

Anon

Spending any time here at all would wound me deeply.

Anon

This bus stop bakes all day long. I almost never see anyone use that stop in summer.

Anon

These concrete slabs to stand on are probably better than dirt or grass, but they must get really hot in summer.

Anon

All glass which intensifies the heat and sun shining through.

Archie

It used to have several seats and shade and has been replaced with a pole.

Chris

Hot for students waiting for buses

Emma

There is no footpath to or from the concrete slab the bus stop is on. But the online map still says it's wheelchair accessible.

Kim

Outside a school, used by schoolchildren, no shade or shelter, hot metal guardrails as well.

Kobra

No shelter or seats. Exposed to heat and harsh weather so no practical to wait for long periods of time for the bus and that inconvenience coupled with the fact that we have only one or two bus lines that pass through this road at long intervals with hours wait in between each bus, the bus stops are not used very often by locals.

Anon

No shade or shelter and no clear area to stand, long grass or on the edge of the road with large trucks passing close by.

Georgia

No shelter from heat or sun or rain or wind. Opposite Bunnings so it's a popular stop!

Helen

No shade, seat, or shelter, located under an electricity transformer.

Ben

This is one of the most 'hope for the best' bus stops i have ever seen. There isn't even any signage, route info, or anything – just a bus zone, a hope and a prayer.

Jasmine

The bus stop has no shade or shelter or a bench to sit on and wait. It would be uncomfortable and inconvenient on hot and wet days.

Lu

No shade or shelter. A lot of elderly people live around here - shelter from sun and rain, and a place to sit very important.

Anon

No shade, no shelter, Very close to main road, 4 lanes of constant traffic and a colorbond fence behind radiating heat.

Anon

No shade or shelter. Outside a school, heavy metal fence radiating heat and presenting a burn danger to young children. 4 lane main road with heavy traffic including large trucks contributing to air pollution and poor air quality.

Chris

No shade or shelter. Google shows as an accessible bus stop, but clearly isn't.

Anon

May have shade at certain times from nearby trees. Classified as accessible but is not, not even a footpath leading to bus stop, would have to use the road.

Anon

Another fine example of "a telegraph pole can be a bus stop, as a treat". No shade, no shelter, no footpath even. No way would a wheelchair or pram get here easily.

Anon

Looks like you get shade in the early morning from a neighbours hedge, but nothing after about 9am in Summer. No seat, and no shade otherwise.

Anon

Yuck, very exposed, no shade, I wouldn't want to be here alone.

Anon

It's like standing on someone's driveway waiting for the bus. There doesn't even seem to be enough room to stand without getting in the way of the residents' driveways.

Anon

I reckon that brick wall behind bakes in summer and radiates heat at the end of the day. Looks too.

Anon

I think this is literally a stop in the middle of a flood overflow catchment area? No shade, no shelter, nowhere near anything.

Anon

I'd almost be worried about snakes here. No shade, hot and gross. No accessibility, just grass, though at least the curb is rolled.

Anon

Does the tiny bit of shelter from an overhead power transformer count? Probably not... horrible.

SWELTERING CITIES

Anon

Standing between two driveways. They should let people wait inside the bus depot it would be more comfortable.

Anon

Sucks

Anon

Wild! they must have had a budget for 1 of these nice ones every 100 bus stops or something.

Anon

This must be almost exclusively a drop-off stop for kids after school right? Who is waiting here to get on... no one surely.

Anon

Classified as accessible but on a 6 lane highway and no way to get around shelter to access shelter or bus door unless it stops before or after

Anon

Outside a residence, no concrete slab so not accessible, no shade or seat or nearby shelter