

VIEW FROM CANBERRA

September 2015

Will Your Business be Left Behind?

If you have not registered for the BIC Conference as yet, then it is time to make the decision and come and support your Industry and think about where your business, whether you are a supplier or operator is heading in the next 10 or 20 years.

A raft of Federal and State Government reports this year have painted a clear picture of the challenges that we face in our cities and regions with a growing and ageing population and meeting future transport demand. The challenges that the bus industry specifically face are several. These challenges will be the subject of discussion in Singapore with the aim to uncover how you best manage the future as business people operating buses or selling buses and products.

The challenges ahead include the fact that demand for public transport services is expected to increase in every capital city (in vehicle kilometres) by 89% by 2031. How do we make sure Governments can provide sustainable funding to let us meet this demand challenge? And if the funding is not available, how will transport services emerge to fill the gap?

What kind of service will you be providing in 2031 (only 16 years)?

Are on-demand services like Uber in the taxi industry going to impact on the bus industry? Will traditional bus services become just a part of a range of different types of services that bus operators might provide? On demand micro transit and para transit services are already emerging in the US and being operated in some instances by existing metro bus operators and in many cases by new innovative entrepreneurs filling a gap in the market.

A recent discussion Paper released by the WA Transport Minister on, "On Demand Passenger Services", would certainly indicate that Australian regulators are looking at what the options are to open up opportunities for passenger transport operators to expand their horizons. The discussion Paper raises deregulation of the entire passenger transport market and investigates the opportunities to move away from the traditional bus contractual arrangements.

These traditional services will continue to exist in some form no doubt. But, and it is a big but, because it is becoming a reality in front of our very eyes right now, other alternatives are going to be available in the passenger transport market place. Will your business be ready to step in?

The bus industry needs to be ahead of the game in providing alternatives to traditional bus service and value adding to what we already do. The alternative is, if you don't keep up, your business will be at risk. The future will be different from today and it will move quickly. How fast did Uber happen?

The future focus I believe for the bus industry, or part of it, will be to look to new customer focussed services that deliver what the customer is demanding, more responsive and personalised transit options. These services will equal the experience that driving your own car can provide at a lower cost. This is what Gen X and Y are demanding now. Our future customers have managed through lifestyle choices and smart technology to change our whole way of thinking about travel choices in a very short time.

Bus Australia Network



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This week in Canberra it was suggested in the Canberra Times, that rather than building the ACT light rail system, which will be old technology by the time it is built, to begin to invest now in a future autonomous fleet of vehicles that can deliver on demand services in the suburbs and through smart technology, collect the passenger from the same general vicinity to where they want to go, when they want to go. Will this be the future bus business or part of it?

How bus operators deal with these challenges and plan for the future of their business - how Governments respond to the challenges outlined above and work with Industry to make sure our cities and regions are planned – how we ensure that we have the right investment made into the right transport infrastructure and services – how we keep up with modern technology – these are questions that will be brought to the table at the Singapore Conference.

Singapore is about keeping bus operators and suppliers and Governments ahead of the game. Ahead of the fast changes and developments that will happen over the next twenty years. To be ready and prepare you to transition your business to what will be a much different business environment in Australia and the Asia Pacific.

Make the investment in your business and your industry. See you in Singapore.

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