4 August 2022

Ms Emma Johnston
Secretary to the Committee
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Dear Ms Johnston,

RE: Submission to the Select Committee on Public and Active Transport

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia working to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. It is the pre-eminent voice for the public's health in Australia and seeks to drive better health outcomes through increased knowledge, better access and equity, evidence informed policy and effective population-based practice in public health.

The Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) is the only professional association specifically for people interested or involved in the practice, policy, research and study of health promotion. Included in our aims is to contribute to discussion, debate and decision-making on health promotion policy, practice and research and advocate for evidence-informed approaches.

We thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Legislative Council of South Australia Select Committee on Public and Active Transport. As per PHAA's Low Emissions and Active Transport Policy Position Statement, PHAA and AHPA support the development and implementation of measures to encourage uptake of active and public transport options and discourage the use of private motorised vehicles. The transport sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and pollution causing respiratory and cardiovascular disease, and our reliance on private motor vehicles is also a major contributor to the lack of physical activity in Australia. Increased use of public and active transport delivers direct and indirect benefits for personal, community, and environmental health. [1, 2]

In our submission, we focus on element (b): The role of government in enabling and encouraging active transport. We have arranged our response by the four subpoints under this element.

Measures to enable more participation

We recommend the following measures to encourage active transport which are aligned with the Heart Foundation's Blueprint for an Active Australia [3] and the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030. [4]

- Provision of quality infrastructure for walking and cycling (safe, connected cycle and walkways, separated from motor vehicles where possible; maintenance and monitoring of safe crossings to support children's active transport to school)
- Social marketing to normalise cycling and walking as means of transport, educate about reduced morbidity and mortality associated with cycling, and change the perception that special gear is needed to cycle
- Improved availability of safe urban green space, including shaded and protected walkways
- Avoiding unnecessary restrictions on cycling such as requirements to carry identification.

We recommend the following measures to encourage use of public transport:

- Making it as cost effective (affordable and at least no more costly) and amenable (easy to use, quick and convenient) as private cars.
- Making public transport infrastructure attractive for use by ensuring adequate capacity, coverage, frequency, ease of access.
- Making public transport more amenable through:
  o Well designed and maintained graffiti-free and secure buses, light and heavy trains and stops/stations
  o Greening of stops and stations (including shade-producing trees) to adapt to the heating climate
  o Improving actual and perceptions of personal safety
  o Accommodating the transport of bicycles.
- Integrating walking and bicycle use with public transport by designing an extensive, well maintained, safe to use, and secure network of walking and cycle ways. This includes a network that is:
  o Free from obstacles, separated from high-speed traffic
  o Well lit, patrolled
  o Linked with existing transport corridors and other networks
  o Follows the routes that people tend to use (rather than following vacant usable land).

Use of private vehicles will also need to be actively discouraged by policies that increase inconvenience and prioritise active and public transport over private motor vehicle use. Specific examples include:

- Fees or charges that discourage use of vehicles, particularly discouraging entry into and parking in central cities, or where access to frequent and reliable public transport is possible
- Subsidies and tax rebates for people and businesses that provide active transport and public transport options and support for themselves or their employees. Specific strategies for employers to encourage staff to use active transport may include not providing vehicles or parking as part of employee benefits (with exception of disabled parking), offering cycle use as part of employment packages instead, and/or ensuring appropriate infrastructure for cyclists (secure bike parking, change rooms).

The effect on community health and wellbeing

Increased use of active transport confers direct and indirect benefits for personal, community and environmental health. [5, 6] **Direct benefits derive from increased physical activity, reduced traffic congestion, and reduced exposure to particulate and other air pollution and noise pollution.** The extensive reliance on private motor vehicles built into urban design is a major contributor to the lack of physical activity in Australia, and motor vehicle transport also contributes to the risk of respiratory diseases (e.g. asthma) and cardiovascular disease through reduced air quality. Regular physical activity is associated with enhanced health and reduced risk for all-cause mortality and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, ischaemic stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon cancers, osteoporosis and depression, as well as promoting psychological wellbeing. [2, 7] Encouraging both active transport and public transport use can increase physical activity, as public transport users typically also report higher levels of walking than car commuters (e.g. because they walk to and from stops or stations). [8]

Indirect benefits from active and public transport include building social capital and improving social connectedness, as well as reduced greenhouse emissions to mitigate climate change (see section below). Improvements to social capital and connectedness occur because people may interact with others whom they see on shared journeys or while walking/biking around their neighbourhoods. [9] This has the potential to reduce socio-economic inequalities (by facilitating social inclusion and wellbeing) [10, 11] and has mental health benefits as it reduces peoples' sense of insularity. [12] Ultimately, a well-developed and effective transport system could result in reduced commuting time which would provide improved social benefits. [13] There is also evidence that making commercial streets more walking and cycling friendly is good for business and good for the local economy. [14]

Access to clean, safe and affordable public transport is also an equity issue. All people need access to employment, services, recreation and social interaction. Current public transport services cater mainly for people living in cities, with fewer services for rural and regional people, those living in outer suburbs, and those needing to travel across or tangential to the central business districts require interurban and inter suburban public transport. Having to travel to an urban centre to travel out again is wasteful of both energy and people's time.

The effect on climate change mitigation

The transport sector is a major contributor to global warming, responsible for 19% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Australia in the year to December 2021 (91 of 488 Mt CO_2-e). [1] Light duty vehicles (cars, vans and utes) are the largest contributor to transport emissions in Australia, accounting for 62% of all transport emissions in 2019. [15] Reductions in private motorised transport through increased participation in public and active transport thus presents a sizeable opportunity for reducing GHG emissions. Research has shown that people who walk or cycle have lower carbon footprints – for example, people who cycle on a daily basis have 84% lower carbon emissions from all their daily travel than those who did not. [16] If you compare the lifecycle emissions of travel modes (taking into account the carbon generated by making a vehicle, fuelling it and disposing of it), emissions from cycling can be more than 30 times lower per trip than driving a fossil fuel car, and ten times lower than driving an electric car. [16] Promoting active transport has the potential to reduce GHG emissions from road transport much more quickly than technological measures such as shifts to electric vehicles, which is critical given the urgency of moving to 'net zero' emissions and limiting global warming to 1.5°C. [17]

Measures to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

Key principles to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists are to reduce vehicle speeds, reduce traffic volumes (exposure to vehicles), and decrease the likelihood of collisions. This can be achieved through traditional engineering measures such as t**raffic calming, intersection treatments, speed restrictions and separation of motorised traffic from slower active traffic**. [18, 19] The AustRoads report *Integrating Safe System with Movement and Place for Vulnerable Road Users* provides detailed guidance. There is also increasing evidence, including from South Australia, that placemaking[1] approaches may improve safety by reducing speeds and traffic volumes. [20] Both traditional engineering measures and placemaking approaches can make active transport more appealing. Placemaking is also considered to have economic benefits, by attracting people to places of business. [20] Motor vehicle design may contribute to pedestrian and cyclist safety through active and passive safety systems that can help to prevent crashes and/or minimise injuries to pedestrians or cyclists [21] - although note again our earlier point about the slow rate of vehicle fleet turnover that can limit the influence of new vehicle technologies. Finally, public transport is the safest mode of road travel, based on crash exposure risk, so encouraging mode shift from cars to public transport will also help to increase the safety of all road users. [22]

The PHAA and AHPA appreciate the opportunity to make this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require additional information or have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

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[1] Placemaking is a design approach that seek to attract and encourage people to spend more time in places through measures ranging from painted road murals to re-designs of space to reclaim substantial parts of roads for people-oriented activities (e.g. by creating shared spaces, increasing footpath space, restricting vehicle access).

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