

# CARING FOR OLDER AUSTRALIANS

## Submission from Community Transport NSW - Future Directions Working Group

Members of the Community Transport NSW Future Directions Working Group are Randwick Waverley Community Transport, Inner West Community Transport, Manly Warringah Pittwater Community Transport, Regional Co-ordination Office for Community Transport in Northern Sydney (Accessible Bridge Services Inc), Sutherland Shire Community Transport, Great Community Transport and South Sydney Community Transport

### About Community Transport in NSW

The Community Transport system in NSW is built on 30 years of experience, a long history with a strong focus on service provision and meeting local community needs. Based around a local service provision model (usually one or a few local government areas) the 132 Community Transport services in NSW today are well recognised for offering a range of locally focussed Community Transport services. The overall target group for Community Transport is people who are transport disadvantaged. In NSW, most groups receive the bulk of their funding from the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, so the focus has been on providing transport for frail aged people, people with disabilities and their carers.

This submission is made by a group of metropolitan based Community Transport providers who have formed a Future Directions Working Group to start planning for the changes that will occur to the Community Transport industry due to the COAG decision to split aged and disability service funding. Members of this Working Group who are making this submission are:

Organisation	Person involved
Great Community Transport Inc	Helen Walker
Inner West Community Transport Inc	Ben Benevento
Manly Warringah Pittwater Community Transport Inc	Kain Allen
Regional Co-ordination Office for Community Transport in Northern Sydney (Accessible Bridge Services Inc)	Helen Battelino & Cassandra Au
Randwick Waverley Community Transport Group Inc	Sharon Blunt
South Sydney Community Transport Inc	Jane Rogers
Sutherland Shire Community Transport Inc	Roslyn Morton

## About this submission

This submission to the Productivity Commission on "Caring for Older Australians" specifically relates to items 1, 2 and 4 in the Commission's terms of reference:

- 1 *Systematically examine the social, clinical and institutional aspects of aged care in Australia, building on the substantial base of existing reviews into this sector*
- 2 *Develop regulatory and funding options for residential and community aged care (including services currently delivered under the Home and Community Care program for older people)*
- 4 *Recommend a path for transitioning from the current regulatory arrangements to a new system that ensures continuity of care and allows the sector time to adjust*

Almost all aspects of community engagement and participation requires the ability for people to be able to travel freely within their community. Public transport systems and personal transport mechanisms would normally allow this to occur. However, for older Australians these modes of transport will become redundant as they are no longer able to access public transport or drive private transport and require extra and specialised assistance with their transport needs.

We believe that it is important for the Productivity Commission to keep the original purpose of the HACC funding in mind when considering any changes to the delivery of HACC services to older Australians. That is:

*"The Program provides funding for services which support people who are frail aged, younger people with disability and their carers, who live at home and whose capacity for independent living is at risk or who are at risk of premature or inappropriate admission to long term residential care."*

As a HACC funded community service our primary responsibility is to ensure that we support our clients with their transport needs and to ensure that they have access to their community, which reduces their risk of premature or inappropriate admission to residential care.

## Looking at the Community Transport sector in NSW

### *What is unique about Community Transport in NSW?*

Our Community Transport system in NSW has had a history of strong focus on service provision and meeting local community needs, though a local service provision model. The Community Transport system in NSW with 132 local Community Transport services is an example for the rest of Australia.

Some of the factors that make the NSW Community Transport system unique are:

<p><b>Locally responsive and flexible</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Transport in NSW is locally based so is not a standard operation; its local focus means it can respond to the needs of its communities.</li> <li>• It can react to the needs of the local community quickly.</li> <li>• We are proactive and innovative, with many services piloting new models.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Filling transport gaps for people who are transport disadvantaged</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We fill the gaps between public transport, taxis and ambulances.</li> <li>• We can transport people who can no longer manage public transport, or who live in areas where it is too difficult to access public transport and we can transport people who cannot afford to use a taxi or need additional support to get from their home to the vehicle.</li> <li>• We have the capacity to provide a broad transport service for all people who are transport disadvantaged and our flexible services offer transport for people who, for a number of reasons, cannot use mainstream transport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Networking and resource sharing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have strong networking and sharing.</li> <li>• We can share resources and vehicles.</li> <li>• We share ideas and our experiences from innovation and new types of services.</li> <li>• In recent years one of our emerging strengths has been the capacity to work across our regions in collaborative ways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strong volunteer contribution</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Transport has a workforce in NSW of 4000 people. There are 3000 volunteer drivers in Community Transport. Of these volunteers, 1200 are providing transport services in their own vehicles.</li> <li>• Volunteering for Community Transport provides opportunities for people to engage in their communities feel valued in their roles and keep active.</li> <li>• As well as providing volunteering opportunities for 3000 drivers, Community Transport has many volunteers in a range of other skill areas, including being a bus carer or shopping assistant and working in an office.</li> </ul>

## *What are the strengths of the Community Transport sector in NSW?*

- The Community Transport system in NSW is **proactive, flexible and innovative**. We pilot new models and share our experiences with innovations to build capacity across the sector.
- We offer **not just transport but a personalised service**. Our staff and volunteers carry shopping bags, assist people in and out of their homes, help people do their shopping at the shops, accompany people to appointments - far more than simply transporting them from home to shops and return or home to the doctor and return. Our clients are assessed so that they can access the most appropriate service.
- We **offer a continuum of care that is client focussed**. Community Transport is often the first point of contact with the community care service system for many people. Our approach is not a 'one size fits all'. Our range of transport services mean that people can access transport services with more support as they become frailer, or if they are unwell. It also supports the use of an enabling model of care based on wellness approaches to support clients to have transport choices ranging from Community Transport services to public transport services if appropriate. We can offer 'early intervention' by identifying emerging needs of individual clients and putting in place services and making referrals so that appropriate support is provided.
- We have **well trained staff and volunteers** who work with clients, to ensure appropriate support is provided and transport services are safe for clients, staff and volunteers. Our staff can advocate for individual clients, make referrals and support them to access other community care services.
- We are **well integrated in the community care service system**. Our staff refer to other agencies when additional service needs are identified. We often work in partnership with other local agencies such as social support or centre based day care services to provide complementary transport services.
- We have **good assets and infrastructure**. Over the years individual Community Transport services have tailored their vehicle fleets to suit the local community and most Community Transport services now have a range of vehicles for different services. Our vehicles can be brokered out as a valuable community resource. We have expertise in fleet management and can meet all transport regulations.

## *What are the unresolved issues for the Community Transport sector?*

- There is some fragmentation, with services of different sizes and not all services offering the same quality. Some smaller Community Transport services are based with community or neighbourhood centres focus on the needs of the centre's clients not the whole community.

- There are limitations on when we can provide services, due to limitations in funding and pressure on delivering outputs. Limitations in funding have also caused us to rationalise our services and focus on the highest level of need. While we respond to local needs we are also driven by meeting outputs.
- We are hampered in our operations due to the fact that we do not have full accreditation under the NSW Passenger Transport Act. Full accreditation would enable us to provide further innovative services to the aged sector such as demand responsive transport where we could charge a fee.
- The cost of our services may be perceived as too expensive for some other service providers. For some clients our fees are too expensive especially when compared to a concession fare on public transport, free transport from some health services and differences in fees between Community Transport services.

## Looking to the future

### *How would we like Community Transport to operate in the future?*

We would like to see the Community Transport system in NSW

- Offer broader transport services for all people who are transport disadvantaged (and not be just a HACC / community care service).
- Within the aged care area, offer a continuum of services, from transport services for older people in the HACC target group who have low support needs but are no longer able to access public transport through to partnerships with Community Aged Care and Residential Aged Care providers to provide transport for people with high level care needs. Use an enabling model of care based on wellness approaches to support clients to not become reliant on Community Transport and move them back on to public transport when appropriate.
- Respond to the needs of people under 65 who have disabilities and are transport disadvantaged, by including in our model services that meet the transport needs of the wide range of people who have disabilities, including people who have mental health issues or who have physical or intellectual disabilities.
- In metropolitan and regional areas, develop a regional focus for service delivery, with a regional transport provider as budget holder in each region (which will vary in size depending on the population of local council areas, LGAs, demographic characteristics and geographic or transport barriers in the area. The region would support local outlets or satellite services and transport delivery at the local level responsive to community needs. This would mean one Management Committee or Board employing all staff and having the contractual relationship with the funding body or budget holder for Community Transport. A number of existing individual services across a region could work together to develop their regional model. A regional model would enable effective planning for delivery in local areas, equity in

service delivery and delivery of services at a number of levels (for example, shopping services at the local level and medical transport organised around hospital destinations) and in response to the needs of different demographic groups. It would also enable development of strong team work approach to service delivery, flexibility in use of vehicles and staff and capacity to build strong systems and processes to support service delivery. These regional Community Transport bodies could use technology to improve service delivery, including technology to support demand responsive transport.

- Continue to meet the needs of people who live in rural and remote areas through locally driven flexible and innovative services. In many smaller rural communities Community Transport is the only form of transport.
- Within the Community Transport sector, look at holistic planning for Community Transport, strong branding and marketing.