



Northern Territory Council of Social Service

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It's a long wait for the bus!

Community Sector organisations continue to be concerned about the inadequate transport services on offer in Central Australia and across the whole of the Territory.

“These issues have been on the public radar for a number of years, but the situation has generally remained the same”, said Central Australian Policy Officer for NTCOSS, Jonathan Pilbrow today.

“People continue to miss out on public transport in the larger centres in the NT because there are no bus routes close to their homes. Some town camp residents in Alice Springs are more than two kilometres from a public bus stop. In regional towns like Tennant Creek there are no public bus services at all.”

“The lack of availability of public and community transport forces low income people to rely on other more expensive forms of transport, such as taxis and minibuses, to meet their everyday needs.” It can be particularly hard for mothers and their babies to get into town for shopping and accessing services, when they do not have access to public transport”, said Mr Pilbrow. There are also significant issues for people getting home from hospital, particularly late at night, who often have mobility issues.

Community organisations face enormous pressure to plug the gaps left by inadequate transport services. These organisations receive regular requests to transport people for essential tasks such as shopping and banking, or to get to medical services. However they are often unable to assist since they are not funded for this purpose. Those who are able to help find that providing this service is very time consuming, and costly in terms of human and financial resources.

NTCOSS conducted some transport consultations in 2009, and this issue was seen as critical across regional towns in the NT. Agencies identified that more bus routes and a greater frequency of services are needed for the system to be fully effective. “Affordable and accessible bus services are essential for disadvantaged Territorians to obtain essential services, seek and maintain employment, and simply do their weekly shopping.”

“The current public bus service falls well short of what is required. “The limited service currently provided must be improved, with a view to increasing hours of operation and frequency of service.”

Towards the end of last year, the NT Government conducted a consultation process in relation to the development of a regional transport strategy, and NTCOSS believes that it is critical that we see some concrete solutions to improve the public transport system as a result of this process.

“The upcoming May 2010 NT Budget, presents an enormous opportunity for the Government to make public transport more affordable and accessible”, concluded Mr Pilbrow.

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