

11 March 2019

The Honourable Andrew Constance, MP
52 Martin Place
Sydney 2000
bega@parliament.nsw.gov.au



Dear Minister Constance,

RE: Transport disadvantage in regional NSW

Thank you for your correspondence of 18 February regarding the NSW Liberal and Nationals' commitments on public and other transport.

I would like to recognise the accessibility improvements that have been made to the NSW public transport system since 2011. We also welcome the recent announcement of \$173 million to continue transport subsidies for people with disability. The continuation of this funding facilitates community and social inclusion and reduces dependence on income support.

There remains much to be done to make access to community resources and public infrastructure equitable, especially for people in regional NSW. I particularly note that your department has acknowledged that it is unlikely to achieve its obligation to be 100 per cent compliant with the National Disability Standards by 2022.

The recently announced Seniors Transport Card, while a well-intended initiative, comes at a cost of \$100 million per year. Yet it does not address the needs of all those who face transport and access disadvantage. For many in regional NSW, public transport doesn't exist or is unable to take them where they need to go. For others, a licence to drive is unobtainable or the cost of owning and running a private car is out of reach.

Achieving a fully accessible transport system is one of the 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, and the demand for this service is growing.

However, community transport providers are facing several compounding challenges:

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

- Aged care reforms are proving complex and costly to administer.
- 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 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 sectors, 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 TfNSW's position on streamlining and clarifying 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?

The Coalition's commendable election pledges regarding social, health and mental health infrastructure will only benefit people in regional NSW if they can be accessed.

We would like to understand your position on these matters and will share this with our networks and stakeholders.

Yours sincerely,



Joanna Quilty
Chief Executive Officer