

11 March 2019

The Hon. John Barilaro, MP
213 Crawford Street
Queanbeyan NSW 2620
monaro@parliament.nsw.gov.au



Dear Minister Barilaro,

RE: Transport disadvantage in regional NSW

NCOSS would like to extend its congratulations to the NSW Nationals for acknowledging that travel is one of the most significant household costs faced by seniors living across rural and regional NSW.

Indeed, older people in regional NSW face longer distances to travel, fewer transport options and a heavier reliance on their costly private cars. We acknowledge the recently announced Seniors Transport Card as a step toward partially addressing transport disadvantage for older people in regional areas. However, isolation affects a range of people of all ages in regional NSW who may be unable to drive and don't have access to public transport to get where they need to go.

Mr Barilaro, you know long distances in regional NSW better than most, having just last week been [cited](#) as one of the politicians who most frequently travels the state. \$250 toward taxi fares in the absence of a private car or public option is not cost-effective and would only cover about 70kms; possibly not even one return trip to the nearest major shopping centre or hospital, let alone subsidise a year's worth of travel.

Solutions to transport disadvantage need to be more equitable, systemic, cost efficient and sustainable.

Achieving a fully accessible transport system and improved conditions for community transport providers are key recommendations of the [Building Great Communities](#) campaign, which is shining a light on the solutions that will improve the lives of those who are doing it tough and being left behind in a prosperous NSW. The campaign has a focus on policies which will build strong, safe, inclusive and accessible communities that celebrate diversity and where everyone can thrive. The Building Great Communities alliance of NSW peak bodies is **calling for certainty and funding for community transport providers.**

At a current cost of about \$9.5 million per year to the State Government, the NSW Community Transport Program supports people isolated by transport disadvantage. Community transport increases community and social inclusion by connecting people of all ages to vital hubs and services, particularly in regional and remote NSW. However, community transport providers are facing several compounding challenges:

- NDIS is insufficiently funding and increasing demand for community transport.

- Where providers used to be able to charge older people only a nominal fee under block grant funding, aged care reforms require full cost recovery by providers.
- Current funding arrangements end in 2020: providers need certainty.
- Service contracts disadvantage community transport providers.

Further detail on each of these issues is provided in the brief attached to this letter.

Community transport organisations are the experts in their communities. NCOSS is asking that these organisations are provided more independence and adequate resources. Improving the situation of community transport for regional and remote residents of NSW could cost of less than \$24 million each year – ***a quarter of the cost of the Seniors Transport Card.***

On behalf of the NSW community transport and broader community services sector NCOSS is asking:

- Will a returned Coalition Government commit to long-term funding for the NSW Community Transport Program, including an increase in funds for service providers by 20 per cent each year for five years?
- What is your position on requiring Transport for NSW to streamline and clarify contractual requirements, including asset ownership and the ability for community transport providers to independently manage their fleets in response to local need?
- Will a returned Coalition Government commit to consulting with the community transport sector on designing place-based arrangements so that resources in a particular location can be more flexibly deployed to meet local needs?

We would like to understand your position on these issues, and share this with our members and networks.

Regards,



Joanna Quilty
Chief Executive Officer