

## Community Transport - Our Shared Vision<sup>1</sup>

***Community Transport is recognised as a specialist door-to-door service that enhances wellbeing and is available to all who need it in the ACT and surrounding regions.***

Community Transport is a specialist service that is an alternative to, and distinct from, other forms of public, mass, and private transport available in the ACT. Community transport is primarily about relationships and about putting **relationships at the centre of meeting people's transport needs**. Community transport providers build relationships with service users. They work to understand service user's health and social needs in order to facilitate a **personalised, effective service**.

Community Transport recognises that transport is a **social determinant of health** and treats social needs – for connection to community, family and friends – as vital to health and wellbeing. Therefore, Community Transport is not limited to transporting people to and from medical appointments. Rather, community transport is a means by which people who are otherwise unable to access community facilities and social activities are supported to connect with their community. This involves offering transport outside of nine to five hours and a recognition that people living in the ACT may have need to travel into the broader New South Wales region. At its core, community transport takes a **holistic understanding of wellbeing**.

Recognising the importance of transport to people's wellbeing also means that, though it is targeted, **eligibility for community transport should be broadly needs-based**.

Community transport should not be limited to people who have a mobility impairment, are elderly and/or who have access to an individualised funding package. Community transport should be available to all people who cannot safely or effectively access other forms of transport and this will include people who are living on low incomes and who do not have access to other transport options.

Community transport is able to provide an appropriate level of service to people who have experienced mental ill health and people who have experienced crisis. Community transport is informed by a **human rights** understanding that all people are entitled to appropriate and accessible transport.

### **Personalised Service – some examples**

- Enabling continuity of service – having the same driver available for a service user, to allow relationships to form and grow
- Changing drivers for a service user if requested
- Knowing and respecting the service user's preference for (for example) travelling alone or with others; music/radio in the car; level and extent of conversation with driver
- Having an approved protocol plan in place if a service user does not come to the door at the time of a scheduled pick up to check on the wellbeing of the individual.

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<sup>1</sup> This document outlines our shared vision for Community Transport in the ACT. It was developed following a focus group facilitated by COTA and the ACT Council of Social Service with not-for-profit Community Transport providers and representatives from People with Disabilities ACT and the Flexible Bus service.

## Excellence in service delivery

Personalised service occurs at every stage of the transport system – including booking. In practice this means providing meaningful information to people when a requested service cannot be provided. People contacting community transport providers should be able to expect to speak with an individual who can clearly explain service capacity and not have their call answered by an automated service. Calls should not involve lengthy hold times.

Excellence in service delivery means that people are able to book their trips in advance and that they have reasonable wait times for service.

Excellence in service delivery also means that providers of community transport are access points into the wider community service system, able to make recommendations and share knowledge about a broad suite of relevant community services and programs.

Excellence in personalised service means that community transport providers regularly seek comprehensive feedback on services from service users to understand what needs exist and how they can be better met.

## Challenges, constraints and opportunities

Community transport faces unique challenges through the introduction of an individualised funding model in aged care and disability services which not only has the potential to limit eligibility of service users, but also to limit the services that those eligible for funding can access.

Any responses to this changing context for provision of community transport must be driven by a desire to maintain and extend the standards of excellence for this specialised service. This was a key theme of the Community Transport Workshop on 28 April, where participants – including the Minister – noted that moves to closer integration across transport systems should be adopted if and when change would improve access, innovation, quality, efficiency and positive outcomes for the people who use the service.

Indeed, the social outcomes of community transport will also generate a longer-term economic benefit. This is because sustaining community connections maintains mental and physical wellbeing, builds informal networks of support and contributes to deferring or avoiding reliance on costly health services.

Community transport is a unique form of transport – it is not public transport ‘on the cheap’, nor is it simply a subsidised form of ride share. Community transport serves people in our community who cannot effectively or safely access other forms of transport. To the extent that this is so, community transport addresses a need that will otherwise go unmet for members of our local community.

While the present context is marked by challenges it also presents an opportunity to make sure that transport is conceptualised as vital to social and infrastructure policy.



Communities@Work

