

View from Canberra March 2015

March is always a big month at the BIC, but this year looks like the biggest yet with a number of important industry events and the launch of a new policy publication that is set to make waves in Canberra.

As those of us in the bus industry and famously the former Minister for Infrastructure and Transport Anthony Albanese appreciate, the bus industry is the workhorse of passenger transport in our cities and the only form of transport in most regional areas.

We cover more vehicle kilometres than any other form of transport and carry passengers in places where rail won't go, can't go and will never go. There is only so much rail like and it can't reach everyone. The bus can deliver a full trip and it can be critical connection in a commuter trip.

In late March the BIC will be launching *Moving People: Connecting Neighbourhoods*. The focus of this paper is to present a solution to the problems facing our cities by thinking locally.

Connecting Neighbourhoods is focussed on local action to address the big challenges our cities face in traffic congestion, the management of growth and future environmental conditions. This paper presents the concept of the 20 minute city in practical terms to governments so that they can make it a reality on the ground.

A 20 minute city is really the division of our existing major cities into more manageable and sustainable forms through the creation of a network of neighbourhoods where people are within 20 minutes of most of the activities they undertake on a regular basis, by walking, bicycle or public transport

What the paper shows is that 20 minute cities are built around high quality local transport links and that the humble bus and its connection to walking and cycling is the key to this. A 20 minute city offers most of the services, activities and social infrastructure required to meet our essential needs: social inclusion, personal wellbeing, mental health and social equity.

Why is the bus so important in all this? Have you ever seen a train pull up outside a house? The bus is the key to providing high quality local public transport links because it offers a door to door service between the home and all of the services, activities and social infrastructure that are important to people.

The report finds a 30 minute minimum service frequency on local bus services for about 15-18 hours a day, with increased peak frequencies if loadings warrant are essential. The report suggests that governments need to look at service levels for buses that aim to provide a service that enables most people to do most of the things they want to do, most of the time, without needing a car.

Connected neighbourhoods are integral to the Australian way of life, the idea that in one of the most urbanised countries in the world we can work in major cities where at the end of a long day at work we can travel back to a quiet village feel and take care of the shopping, meet with friends and make a range of lifestyle decisions close to where we live.

As the bus industry we might be the unglamorous work horse of the public transport network but we might just be the key to achieving the compromise between making our cities globally competitive powerhouses of the future and retaining them as the places where the great majority of Australians enjoy a high quality of life.