

## **View from Canberra April 2015**

After a few years as a lobbyist you get accustomed to the mystified and glazed eyed look you get from strangers, friends and family members when you reply to the obligatory “what do you do for a living?” small talk.

The truth is far more literal than people realise. Back in the days before the internet, twitter and the 24 hour news cycle, lobbyists used to stand in lobbies. They would wait in the lobbies of parliaments and places where politicians gathered to catch their attention and give them a brief pitch on the issue, industry or cause that they were representing and try to influence the laws and decisions they made.

As buildings grew skywards the “elevator pitch” became an important tool in a lobbyist’s arsenal. A short pitch in the lift that has to be brief, memorable and effective in shaping decisions.

The question in this month’s view from Canberra is what we, as the Australian bus and coach industry, would say to the Prime Minister in an “elevator pitch”:

“Prime Minister Abbott I’ve got the perfect idea for your government to lower the costs of the health system, make our cities better to live, grow the economy and win votes at the next election”.

“It’s called *Moving People* and it’s a plan to make people healthier and reduce traffic in our major cities. The best part is you only have to take three measures to make it a success.”

“First, encourage State governments to invest more in public transport with Federal Government incentives. Your government’s Asset Recycling Program is on the right track with States investing in public transport infrastructure. But you can do more by directly investing in bus rapid transit and bus priority projects as part of your existing road infrastructure funding and it will not cost you a cent more. Why not create a specific fund which allows the Commonwealth to co-contribute to public transport infrastructure investment to improve urban transport networks or fully support Infrastructure Australia funding public transport projects if they stack up.”

“Second, encourage people to walk, cycle or catch a bus for short trips by promoting 20 minute cities within our metropolitan regions. 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. We can build these 20 minute cities through improved bus services and better land use planning. You can do it Tony. The Council of Australian Governments would be a good start to get Premiers and Chief Ministers on board.”

“Third, give people the information they need to make good travel choices. Under Prime Minister Howard, the Coalition ran a federally funded program which encouraged people to use public transport, walk and cycle by making them aware of the real cost of running a car, making them aware of alternate transport choices they had and how to better plan their travel.”

The “elevator pitch” is BIC’s Moving People policy agenda compressed into a short conversation to suit the intended audience. You can read more of our policies, including the recent Moving People: Solutions for Policy Thinkers Series on the BIC’s Ozebus website.

*Connecting Neighbourhoods* is the focus of the BIC’s 2015 Singapore Conference from Sunday November 8 to Wednesday November 11. This Conference is strongly focussed on policies and ideas on how the bus fits into the cities and regions of the future and how we learn from international best practice in building and delivering public transport. The Conference will be equally relevant for operators and suppliers with the program having specific sessions for both.

It will be a great Conference with a big turnout like Fiji, if booking for accommodation in Singapore already is any indication so please book your flights and accommodation early to avoid disappointment and get the best rates and airfares. Details about the program and accommodation are at [www.ozebus.com.au](http://www.ozebus.com.au).