



Council on the Ageing (COTA) NSW

Submission

Draft Transport for NSW – Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018 - 2022

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Introduction

COTA NSW supports the right of older people to access public and community transport in all locations of NSW. Because such transport is often crucial in enabling older people to remain connected within their communities, it should be universally accessible, adequate, affordable, reliable and safe. It should enable older people to readily meet their needs for health and community services as well as participate in the social and cultural life of their community. It should be aligned to older peoples' capacities, so that it can be safely used by older people, even when they have physical or mental limitations.

COTA NSW is the peak body representing people over 50 in NSW. We're an independent, non-partisan, consumer-based non-government organisation. We work with politicians, policy makers, service and product providers as well as media representatives to make sure our constituents' views are heard and their needs met.

Community engagement is a primary focus of COTA NSW. This is undertaken through a variety of methods, including focus groups and online surveys. The importance of accessible and affordable transport has been consistently raised by consumers during our extensive consultation initiatives as an area of concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Draft Transport for NSW – Older Persons Transport and Mobility Plan 2018 – 2022*. COTA NSW commends Transport for NSW for their commitment to providing a range of transport options for older people and a recognition of their changing needs as they age. Particular recognition is warranted for the continued support of the Accessible Transport Advisory Committee and the Social Policy team who have strived to imbed the principles of inclusivity and accessibility within Transport for NSW.

This draft *plan* clearly articulates the four broad outcomes that support and enable older people to remain active and connected to their communities and provides well-defined linkages to the NSW Ageing Strategy and other plans and policies.

Further comments are provided below under the respective outcomes contained within the draft *plan*.

Keeping active and connected with my community

Access to affordable and accessible transport options, supported by an effective pedestrian network is critical in supporting the ability of older people to remain active and connected within their communities.

COTA NSW acknowledges the significant number of sites that have been upgraded through the Transport Access Program. Although there has been solid progress on improving accessibility, COTA NSW has called for an increase in annual funding of this program and the introduction of specific targets for completion of train station upgrades.

COTA NSW strongly supports the trials of flexible and on-demand responsive services in metropolitan, regional and rural areas and believes that these niche services will form an important component of current and future transport service offerings. COTA NSW reiterates the importance of ensuring that access to book these services is available in a variety of methods to allow older people without smart phones or internet access, the ability to utilise this flexible transport option.

As stated in the *plan* people in rural and regional NSW often face transport disadvantage. The sustainability of community transport that has often provided an essential service in these communities is under threat. The Legislative Committee report – *Access to Transport for Seniors and Disadvantage People in Rural and Regional NSW* – highlighted the funding challenges faced by community transport providers since the introduction of the NDIS. Providers are subsidising fares for long distances; as it would be financially prohibitive to charge the actual cost of the trip to vulnerable passengers. A review of the sector, including current funding models and service contracts is needed to ensure the continued availability of community transport in rural and regional NSW.

COTA NSW supports the commitment by Transport for NSW to design better rural transport services that provide access to key destinations such as hospitals and medical centres. Feedback received in many regional areas during our 2018 consumer reference groups raised the issue of transport to and from these destinations. There were many stories of hardship and older people unable to return home easily and affordably after being discharged from hospital. Co-ordination between NSW Health, Transport for NSW and local transport providers is required to establish responsive services in many regional locales.

Staying Safe

Pedestrian safety for older people is an area that warrants further attention. The *Pedestrian Trauma Trends* report published by Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety highlighted that the largest proportional increase in pedestrian fatalities by age and gender over a

period of five years were females aged 70 or older – with an annual average of 5.3 in 2008-10 increasing to 10.3 in 2014-16. Additionally, this age cohort was also the highest percentage of female pedestrian fatalities by age.

COTA NSW concurs with the imperative to build upon the *Pedestrian Safety Action Plan 2014-16*, implementing a range of methods to raise awareness about such issues as jaywalking and the associated risks with older people. An expansion of the Local Government Road Safety Program would be an effective mode of delivery for these programs. Further exploration of innovative engagement pathways such as peer education should be explored.

Being informed

Although, increasing numbers of older Australians are digitally literate, there is still a large group of older people that do not have access to a computer or smartphone. These people may not feel skilled or comfortable using technology, and many simply prefer to receive information in a more traditional format.

Attendees at COTA NSW consultations consistently discussed the way in which they wished to receive or seek information about the services and activities available in their communities. There was a general frustration that in many instances' information is solely located online. Attendees felt that this is excluding, in particular for those without internet access or who did not feel technologically proficient in this space (this feedback was particularly common in the older 75+ participants).

Whilst COTA NSW understands the imperative to develop innovative and technological advanced ways of communicating with the public, we continue to emphasise the importance of providing information via traditional avenues, such as printed media or phone access, to facilitate inclusion for all ages, abilities and digital literacy.

Maintaining independence

As outlined previously, continued investment in improving accessibility of transport infrastructure, exploration of innovative service delivery models such as the on-demand shuttle bus services and support for community transport will support and enable the independence and connection of older people in NSW.

Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

COTA NSW recommends the implementation of a publicly available dashboard for ongoing monitoring and measurement of the actions and strategies contained within the *plan*. This

should also include information such as dates for implementation, description of activities associated with the implementation of the broader actions, responsible departments and development of broader outcome-based indicators.

Whilst it is expected that not all actions may be completed within a specified timeframe, the provision of information relating to progress of the action or associated activities would demonstrate to the community the progress achieved by Transport for NSW (and other government departments) in relation to this *plan*, whilst maintaining public accountability.