



Tasmanian Council of Social Service

Submission to

Legislative Council Committee B Integrated Transport Options

About TasCOSS

TasCOSS is the peak body for the Tasmanian community services sector. Its membership comprises individuals and organisations active in the provision of community services to low income, vulnerable and disadvantaged Tasmanians. TasCOSS represents the interests of its members and their clients to government, regulators, the media and the public. Through our advocacy and policy development, we draw attention to the causes of poverty and disadvantage and promote the adoption of effective solutions to address these issues.

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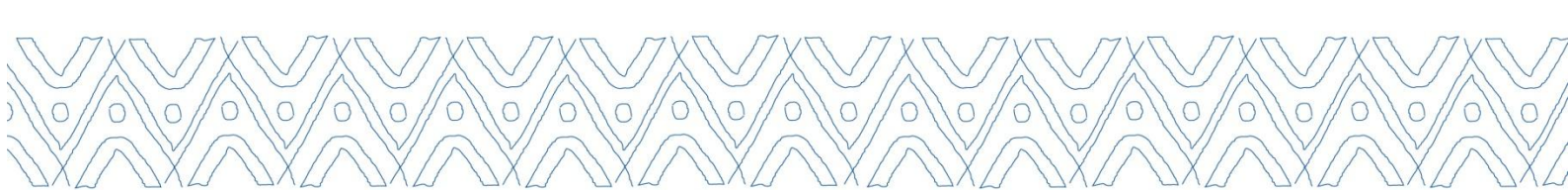
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues facing the Tasmanian Legislative Council's Committee of Inquiry into integrated transport options for southern Tasmania. The following observations reflect TasCOSS' review of submissions to the committee to date as well as insights resulting from our own consultative process in relation to transport issues, as discussed in more detail below. To date, these TasCOSS consultations have included representatives from around 30 organisations, including federal and state level bureaucracies, transport providers, community sector organisations, lobby groups, and academics (see Appendix A for a list of participants). Although our consultations have addressed the issue of transport disadvantage at the state-wide level, their conclusions apply equally to Tasmania's southern region.

Passenger transport options in Tasmania and their limitations

As TasCOSS consultations and the Committee have heard, a wide variety of passenger transport providers operate in Tasmania, including subsidised and unsubsidised route passenger services, commercial 'general hire' services (including taxis), and publicly and privately funded not-for profit services. Nevertheless, as TasCOSS and the Committee have heard, despite the many and considerable improvements initiated by the 2007 Core Passenger Service Review, transport services in the state are substantially characterised by:

- *Limited hours and frequency of operations:* Both subsidised and non-subsidised bus services are limited in their hours of operation and in the frequency of services. Not-for-profit door-to-door providers can offer only limited services due to funding constraints and reliance on volunteer drivers.
- *Limited geographic scope:* The routes of both subsidised and non-subsidised bus services are limited to particular areas. Only a small percentage of Tasmanians live or require transport to destinations within the suggested 400-600 metres of a bus stop.
- *Limited integration in:*
 - *Ticketing:* Private providers offer only limited integrated ticketing with public providers. The fees charged by not-for-profit providers are not at all integrated with the fares of private or public providers.
 - *Physical location:* The terminals and stops of private and public bus service are not always co-located or well-connected.
 - *Timetables:* Timetables of different providers sometimes do not mesh well.
- *Limited affordability:* Low-income Tasmanians, particularly those living in rural or remote areas and those having to travel frequently, often find general access services or taxi fares unaffordable, even with concessions and/or the Transport Access Scheme.
- *Limited eligibility.* While a wide variety of not-for-profit transport services operate across the state, most of these cater only to those Tasmanians who fall into the categories for which the providing organisations are funded (frail aged, disability, users of particular services, etc.). Tasmanians on low wages often also are ineligible for transport concessions and/or the Transport Access Scheme.

Although these issues severely hamper the mobility of transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians, they also discourage people with access to a car from shifting away from driving towards more environmentally sustainable and healthy public or communal transport.

Transport disadvantage and its consequences in Tasmania

The consequences of this situation for transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians—people who have difficulty getting where they need to go due to age, ill health, disability or financial constraints, particularly those who are geographically isolated—are clear.

- As of 2010, 25.9% of Tasmanians in the lowest quintile of income could not easily get to the places they needed to go—up from 22.5% in 2006.
- For adults describing themselves as unemployed, this figure rose to 33.5%.
- For people with self-described health status of ‘poor,’ the figure was 39.6%.
- For Housing Tasmania renters, the figure was a staggering 41.6%, with 46.2% lacking access to a vehicle.¹

The situation is particularly acute in rural and remote areas, but also applies in urban areas, particularly in developments on the urban fringe.

This situation results from the fact that many transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians:

- Live in, or need to access, areas outside those covered by core passenger services or general access services.
- Live too far from core or general access service routes to be able to walk to bus stops.
- Need to go to destinations that are too far from core or general access service routes to be able to walk from bus stops.
- Need transport outside the hours of core/general access service or at times other than the service times, particularly in the case of infrequent or truncated service timetables.
- Require more than one provider or route service to complete a journey, and:
 - Are not able to walk between the terminals/stops of different providers and/or route services, and/or
 - Are stymied by a lack of coordination between the timetables of different providers and/or route services.
- Cannot afford General Access service and taxi fares, even with concessions and/or the Transport Access Scheme.
- Are not eligible for non-profit transport services.

Consequences for Tasmanians and for Tasmania

As TasCOSS and the Committee have heard, at the individual level, access to transport is crucial to many areas of life, including physical and mental health, educational and training outcomes, social connection, and economic security. Lack of transport has been

¹ ABS (2010), General Social Survey: Tasmania, 4159.0.55.003; Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) General Social Survey, Tasmania, 2006 (cat. No. 4159.6.55.001).

demonstrated to be strongly linked to social exclusion. At the societal level, access to transport for all Tasmanians is vital to the state's continued economic and social development. Without access to transport, transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians cannot take advantage of expanded and diversified employment, education and training opportunities; meanwhile, issues linked to lack of transport—not only broad social issues such as poor health outcomes, but also day-to-day issues such as no-shows for hospital appointments, for example—place burdens on government services and finances.

Basic premises

Stakeholders in TasCOSS consultations and in submissions appear to be in agreement on a few general premises underpinning any effort to address transport issues in the state.

1. Transport is not an issue that can be approached in isolation. Transport concerns must be integrated into most areas of policymaking, particularly health, education, economic development, and spatial planning. For example, many participants identified the need to integrate transport into regional development planning.
2. Modes of transportation cannot be approached in isolation either, as any complete journey is only as possible as each of its legs, door to door (which, in the case of someone suffering from severe frailty or disability, may include assistance getting to/from a vehicle). By the same token, each leg of a journey that is accessible increases the chance of another leg being used; improvements to any one area of transport therefore can have the effect of growing the transport industry as a whole.
3. Good spatial planning is crucial to supporting transport options, shaping people's transport choices, and ultimately shaping people's residential choices. This point applies at all levels, from the macro (settlement planning) to the micro (provision of disability parking spaces/drop off areas to support all transport options).

Key needs

On 18 December 2012, TasCOSS and Regional Development Australia/Tasmania sponsored an initial meeting of key stakeholders in the transport and social inclusion fields. At this meeting, stakeholders identified a number of key needs and areas for improvement.

Strategic

1. There is a pressing need for a long-term, evidence-based, strategic approach to transport that will inform all areas of policy and ensure that existing transport-related strategies and principles (liveability principles, for instance) are actually applied. This will require the development of an overarching strategic vision for transport in Tasmania that will apply to all levels of government.
2. There is a pressing need for transport issues—including provision of transport infrastructure and promotion of transport-oriented development—to be factored into all spatial planning in the state, ideally via the three regional land use strategies. These

can ensure that, for instance, developers are required to address transport issues as part of the approvals process.²

Formulating transport policy

1. In addressing the needs of transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians as well as in formulating strategies for reducing the general community's reliance on the single-passenger car, there is a need for a whole-of-transport-sector approach that includes general access and private bus services, not-for-profit services, taxis, carpooling, innovations in car 'ownership' such as car sharing, active transport (walking and cycling) and other forms of personal mobility (for example, assisted forms such as mobility scooters)—as well as any other possible areas of innovation (light rail or ferries, for instance).
2. There is a need for all levels and areas of government—state and local, as well as regional authorities—to work together to develop the overarching strategic vision identified above; to coordinate transport initiatives; and to cooperate in the provision of transport infrastructure such as bus stops and cycle paths.
3. At the state government level, there is a pressing need for a focal point for transport issues. Transport falls across many departments and levels of government; no single body has an overview of the whole sector or of all transport-related policy initiatives, making it difficult to achieve a coordinated approach.
4. One-size-fits-all approaches do not work well for addressing the needs of transport-disadvantaged communities and cohorts; consequently, there is a need for in-depth consultations to better understand the transport needs of specific locations as well as many specific cohorts (older people, young people, humanitarian entrants and CALD communities, women, people living with disability, Aboriginal people, and people on extremely low incomes, such as students).
5. In addition to a better understanding of the needs of transport users, policymakers also need a better understanding of the needs of the volunteers who underpin the not-for-profit transport sector, as in many instances the factor leading to a transport gap is not a missing vehicle, but a lack of someone to drive it.

The passenger transport sector

1. There is a strong need for better coordination and integration *between* existing transport modes across the transport sector landscape. At the moment, connections and communication between modes are often poor; overlap and competition between modes remains an issue; and there is a substantial disconnect between the profit and not-for-profit sectors, as well as between active transport and other modes.

² For a broader discussion of spatial planning for social inclusion, including transport, see TasCOSS (2011), *Social Inclusion Principles for Spatial Planning in Tasmania*, www.tascoss.org

2. There is also a need for better coordination and rationalisation of the transport landscape *within* modes to address gaps, overlaps, and competition between services. All modes within the transport landscape must be operating effectively if they are to be effectively integrated.
3. There is a need for a rethink of the constraints placed on many not-for-profit transport services by funding sources. At the moment, many not-for-profit transport operators are limited by their funding sources or their mission statements to only carrying particular types of clients, leading to inefficiencies as well as the exclusion of other transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians or other clients.

Needs of the passenger-transport-using public

1. Tasmanians badly need a centralised information site to help them identify and access transport services and options—general access, private, not-for-profit, car pooling, car sharing, and active transport—in their areas. In many instances, adequate services and concessions exist, but people don't know that they're there, or how to use them, or whether they're eligible for concessions.
2. Rural areas could benefit from a local information focal point as well.
3. Many cities and towns need physically co-located transport hubs so that people can transfer easily from one type of service to another.

Ways forward

No one service can be expected to solve these problems. However, better coordination and integration between existing services, as well as innovation in service types and funding, has the potential to begin to address these problems at relatively low cost.

Tasmanian transport providers themselves are highly supportive of the notion of better coordination, integration and innovation. TasCOSS consultations and submissions to the Committee suggest that providers are aware of the gaps in services; often feel frustrated and overstretched themselves; would like to be able to concentrate on what they are good at; have little objection to other services filling needs that they do not feel capable of meeting themselves; and have many ideas for how better coordination and integration could be achieved, as well as for innovations in the sector.

TasCOSS consultations to date suggest that many people in the passenger transport sector already have many good ideas for how better coordination and integration could be achieved, as well as for innovations in the sector. What the State currently lacks, however, is an environment where all transport providers and key stakeholders in the transport and social inclusion fields can come together to discuss:

- The needs of transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians and communities
- Strategies for improved information sharing, coordination and integration between existing services

- Possible new service models for existing providers
- Possible new providers – social enterprises, for instance
- The legal and regulatory instruments necessary for innovation.

TasCOSS project *Transport in the Community*

TasCOSS has put a bid for State funding for a facilitation project, *Transport in the Community: Integration and Innovation for Social Inclusion*, in our 2013-2014 Budget Priorities Statement. This project will enable TasCOSS to play a facilitating role for further discussions around this question and to dedicate a resource to exploring the issues. We envisage the project involving and leading to:

- Preliminary identification of key issues facing both transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians and the Tasmanian transport sector, and of potential areas for information sharing, coordination, integration and innovation.
- A series, over the course of six months, of facilitated discussions between Tasmanian transport providers and key stakeholders around opportunities and constraints for information sharing, coordination, integration and innovation, and practical ways in which these can be achieved. These may include peak-level discussions of state-wide issues; regional discussions involving a greater degree of community participation; and/or sectoral discussions designed to address specific transport industry sector issues.
- A one-day brainstorming workshop bringing together Tasmanian discussion participants and innovators in the Australian transport field—academics, policy analysts or transport providers from other states, and social entrepreneurs.
- Development of a model for a public information source (website/phone) designed to provide information on all existing aspects of the transport landscape: general access and private bus and coach services, not-for-profit services, taxis, carpooling, and active transport initiatives. Such an information point would provide up-to-date information permitting potential passenger transport users to find out what services are available for the trip they wish to make, and to access timetables, fare structures and booking websites.
- A final report offering clear, actionable recommendations for transport providers and government.

In support of the project, TasCOSS currently is engaged in:

- Mapping those not-for-profit services that will not be covered by the mapping of HACC-funded services about to be initiated by Ambulance Tasmania.
- Creation of a comprehensive map of transport resources in the state.
- Identification of areas in the state most likely to contain concentrations of transport disadvantage.

- Development of a model for a one-stop transportation hub web page that will enable users to enter points of departure/destination and receive a summary of the full range of transport options, including for-profit and not-for-profit providers, car pooling/sharing, and active transport.

Stakeholder responses to the project proposal

At the December 2012 meeting, stakeholders responded positively to the proposal overall. Stakeholders have observed that the project will need to:

- Focus on using resources that are already in place through better coordination and/or integration, rather than trying to create more/new resources, and on helping existing services work together, not in competition or at cross-purposes.
- Ensure a balance between the macro and micro levels, examining both overarching structural factors and specific, place-based factors; each aspect will inform the other in seeking out solutions to impasses. In this regard, some stakeholders observed that it may be important to launch quite rapidly into discussions at a regional level, in parallel with discussions designed to identify state-wide/structural issues.
- Consider auspicing arrangements for place-based projects, identifying possible collaborations, partnerships, and local leaders from local government, regional-level bodies such as the Southern Tasmania Councils Authority (STCA), the community sector, and/or local groups.
- Ensure that any pilot project takes into account existing community-led discussions on the issues in order to ensure community involvement, but also be prepared to mediate intra-community or intra-sector conflicts of priorities or interests.
- Tackle capacity-building issues.

Stakeholders particularly noted the importance of good data and background analysis, for instance on behavioural patterns, as well as a need to identify what data is still needed.

In relation to regional-level discussions, a few stakeholders suggested the Huon Valley as a potential area to look at in detail, and pointed to a study conducted in Warnambool by Monash University as a potentially useful model.³

Barriers/factors that need to be taken into account

Stakeholders noted the existence of a variety of barriers and factors that need to be taken into account when considering possible areas for better coordination, integration and innovation in service provision for transport-disadvantaged Tasmanians.

- A number of legislative/regulatory issues exist.

³ Monash Sustainability Institute (2012), "Improving personal mobility opportunities in regional areas: a report to Bus Victoria."

- The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) makes it difficult to expand the services of providers whose primary function is to provide school bus services: school buses are exempt from the DDA, but if adults are carried, the DDA applies. One stakeholder noted that that school bus operators in Gippsland applied for an exemption in order to carry adults during daytime hours, without success.
- Under the *Taxi and Luxury Hire Care Industries Act 2008*, taxis are prohibited from multi-hiring.
- Sunday and public holiday services are very expensive to run due to penalty rates.
- Student transport has a substantial impact on the whole transport system, with school-related timetabling affecting the overall timetables of many regional routes in ways that don't always suit other users.
- The not-for-profit transport system has its own “ecosystem”—it is largely volunteer based and may falter if government is seen as coming in and taking over, or if people are asked to volunteer for a different organisation than the one they're accustomed to.
- There is a need to obtain community commitment as well as provider commitment. New services that have been trialled haven't always been supported by the community. To some extent, this may have been because those services did not actually meet the community's needs; to some extent, however, it may reflect a disinclination to use passenger transport as anything other than a last resort.
- There are many structural factors that currently make it very easy to rely on the individual passenger car—too easy, from the point of view of promoting other forms of transport. Some of these structural factors are within the control of state and local governments: cheap CBD parking, for instance. Some are not: petrol prices, for example, are not yet high enough to effect broad-scale changes in behaviour. Until some of these factors change, many people will continue to find the private car cheaper and more convenient, making it difficult to achieve the critical mass necessary for cost-effective mass transit.
- There also are many cultural issues that inhibit passenger transport uptake—stigma/perceptions that it's a poor person's form of transport, that services are poor, elderly people not liking being on the bus with rowdy kids, elderly people feeling bad about using not-for-profit transport for social purposes. Understanding and tackling these will be critical to increasing uptake of services.

Priority areas

Stakeholders identified a few key issues and problems that a facilitation project could tackle immediately, including:

- Facilitation of the creation of local focal points for transport information in local communities as well as the creation of a state-wide information resource (website/phone).
- Facilitation/brokering of intra-sectoral discussions, for instance on integrated ticketing, sharing of resources, integration of services/information between general access providers.
- Advice in relation to planning exercises for commercial operators needing to plan for growth areas (e.g. Sorrell, Deloraine—expanding urban fringes with unknown demographics and needs).

Opportunities for contribution/collaboration

Stakeholders identified a variety of ways in which other organisations could further the objectives of the *Transport in the Community* project, or contribute to the project itself. For instance:

- The State Government could:
 - Create a position, for instance within DPAC, with responsibility for monitoring and enhancing the entire transport system's effectiveness in overcoming transport disadvantage and furthering social inclusion.
 - Create a focal point within DIER for transport-related questions falling within DIER's purview.
 - Continue to promote car pooling and use of passenger transport, for instance through salary sacrificing for bus tickets or vehicle registration for registered car poolers.
 - Create incentives for car sharing services to expand operations to Tasmania.
- Community service organisations could:
 - Contribute education campaigns, including buddy systems and/or peer educators, to make people aware of how they can access available services and concessions.
 - Collect information on transport gaps.
- Students in the University of Tasmania's Department of Geography could:
 - Contribute research in the form of student projects. Some possible topics included:
 - A comparative analysis of all existing Tasmanian transport strategies/plans—local government, regional, state.
 - Why people are living where they are relative to where they need to go.
 - Behavioural issues, including barriers to passenger transport uptake and ways of overcoming them.

Over the longer term:

- The Tasmanian transport information website/phone line will need a long-term home, with Service Tasmania identified as a suitable possibility.
- Once changes resulting from the discussions start to flow through to expanded/improved services, there will be a need for public relations campaigns that promote the use of passenger transport.
- There is a need for discussion towards a shared understanding of what adequate/appropriate transport looks like—to providers, to planners, to the community. Community expectations are very high; a large-scale survey of consumer expectations would be helpful.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues facing the Committee. TasCOSS believes that our proposed project is an important first step in addressing some of the pressing issues identified in submissions to the Committee, as well as in our own consultations.

Appendix 1: TasCOSS/RDA stakeholders meeting and consultations

Meeting chairs: *Jen Newman, RDA; Gus Risberg, TasCOSS; Wynne Russell, TasCOSS.*

Meeting attendees: *Fiona Benka, SIU, DPAC; Mel Brown, LGAT; Simon Buddle, DIER; Janet Carty, Ambulance Tasmania; Stuart Davies, CTST; Monika Dutkiewicz, MRC; Shirley Grace, DEEWR; Inge Hendriks, DEEWR; Barbara Hill, Red Cross; David Hope, DIER; David Hunn, STCA; Linda Jamieson, COTA; Fiona Jordan-Coad, DHHS; Sue Leitch, COTA; Anna Lyth, UTas; Larry Mills, Redline Coaches; Rebecca Moles, CDD, DPAC; Corey Peterson, UTas; Emma Pharo, Bicycle Tasmania; Brian Risby, Tasmanian Planning Commission; Sharon Ryan, Red Cross; Colleen Thompson, DEDTA; Gerry White, Colony 47.*

Also consulted: *Phil Bayley, TCCI; Roger Burdon, Taxi Industry Association of Tasmania; Shane Dewsbery, Tassielink; Heather Haselgrove, Metro; Ann Herbert, SIU, DPAC; John Hooper, TACH; Anthony James, Metro; Geoff Lewis, Tasmanian Bus Association; Andrew Mullen, DIER; Peter O'Driscoll, O'Driscoll Coaches; Joanna Seijka, YNOT; Vince Taskunas, RACT; James Verrier, DIER; Steve Webber, DHHS; Jo White, DHHS.*