

ISSUE: PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Council on the Ageing (COTA) NSW Policy Position

COTA NSW supports the right of older people to access public and community transport in all locations of NSW. Because such transport is often crucial in enabling older people to meet their needs, it should be universally accessible, adequate, affordable, reliable and safe. It should enable older people to readily meet their needs for health and community services as well as participate in the social and cultural life of their community. It should be aligned to older peoples' capacities, so that it can be safely used by older people, even when they have physical or mental limitations.

Rationale for COTA NSW's policy position

- A consistent and well documented complaint of older people is that public and community transport in NSW is inadequate, particularly in coverage, accessibility and frequency of services.
- The ability of older people to maintain their independence and participate in the social and cultural life of the community is greatly enhanced by the availability of good public and community transport which can directly or indirectly contribute to the health and well-being of older people.
- Inadequacies in public and community transport lead to heavy dependence on cars and private transport, such as taxis. As people age, factors such as loss of license or cost of running a car means that many older people do not have access to a car or anyone to drive them and cannot afford a taxi. Public and community transport becomes even more important with age.
- Distances to public transport are reported by many older people to be excessive and hazardous, putting older people, particularly frail older people and those with mobility problems, at risk.

Actions COTA NSW Calls For

- Development and implementation of innovative and efficient transport options in all areas (but particularly in regional, rural and remote areas) that increase the coverage and accessibility of public transport for older people.
- Support and promote the work of the NSW Department of Transport's Accessible Transport Advisory Committee (ATAC).
- Expedite the upgrading of accessibility measures at train stations through the Transport Access Program.
- Undertake a review of the Isolated Patient Transport and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTASS).
- Ensure that public transport information is disseminated to the public in plain English and a range of other languages, both electronically and in hard copy print formats.
- Provide funding to local Councils to improve access to transport by upgrading unsafe footpaths, inadequate street lighting and other impediments to safe access, and provide sufficient suitable parking areas for people with disabilities.
- Encourage all transport providers to implement staff training on the experiences and needs of older transport users.