

TOTTS INC

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO AGED CARE

Government policy at present is to provide service to older Australians to stay at home instead of entering low and high care establishments. It is intended that authorised service providers would service them in their homes at a reduced cost to the government. The Federal Government has jointly with the states set up Home and Community Care (HACC) packages, and CACPs packages in some cases of which there are 18 services. (*Service agreement effective 1st October 2006*).

One of these services is transport which not only service HACC or CACPs elderly which support frail aged but they are in the minority within any community. This is brought about by the loss of their car licence usually after aged 75 years due to the original car at retirement is now no longer serviceable or they find driving is now too expensive or too dangerous and unless these people have access to inexpensive and flexible transport they become socially isolated. All aged people like to go shopping, visit doctors, attend to hospital complaints, attend their social club or just visit friends and family. Many of these people cannot afford taxis or unable to walk to a bus stop and even then may not be able to enter the bus.

TOTTS INC a service provider with Queensland Department of Community Services with a membership of 1200 people only 28% is HACC members. Our membership partly consists of 73% of seniors aged over 75 and the oldest is 98. We cater for isolated seniors over age 55, disabled and disadvantaged, which include the ethnic and indigenous peoples. Our motto is no person should be denied their car licence unless there is an alternative transport system in place to cater for them. TOTTS INC is a not for profit, charity organisation catering for people the public transporters leave behind. We sit between Buses and taxis and provide a hybrid passenger service of buses and station wagons accredited under Queensland Transport Regulations. Elderly people have an inherited right to access transport to socialise and improve their wellbeing away from their home.

Whereas HACC transport operate at extremely short periods dropping people off at respite centres etc usually between the hours of 8AM to 9.30AM and again 2PM to 4PM during working days whereas we provide service 7 days a week on demand usually 7AM to 9PM. This is what all elderly people should be catered for irrespective of their frailness or classed as HACC clients. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that 20% of seniors who live at home have a need for assistance for transport in an earlier report. In 1999 in Townsville there were 16,498 people over 60 of which 10,683 held a car licence. Hence 5,815 or 35% do not. The statistics at that time indicated 46.52 % or 3657 over 70 did not. (*The history of TOTTS INC development 1990 – 2007*). In the mix of people who use TOTTS INC are the people who travel to Townsville for hospital treatment from throughout North Queensland and need transport from the transport terminal where Queensland

Health leaves them to travel the best they can to the hospital. This is a failure of Health throughout Queensland and was a major issue in Townsville until TOTTS INC provided that service at a reasonable cost in 2005.

In order to economically provide this transport the Government must consider a community transport service similar to TOTTS INC where they are picked up at their door and taken to their destination and returned at a reasonable cost for those who meet the criterion for that service. In North Queensland there are groups of community transport organisations in every Local Government Area responding to the requirements of elderly people. Unfortunately many of these groups act as silos and have problems with finance, both local and Grants, vehicle choice, policies, and recruiting members and staff. They travel great distances to small communities and farms to service their patch with weekly trips to the nearest major hospital.

What we propose is that all community transport groups in a LGA area commence to network and establish a coordinator to provide a service to their wants. Each LGA would have a coordinator who keeps in touch with other coordinators throughout Australia. This network would prove that much waste is eliminated and the transport system would sit between Taxis and the Public Bus system if there is one.

It is important to gain some knowledge of TOTTS INC which has two divisions. One of transport called NQ COMMUNITY TRANSPORT and the other is the social aspect called NQ COMMUNITY CONNECT. The social aspect includes a monthly barbeque, bi monthly tours to selected places of interest and a weekly drop in centre. The centre includes indoor games, guest speakers and gentle exercise. It is planned to build on this over time with a member's shed as finance becomes available and computer training.

We are told by many we have an excellent model and we are proud of it. *(REF The History of TOTTS INC Development 1990- 2007)*

Garth Harrigan

President & CEO