

View from Canberra



9 December 2019

In last month's column, I talked about some of the core actions that the federal government could undertake to provide incentives to state and territory and local governments to help provide great public transport service and options for our ever-expanding cities and regions.

The BIC has long advocated that the federal government has always needed to play a role in regional connectivity, accessibility and ensuring our villages, towns, regional centres and cities are connected by transport passenger services.

Living in regional Australia is no longer just about owning a car. Regional passenger transport services provide the connectivity to access jobs and services, education, health and recreational activities. Connecting regional passenger transport services will help government address the population challenges our nation faces.

The whole notion of decentralisation as a pressure valve for our cities is all too often based on jobs. Jobs are an important attractor, but transport infrastructure and transport services need to be recognised as the glue that connects people to their community, their regional centre and city and makes moving away from the big smoke to the country a much more attractive option.

This year, the BIC in collaboration with the Bus Australia Network released a 10 year plan for the coach sector to double the number of passenger trips taken by coach to boost our regional tourism economic contribution. This could be a massive regional economic driver if we get the transport infrastructure right, the connectivity, transport services and promotion right.

The diversity and reach of the bus and coach industry and the various sectors that operate within it is something that **"just happens"** and this potentially places our industry in a **"nothing much to see here"** syndrome.

An important message from the BIC to all governments and transport departments that we visit across Australia is that bus and coach operators are part of the fabric of their communities and pretty much operate in every community in Australia.

The BIC is always getting in the face of federal and state/territory governments on **"how much there is to see here"** in the bus and coach industry across our cities and regions.

1. School bus operators who every day makes sure students get to school and special school service providers that work with children with disabilities that bring a unique skill set that is more than just about operating buses.
2. Public transport operators providing services that could be termed as mass transit and at the same time providing social transit for people less well-off and without access to a car.
3. Coach operations that provide day tours, long distance tours, charter services and services to get the school kids to the swimming carnival and the local footy team to the game.



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4. Coaches are in the mining industry. Moving miners to and from the mine for their shifts and transporting mining families into town for shopping and other services.
5. A host of other specific and often niche bus service markets that provide transport, such as the buses on the tarmac at airports.

And don't think we stop our industry story at the bus operators. We are equally vocal about our bus manufacturing and supply sector.

We are big on the federal government getting involved to provide incentives to get new low emission buses on the road.

Incentives such as investment or accelerated depreciation to deliver modern low emission bus and coach fleets on the road that encourages the uptake of new low emission buses – euro 6 diesel – hybrid, electric, be they hydrogen fuel cell or lithium batteries.

Buses are a perfect springboard for the federal government to invest in electric vehicles and electric fuel infrastructure with buses being the first “cab off the rank”.

Public transport in our cities and regions is predicted to become more important as our cities and regions grow.

The federal government has a vital role in leadership and strategic policy in public transport and increasingly it is becoming evident that the government has a direct role in helping state and local governments ensure our cities and regions of the future are economic, liveable and sustainable. The BIC will as usual be taking our industry message “on the road” in 2020 to federal government, state and territory governments and transport agencies. Our industry message will incorporate much of what was discussed at the National Conference held in November, in particular how the bus industry is an essential ingredient in providing MaaS solutions to improve mobility in our cities and regions. It is evident that PT services need to be scaled up not down which is part of our core strategic message to governments which will grow operator businesses and increase demand for new buses and coaches which directly impacts the sustainability and growth of our manufacturers and supplier members.

Bus Australia Network

