

TOTTS INC

REPORT ON PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT

TOTTS INC (Townsville and Thuringowa Transport Solutions Incorporated) is a community transport service located in Townsville managed and staffed by volunteers with a Board of community people who have a strong caring disposition to supply transport to isolated seniors, disabled and disadvantaged people at a reasonable cost.

Management consider that community transport is an important and necessary service sitting between Taxis and Public Bus system and that through Queensland Community Transport Industry Association (QCTIA) realise it should be considered by Government as an alternative transport service providing transport to those seniors who have lost their license to drive a car or cannot afford a taxi or catch or enter a bus.

TOTTS INC has a membership of 1223 people at 3rd March 2011 and a fleet of 12 vehicles, a combination of station wagons and buses, as the most suitable vehicles for catering for elderly and disabled people.

After reading through the draft report it is obvious that the Commission is not aware of the importance of community transport as it is seldom mentioned yet it has a major impact on ageing seniors and the disabled to travel from their accommodation to hospital visits, shops, clubs and friends. It can be considered to be the glue that ties seniors to their wellbeing and the opportunity for them to continue to use the facilities provided by the community and probably paid out of their taxes. The Government is endeavouring to unite community transport providers to cater more economically throughout the regions.

Acknowledging that our major BANKS are known as the 4 Pillars it is considered appropriate to divide the ageing of Australians report into major pillars as shown on the flow chart attached page 5 under accommodation, care, transport, legislation, advocacy and appeals. It is agreed that the Commission's recommendations are the right ones but there is a worrying problem that it may be wasted unless leaders in all states irrespective of their politics accept that we are all Australians and the final decision as far as seniors are concerned is for all State Premiers to accede to a federal plan.

PILLAR 1: Accommodation

The major improving choice for elderly people and disabled is **transport**. Irrespective of where socially isolated seniors live throughout Australia the preference should be public transport. However there are many towns and regional cities where buses do not operate efficiently and an alternative affordable transport system is considered necessary. This option here would be suitable community transport which picks up at their door and taken

to their desired venue at a certain time and returned when they are ready with their wheel chair, walkers and groceries or suffering effects of treatment at the hospital or GP to their door or even helped into their house. Should they return after dark some even ask the volunteer driver to check the house for **invaders** while they were away.

Care has to be taken should their accommodation be built on a flood plain and that the accommodation is on high blocks with provision for a water lift or a chair mounted lift attached to the stairway. Entry into a shower recess or bathroom can also be a problem as they are often raised above natural floor level to keep the water running throughout the house.

There are thousands of homes throughout Australia where one person lives as the family have moved and one spouse has died. The house becomes neglected and in need of urgent repair. The Commission should comment on allowing others to live in the house and have it updated at Government expense but take a share in the value of the house once repaired. On the death of the last spouse the inheritance can be charged for the cost of the repair or the cost of the repair taken off the value of the house and either paid to the inheritor or purchased by the Government to improve their housing stock.

The Commission should solve the problem of a person transferring from a retirement village into residential care so as to make it as smooth as possible.

PILLAR 2: Care

The word care takes in all people who have a connection of some sort with the aged person, it can include the spouse, friend, children, doctors, nurses, shop keepers and a person paid or volunteers to clean house and help with the shopping and of course the volunteer community transport driver.

They should be assisted to live where they like and able to travel where they can afford say to clubs, friends, shops, doctors, hospital. Initially they may choose to own a car or travel by bus or taxi but time may come when they need to travel by community transport as they provide a caring role from front door to front door.

There is also a requirement for cert 3 carers who are trained to help in the home or nursing home. However these people also need to be supported as care is often 24/7.

A major problem with caring as people age is the amount of money spent by hundreds of small organisations (NGO) renting individual offices with a full kit of office furniture, when Government should be providing a suitable sized building where some equipment can be conveniently placed for all to use. This would also provide a one stop shop gateway for people needing and being approved for care. It would allow more finance to help more people. The Commission's gateway is a good example where NGOs are placed in the same building to conserve finance and provide service to more people.

Payment for services to the clients would lead to problems, particularly over the age of 80. Under 80 they would be able to budget and buy their service ie meals, transport etc but once over 80 budgeting would become a tedious chore and it would be better to pay the provider. There is also the problem of children putting pressure on their parents for some of the money.

PILLAR: 3 Transport

Transport is an important pillar for an ageing person particularly when living in their own home. There comes a time when they have to surrender their license or the car they bought many years earlier is no longer a viable option due to costs to own and operate one. Ageing seniors become isolated unless they are able to use a public bus if there is one or can afford a taxi. The public bus system has changed and now provides buses that are people friendly but in most cases do not exist in small towns and is not supported in regional cities. Taxis have priced themselves out of the market and are not always available when required and may not be people friendly for elderly people because of their design.

Private community groups using volunteer drivers are becoming the life blood for transporting elderly people as the providers supply appropriate vehicles for their use. Vehicles must be station wagons with space for walkers and the occupant must be able to open the door and turn 90 degrees on the seat and walk away. Where buses are used an additional hydraulic step is fitted to open at the same time as the door opens to provide an additional step for the person to get out of the bus. The service provider must have a fleet of vehicles using assisted buses of varying capacities, suitable station wagons, and buses with wheel chair capacity.

It is also necessary for the provider to have many policies in place but one in particular with the Ambulance Service for immediate transfer to an ambulance should one be required if a person suffers a heart attack. The drivers must be specially trained not only to drive the vehicles but to be trained in first aid and be of good character. They are required to assist the person from their door to the vehicle both at pickup and return. Providing the provider has a scheduling computer program the person can request an appointment time and a return time by scheduling a fixed time required by the person or having a telephone call to say when they are ready to return home. The home may be where they lived for many years, or a retirement village or a nursing home.

Of our 1223 members 74% are over 75 years of age, with only 30% are HACC clients of various groups in the Townsville City who do not have the type of transport we supply. 57% have a disability which indicates there is a short fall in the number of people who do their best to survive. This means that should TOTTS INC transport only HACC clients 70 % or 850 members would be discriminated against, although the State Government supports our service because they respect the service provided to reduce social isolation among the elderly whether they be HACC clients or not.

PILLAR: 4 Legalisation

We believe the Commission's plans to set up 2 entry points for seniors to receive financial support from Government i.e.

1. Australian Seniors Gateway
2. Australian Aged Care Regulation Commission

Is the correct way to cut down on duplication?

We would hope the present "Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres" will have a place in the Seniors Gateway group as they have proved to be a valuable referral and information centre for many years.

It is also important the Federal Government 2 groups also have accommodation suitable for many of the NGOs in the region to keep accommodation costs to a minimum and make it easier for the elderly people to access them without travelling all over the city to find them.

It is also important that all State Premiers agree to the submission and remember we are all Australians.

PILLAR: 5 Advocacies

It is important that advocacy is independent of PILLAR 4 and that these people are representing the seniors within the system. They must be trained in the regulations and able to interview people in an empty room suitable for interviewing.

PILLAR: 6 Appeals

It is important that Administrative Appeal Tribunal (AAT) is in place to deal with any decisions of Australian Seniors Gateway Agency (ASGA) and Australian Aged Care Regulation Commission (AACRC) in an early decision.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF AGEING OF SENIORS

