



Health Care Consumers' Association Inc
100 Maitland Street
HACKETT ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6230 7800
Fax: 02 6230 7833
Email: adminofficer@hcca.org.au
ABN: 59 698 548 902

Mr Gary Byles
Director General
Territory and Municipal Services Directorate
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601

15 November 2011

Dear Mr Byles

Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city 2011-2013

Please find attached the submission from Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) on the draft *Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city 2011-2013*.

HCCA attended the focus group on "Planning a City for the Most Vulnerable", held at the Legislative Assembly on 2 November 2011. This was a useful forum and we, and several other participants, were keen to submit comments on the draft *Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city 2011-2013* document.

However, we were concerned about the tight deadline for accepting submissions. We, and others, requested an extension of the timeframe, but were disappointed to be advised, by the representative from your Department, that there was no flexibility for extending the closing date for comments.

Transport is critical to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society and it is imperative that peak organisations, such as HCCA, have sufficient time to engage with members of the community, listen to their views and concerns, and reflect their comments in a properly considered submission.

In the light of the above, I hope you will accept this submission, despite having missed the closing date for comments of last Friday, 11 November.

If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darlene Cox", written in a cursive style.

Darlene Cox
Executive Director



Health Care Consumers' Association Inc
100 Maitland Street
HACKETT ACT 2602
Phone: 02 6230 7800
Fax: 02 6230 7833
Email: adminofficer@hcca.org.au
ABN: 59 698 548 902

HCCA Submission on the
Transport for Canberra:
Transport for a sustainable city,
2011-2031 Draft Plan

16 November 2011

Contact Darlene Cox
darlenecox@hcca.org.au
02 6230 7800



The **Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) of the ACT** was formed over 30 years ago to provide a voice for consumers on local health issues and now provides opportunities for health care consumers in the ACT to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- Consumer representation
- Consultation
- Training in health rights and navigating the health system
- Community fora
- Information sessions about health services
- Advocating for issues of concern to consumers

HCCA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *ACT Transport for Canberra: Transport for a sustainable city: 2011-2031*. Our comments are informed by the principles of the *Health in All Policies* approach the *Adelaide Statement on Health in All Policies (2010)* and a "social determinants of health" framework.¹

This submission will include general comments, but will focus primarily on the following sections of the Draft ACT Transport Strategy:

- 1.1 Policy Context
- 1.2 The case for change in how we travel – Active Travel
- 1.3 Transport for Canberra – strategic goals
- 2 Public transport

¹ "Adelaide Statement on Health in All Policies: Moving towards a shared governance for health and well-being", *World Health Organisation & the Government of South Australia* <http://www.who.int/social_determinants/hiap_statement_who_sa_final.pdf> (2010) accessed 13 November 2011.

Introduction

Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA) response to this document is informed by the Social Determinants of Health model which promotes a health in all policies approach, which advocates for health promoting policies in all sectors, including non-health sectors.²

In the field of public health there is an ever increasing acceptance that health is determined not just by biological and genetic factors, but also by a range of economic, environmental and social determinants. In this context, access to transport is a major determinant of good health and wellbeing, as it impacts greatly upon, and intersects with, the other social determinants of health – a safe environment, secure employment and social support.

Although there have been major developments in the management and prevention of acute illness, chronic conditions are emerging as a significant ongoing cost to the community. The majority of these chronic conditions are preventable and are closely linked with living conditions or other social determinants which tend to be influenced by policies outside the health sector. It is a well-recognised fact within the field that access to transport has significant effects on health and inequalities. A social determinants of health approach highlights the need for policy makers in all sectors to be aware of the impact of their decisions on population health and to act to incorporate considerations of health into their policies.

Accessible transport for all consumers ensures equitable access to health services, employment and recreation, which in turn has a direct impact on the health of the population. HCCA promotes the view of the World Health Organisation (WHO) that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.³

Access to appropriate transport is a major issue for many people in Canberra, particularly for those who are isolated because of social, geographic, economic or cultural circumstances. Individuals who do not drive are considerably disadvantaged because of the lack of accessible and equitable public transport options in the Territory. Low income, disability and an ageing population are all factors which contribute to restricted transport access. As such, this considerable and ever-increasing population subset requires distinct and urgent consideration.

Use of health care services declines as the individual's distance to the facility increases. This factor intersects, and is compounded by, inaccessible transport

² "Social Determinants of Health", *World Health Organisation* <http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/> (2011) accessed 13 November 2011.

³ "About WHO: Definition of health", *World Health Organisation* <<https://apps.who.int/aboutwho/en/definition.html>> *World Health Organisation* (2011) accessed 13 November 2011.

issues resulting in delays in treatment, increased mortality rates and increases in Emergency Department presentations and hospital admissions. In short, transport is an essential resource for creating and maintaining positive health in populations. Therefore, it is crucial that all future transport plans and policies take into account the likely impact on the health of populations.

HCCA calls for intersectoral collaboration to ensure that the Transport Plan leads to improved population health and wellbeing for all people who live, work or visit Canberra. We strongly support the Health in All Policies (HiAP) model, adopted by the Government of South Australia, which emphasises the fact that health and wellbeing are largely influenced by measures that are often managed by government sectors other than health.⁴

HiAP seeks to highlight the connections and interactions between health and policies from other sectors. HiAP explores policy options that contribute to the goals of non-health sectors and will improve health outcomes. By considering health impacts across all policy domains such as agriculture, education, the environment, fiscal policies, housing and transport, population health can be improved and the growing economic burden of the health care system can be reduced and the system itself can be made more efficient.

1.1 Policy Context

The *Transport for Canberra* Plan should be informed by other ACT policies and plans. In the past, the tendency to plan in departmental “silos” has adversely impacted on consumers, leaving those of us without access to private transport unable to access major health facilities. An example of this was the relocation of the Aged Care and Rehabilitation Service from The Canberra Hospital to the Village Creek site in Kambah. This example of non-intersectoral planning has left this group of, already vulnerable, health care consumers in a position where access to treatment is difficult, unless they are able to use a private vehicle. If the Government had a coordinated approach to health service planning and delivery, we feel that this site would not have been selected and a more appropriate location, with convenient access to public and community transport, would have been identified.

Transport for Canberra Policy Linkages

Two obvious omissions in this draft document are:

Capital Asset Development Plan

⁴ “Implementing Health in All Policies: Adelaide 2010”, eds. Ilona Kickbusch and Kevin Buckett, <<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/0ab5f18043aee450b600feed1a914d95/implementinghiapadel-sahealth-100622.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=0ab5f18043aee450b600feed1a914d95>> (2010) accessed 13 November 2011.

HCCA recommends the inclusion of the Capital Asset Development Plan as one of the ACT Health Directorate policies informing this transport document. The Capital Asset Development Plan is ACT Health Directorate's response to the ever increasing demands on the health system. By the year 2032, Canberra's population is projected to grow by 67,000 people to 389,000, with the proportion of our population aged over 65 expected to increase from 9.7 per cent to 25.6 per cent. In addition the ACT health system services a surrounding regional population in South East NSW, and this region will also experience similar degrees of growth and ageing.

The Capital Asset Development Plan is the blueprint for future health infrastructure development in the territory. As such, it includes the location of major health services planned for the next decade. HCCA strongly recommends a joined up government response that ensures these plans inform the location of frequent transport corridors, frequent bus networks and location of bus stops to ensure integration of land use and transport.

Women's Health Plan

Currently not all women in the ACT have equal access to health and wellbeing services. Women are the primary seekers of health care and health and well-being information, not only for themselves, but for their children and other family members. Despite this, ACT women face significant challenges, as they try to manage their own and their family's health. Women in the ACT are confronted by a number of barriers in acting on their health and wellbeing issues. One of the systemic barriers, which prevents women from dealing with these issues, is difficulties with transport.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) report published in April 2011 showed that the number of women with disabilities in the ACT is about 31,346 or 17.8% of the population. We know that half of all women with a disability live on a pension, are twice as likely as men to be unemployed and do not drive a car. Many women using wheelchairs have strength issues and chronic conditions which impede their mobility.

1.2 The case for change in how we travel – Active Travel

HCCA commends the focus on active travel in this document but would recommend an acknowledgement and consideration in all planning and target setting of those consumers who, due to significant mobility issues, are unable to make use of active transport options. This issue was voiced by the *People with Disabilities* Executive Director, Robert Altamore, during a forum on "*Transport for the most vulnerable*" on 2 November 2011. When considering driving and parking disincentives, this substantial and growing sub-section of the population needs distinct consideration. Further to this, major upgrades of footpaths and walkways in older suburbs and establishment of footpaths in the newer suburbs is a major implication of this *Active Transport Plan*. Every year, many consumers experience falls, as a result of poorly maintained pathways and footpaths. Moreover, regulations preventing parking and obstructing footpaths, walkways and cycle paths need to be aligned with this plan. Lastly, adherence to ACT Government regulations and standards on culverts, gradients and safe street-crossing provision are all follow-on issues that need to be considered and invested in.

1.2 Transport for Canberra Strategic Goals

Accessible and socially inclusive

HCCA commends this goal and specifically encourages the provision of more community buses to adequately meet the demand of those needing to make use of this service. This service is designed to be flexible; however, the current provision of six buses does not meet the current needs. In Winter of 2011, consumers using the Northside bus depot, experienced waiting times of two weeks, and wheelchair users experienced waiting times of four weeks. This service clearly needs to be more responsive in order to adequately service this consumer group who have limited transport alternatives. Waiting times need to be reduced so the service can meet the needs of consumers who need to access the service for urgent/unplanned health appointments.

Taxis

HCCA strongly commends the 2010 review undertaken by Territory And Municipal Services (TAMS) of Wheelchair Accessible Taxi (WAT) provision in the ACT and the taxi industry in general.

HCCA supports the following recommendations to assist in building the capacity of those with limited transport options to increase their health and wellbeing:

- the introduction of a centralised 24/7 WAT management and booking service, with the recommendation that, if the centralised booking service fails to deliver the required KPI outcomes for service levels, the Government consider other approaches to the provision of transport services for wheelchair users;
- an increase in the Taxi Subsidy Scheme (TSS) level of 32% and that future increases align with increases in taxi fares to maintain parity between taxi fares and the TSS subsidy;
- the removal of the annual cap on the number of TSS vouchers available to a member of the TSS scheme;
- the introduction of an electronic 'smart card' style of payment system for the TSS; and
- an increase in the provision of taxi ranks and drop off points to increase safety, accessibility and efficiency of the service, especially for those with mobility and or health issues.

Safe

HCCA commends the safe systems approach to designing and delivering transport infrastructure for all modes of transport. Further to this we recommend the

implementation of safety audits to ensure the adequate provision of lighting, road, cycle path, footpath, and bus stop maintenance programs. The *Women's Centre for Health Matters* conducted an Older Women's Safety Audit in 2011 which showed that women feel very unsafe in bus interchanges, particularly in Civic and Woden.⁵ The survey also showed that many older women face social isolation and do not go out at night because of perceptions of unsafe public transport and poor street lighting.

Additionally, consumers have told us there is a need for more car parks with access for people with mobility issues. This consumer group is growing in number and with the aging population this will continue. It is important that these car parks provide adequate width dimensions to properly cater for the needs of consumers using wheelchairs or other mobility devices, to enable them to alight from vehicles and to store such devices.

In order to ensure safe use of footpaths, roads, bike lanes and pathways HCCA suggests a focus on adequate provision of household parking spots for each dwelling planned. This is especially important in those suburbs designated for intensification, so that the risk of accident and injury is not increased for those using active travel modes and thus increase.

Integrated transport system

HCCA commends this approach and suggests a further extension of this idea to include the integration of taxis and buses especially to meet the needs of people with mobility issues using the taxi subsidy scheme in areas where there is inadequate coverage of appropriate public transport.

Active

HCCA recommends the introduction of safe cycling regulations for use on shared pathways with pedestrians. We recommend the adoption of safe speed limits for cyclists using shared pathways with pedestrians. Additionally, we support a campaign to encourage cyclists to use bells to warn pedestrians and slower riders.

Sustainable

HCCA recommends the use of smaller buses that can be used more flexibly and responsively in areas of less demand. This enables a more sustainable approach to the issue of underuse on some services or at certain times of the day. It also enables buses to access narrow streets in less built up areas.

2. Public transport

⁵ "WHCM Submission to Transport for Canberra 2011-2031", *Women's Centre for Health Matters* <<http://www.wchm.org.au/Submissions.htm>> (November 2011) accessed 15 November 2011.

HCCA commends the walkability mapping exercise to be undertaken before scoping final minimum coverage of public transport. However, we strongly recommend this mapping and walkability exercise be extended to include high importance facilities such as hospitals, GP surgeries, community health centres and residential aged care facilities. As part of the work undertaken by the GP Task Force, the Health Directorate prepared a map showing the location of general practices. We encourage Transport ACT to work with Health to use this information when completing the mapping exercise.

References

“About WHO: Definition of health”. *World Health Organisation* <<https://apps.who.int/aboutwho/en/definition.html>> *World Health Organisation* (2011) accessed 13 November 2011.

“Adelaide Statement on Health in All Policies: Moving towards a shared governance for health and well-being”. *World Health Organisation & the Government of South Australia* <http://www.who.int/social_determinants/hiap_statement_who_sa_final.pdf> (2010) accessed 13 November 2011.

“Implementing Health in All Policies: Adelaide 2010”. Eds. Kickbusch, Ilona and Kevin Buckett. <<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/0ab5f18043aee450b600feed1a914d95/implementinghiapadel-sahealth-100622.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=0ab5f18043aee450b600feed1a914d95>> (2010) accessed 13 November 2011.

“Social Determinants of Health”. *World Health Organisation* <http://www.who.int/social_determinants/en/> (2011) accessed 13 November 2011.

“WHCM Submission to Transport for Canberra 2011-2031”. *Women’s Centre for Health Matters* <<http://www.wchm.org.au/Submissions.htm>> (November 2011) accessed 15 November 2011.