

ISSUES PAPER

ACCESS TO TRANSPORT



Transport disadvantage is a significant issue throughout much of the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern NSW, particularly in suburbs with low socio-economic indicators.

The diversity of settlement and the vast distances across the region has resulted in many people experiencing geographic and social isolation. Groups of people most vulnerable to this isolation are:

- young people
- people living with physical or mental illness or disability
- people living on income support payments, pensions or low incomes
- older people
- carers of older people and people with a disability
- single parent households with young children
- people experiencing an emergency or crisis

Access to reliable and affordable public transport is inequitable throughout the region, with some areas having good access to free transport, and others having access to only one bus service daily with fares which make regular transport inaccessible.

Some villages in regional parts of NSW have no public transport options leaving residents to rely on private vehicles to access to essential services, education and employment opportunities, and recreational activities.

With the real cost of attaining a Learner driver license exceeding \$1,000¹, combined with the cost of maintaining and running a vehicle at approximately \$200/week², car ownership creates a significant financial burden for low-income households.

TRANSPORT INEQUALITY IMPACTS

Difficulties caused by the lack of public transport:

- Inability to access health and medical services.
- Inability to take advantage of educational opportunities including preschool for young children, and vocational and tertiary education such as TAFE and University.
- Inability to access training including work experience and apprenticeships.
- Barriers to employment opportunities. For example, there are employment opportunities in the industrial zone at South Nowra, but public transport access to the area is very limited. A journey that takes 12-20 minutes by car can take over 2 hours by bus.
- Inability to participate in social and community events, leading to social isolation and increased incidence and severity of mental illness.
- Difficulty and danger for women and families escaping domestic violence.

¹ Driver Knowledge Tests (2019)

² NCOSS (2019)

CASE STUDY

John* is a man in his late 20s who has been unemployed since leaving school at 17.

John has a partner and three young children and lives at Sanctuary Point in the Bay and Basin area of the Shoalhaven. Some months ago, John was fortunate enough to secure a full-time job as a factory hand with a company located at South Nowra. He earns a low wage but enjoys the work, and particularly enjoys the comradeship of his fellow workers.

The only bus out of Sanctuary Point in the early morning is at 6:35am, and this does not get him to South Nowra in time to walk the 20 minutes to his worksite before his shift begins.

John has no choice but to drive the family's only car – an older model sedan for the 60km round trip. Due to their tight budget, he is often unable to buy sufficient petrol for the week.

Therefore, several times a week, John will spend the night in his car, rather than drive home. This impacts on his family, who not only miss having him at home, but are also trapped at home because they have no vehicle.

* Name has been changed for privacy reasons.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Free shuttle services, similar to the existing free 'Gong Shuttle' for regions across South East NSW. For example, linking Bomaderry Train Station with Nowra CBD, TAFE Campuses, University of Wollongong Shoalhaven Campus and Shoalhaven Hospital (enabling patients and families from outside the region to take advantage of services at the Cancer Care Centre at Shoalhaven Hospital).
- Improved community access to public transport, with increased public transport options commensurate with population growth.
- Development of new models of public and private transport to suit the needs of people in regional and rural areas, including smaller buses with flexible routes; for example, extend the On Demand services on trial in Bega and Eden.
- Increased frequency and improved reliability of rail services to and from Sydney. This will improve access to employment opportunities and health and other services.
- Investment in current transport infrastructure to ensure disability access at all railway stations.
- Broaden the Regional Excursion Daily (RED) Ticket program to include people on JobSeeker and Youth Allowance.
- Extension of the South Coast Rail line to Ulladulla. This would not only improve access for Shoalhaven residents, but would help to build the vital tourism industry in the area.

