

View from Canberra



14 August 2019

Bus Industry a Massive Future player in cities and regions

Australia's population is forecast to increase to 31.4 million people over the next 15 years. Infrastructure Australia says that spending in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth is failing to keep pace with population growth — especially in the outer suburbs.

Various studies have shown that 'acceptable' walking distances to public transport are generally in the realm of 400 to 800 metres. Based on this, 96 per cent of people living in the inner city are within walking distance of public transport with only 34 per cent of Australians living in the suburbs are within a walkable distance to a transport connection. Those in regional and remote areas are worse off, with services falling 'below what is acceptable' for a developed nation.

Remote communities are struggling with overcrowded social housing, limited access to drinking water, inadequate transport and poor telecommunications, which has led to poorer health standards and a lower quality of life.

I attended a key stakeholder briefing from Infrastructure Australia on 5 August about the 2019 Infrastructure Australia Audit Report that was publicly released on 13 August. The report paints a dire prediction about our future if Australia does not get serious about investing in infrastructure and getting public transport right. The report identifies serious trouble ahead relating to the impacts of congestion on our living standards and a productive economy, not just in our capital cities but in all of our major cities and regions. The pressure of population growth on the whole transport system and transport infrastructure will outstrip our capacity to provide the living standards we are accustomed. This will have flow on effect on housing, health and other vital services that we take for granted in a first world nation like Australia.

Am I being dramatic? No, this is not new news but it is putting out the warning to the Morrison government and whoever is next, and to all state and territory governments that we need a national plan. We need to invest now in priority transport infrastructure and we need to start now or as Hanrahan once said "we will all be rooned". This report could not be clearer, and part of BICs role and all Industry participants is to make sure governments are listening and acting.

The BIC National Conference is being held in Canberra November 17-20. The theme, *Moving People - a National Priority* is to make sure governments are listening and acting and emphasise the role of all governments to get moving and work with Industry to meet the public transport challenges ahead and recognise the role of the bus as the biggest mover of people every day in the public transport system no matter where you live.

We are part of the solution, not only for public transport improvement but to deliver the legacy you want to leave for future generations, your children and grandchildren. There is more to this than just your own businesses growth.

And let me tell you autonomous vehicles or modules for everyone is not going to solve this problem.

The next BIC policy paper (Number 12) "From Workhorse to Thoroughbred" will provide ideas and thoughts on the future options on the role of bus and investing in improved branded bus services, bus priority and bus rapid transit infrastructure and services as a big part of the solution - at a fraction of the cost of light and heavy rail. Our industry is part of the solution and the BIC Conference is your opportunity to contribute to your future and the future growth of the bus industry and your business, whether you are a supplier or operator. Infrastructure Australia will present at the BIC conference on the 2019 IA Audit Report and the future of Bus. Not to be missed.

I hope we will see you in Canberra to highlight the unity and strength of Industry and our commitment to playing our part in delivering the Australia of the future. Visit www.movingpeople.com.au for all information regarding the conference.

