

MOVING PEOPLE

➤ *Across Australia*



Bus and Coach Industry
Long Distance, Charter and Express





MOVING PEOPLE IS WHAT WE DO



The Australian Bus and Coach Industry

The Australian bus and coach industry carries more than 1.5 billion passengers over a distance of 18 billion kilometres annually. The bus and coach industry employs more than 40,000 people in bus and coach operations, manufacturers and suppliers.

The Bus Industry Confederation (BIC)

The Bus Industry Confederation (BIC) is the peak national body representing the interests of Australian bus and coach industry operators, manufacturers and suppliers.

As the primary voice of the bus and coach industry in Australia the BIC works with all levels of Government, regulatory authorities, the industry and the community to:

- > Encourage investment in public transport infrastructure and services.
- > Coordinate and make more effective existing Federal, State and Local Government policies and programs that relate to passenger transport.
- > Improve public understanding of the contribution made by the bus and coach industry to Australia's economy, society and environment.
- > Ensure that the accessibility and mobility needs of Australians are met, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.
- > Ensure that buses and coaches operate safely and effectively.

The Coach Sector – Economic Contribution

The coach sector of the bus and coach industry comprises long distance and regional, rural, tourism, charter and express intercity services which contribute more than \$5 billion dollars to the Australian economy encompassing almost 16 million nights of tourism enjoyed by almost half a million international and more than 1.5 million domestic travellers.¹

In the coach sector more than 5,000 coaches are in operation nationally, with a rolling stock value of more than \$2 billion.²

On average:

- > International visitors travelling by coach stay for 26 nights and spend \$8,246 on their trip; an annual contribution of more than \$2.3 billion to the Australian economy;³
- > International visitors travelling on charter or tour coach services average 11 nights and spend \$8,166 on their trip; this equals annually more than 2.5 million nights of tourism and a contribution of almost \$2 billion to the Australian economy spread mostly between the NT, QLD and NSW.⁴

These figures compare favourably with aircraft travellers who spend less time in the country, 16 nights, and on average spend less money during their visits to Australia, \$6,933 a visitor.⁵

The BIC is seeking a partnership approach with the Federal and State Governments to build on the high value return bus and coach tourism delivers.

1 Tourism Research Australia, Transport Facts Sheet, 2008
2 Bus Industry Confederation Association Members Survey, 2009
3 Tourism Research Australia, Transport Facts Sheet, 2008
4 Tourism Research Australia, Transport Facts Sheet, 2008
5 Tourism Research Australia, Transport Facts Sheet, 2008

MOVING PEOPLE: STRATEGIC ACTION



> A National Land Transport Tourism Plan

The BIC supports the development and implementation of a National Land Transport Tourism Plan to form an integral part of the National Long Term Tourism Strategy.

BIC proposes the development of this plan in strategic partnership with organisations including the National Tourism Alliance, State Tourism Councils and the Australian Regional Tourism Network.

The Plan will promote the opportunities available to domestic and inbound tourists for land transport based tourism.

Key aspects of the proposed Plan are:

- > Facilitating international best practice in the land tourism sector
- > Infrastructure investment and taxation
- > Marketing
- > Research
- > Employment and Skills Shortages

Infrastructure Investment

Targeted investment in transport and tourism infrastructure is required from the Federal and State Governments to make Australia a world class and traveller friendly destination.

Investment in coach and rail terminals in each state capital and major regional centres will provide world class facilities where travellers can set down, plan accommodation, purchase tickets and obtain information about attractions. This needs to occur in a modern, sleek and attractive environment.

The trend in recent times has seen arrival points for coaches in capital and regional cities being pushed further into the outskirts of these cities, which is not conducive to coach tourism.

The BIC has identified investment in coach facilities as a responsibility of State and Local Government Tourism bodies and views the implementation of the National Tourism Planning Guide as an opportunity for this responsibility to be clearly defined.

There is a need to put in place a nationally consistent planning approach to the provision of coach facilities to accommodate inter-town and interstate services with airport, rail and cruise ship transfers and connections to ensure the whole of the trip for coach passengers is seamless and accessible.

The BIC believes infrastructure investment should also have a focus on achieving efficiencies and mutually recognised standards between states for the integration of different modes of tourism, for example better linkages between the cruise ship and coach sectors.

Taxation

The BIC supports taxation incentives to encourage investment in tourism infrastructure by tourism providers through measures such as accelerated depreciation and capital write off on class three accommodation, tourism premises and vehicle depots for coach tourism operators.

The BIC supports a review and reform of the tax burden on tourism businesses as an important industry contributor to the Australian economy.

Marketing

The marketing of land transport tourism options is a key aspect of the proposed National Land Transport Tourism Plan. The aim is to educate inbound tourists before they arrive and domestic tourists about land transport options available from each capital city and major tourist destination.

The BIC supports the documenting of unique land transport tourism experiences in Tourism Australia's "There's Nothing Like Australia" campaign and all future campaigns.

In addition to this campaign the BIC calls for a stronger focus in tourism marketing efforts, on the opportunities available for land transport based travel particularly geared towards national park and regional tourism through the development of a "Great Australian Journeys" package which combines road and rail tourism experiences.

Research

The BIC supports the development of the National Tourism Research Agenda (NTR Agenda) as part of the Federal Government's coordinated national approach to developing an understanding of the tourism sector between Federal, State and local tourism bodies.

The BIC supports the pilot research being undertaken as part of the NTR Agenda in the Flinders Ranges and Cairns identifying the most appealing tourism experiences for visitors to Australia. This research should include perceptions of different modes of travel within tourism experiences and awareness of alternatives for destination to destination travel, e.g. road and rail journeys.

The BIC calls for greater coach sector involvement and participation in the NTR Agenda process and believes a significant project involving the coach sector should form part of the work flowing from the development of the Agenda.



MOVING PEOPLE: STRATEGIC ACTION

The BIC seeks that the value of various modes of transport to regional tourism be measured as an extension of the Transport Fact Sheet undertaken by Tourism Research Australia.

This project would see a dedicated tourism survey developed and undertaken annually to identify land transport tourism trends and statistics. This could then form part of the national tourism information database and assist in the development of future investment and planning decisions for Governments and the industry.

The BIC believes Federal and State Government funding should be provided on a recurrent basis to support this important data collection requirement.

Employment and Skills Shortages

In 2009 the Australian bus and coach industry launched a promotional campaign titled “Day in the Life of” promoting employment opportunities with bus and coach based businesses to address employee and skills shortages in the industry.

As part of this campaign the industry identified skill shortages for drivers, diesel mechanics and management staff and in the short term has identified a number of opportunities to address these skill shortages.

- > The BIC supports a national education campaign to promote the new Passenger Vehicle Transportation Award to promote the employment, wages and conditions available.
- > The BIC supports the development of a dedicated promotion for working and backpacker holidays in the international marketplace.
- > The BIC supports the redefinition of the term Working Holiday Visa to better reflect the nature of the permit and establish a clear differentiation between travellers wishing to work in Australia while on holiday and potential long-term skilled migrants wishing to ‘test the waters’ by working in Australia over a short period.
- > In the longer term the bus and coach industry would like to work with tourism and training organisations to attract people to work in the sector through a promotional campaign and investigate the opportunities for the development of specific training qualifications where they are required.
- > The BIC believes heavy vehicle drivers holding combination and rigid license equivalents should be added to the list of occupations in demand for General Skilled Migration applicants.





INDUSTRY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



The coach sector faces a number of challenges to its productivity and ability to compete with other modes of travel and tourism. The BIC seeks the support of the Federal and State Governments in addressing the following challenges:

> **Vehicle mass and dimensions**

The BIC seeks increases to vehicle mass limits for buses and coaches to help the industry deal with the changing nature of our passenger task.

> **Vehicle access**

The BIC seeks a participatory role in the Tourism Access Working Group in order to address the problems of national parks access permits, airport access and cross border anomalies impacting on interstate operators.

> **Regional and remote social exclusion**

The BIC seeks a national review of passenger rail subsidies to determine the net value they bring in tourism revenue and the impact they have on coach services and consequent impact on social inclusion in regional and remote areas.

> **Accreditation**

The BIC supports the National Tourism Accreditation Framework and in the long run seeks the development of a coach specific module to fit into the Framework, within current operator accreditation systems in place in most jurisdictions.

> **Licensing and driver authority**

The BIC supports the development of a National Heavy Vehicle License and Driver Authority system that is mutually recognised by all States to facilitate seamless employment of drivers between States.

> **Disability standards for accessible public transport**

The BIC seeks recognition from the Federal and State Governments of the difference in the relative compliance burden of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport on non-route service operators.



> Vehicle Mass

The BIC seeks an increase in mass limits for all buses. In the past two decades, the TARE weight of all buses has increased as a result of the introduction of a range of mandatory vehicle standards related to accessibility, exhaust and noise emissions and safety.

In the past two decades the overall weight of children and adults has increased.

Between 1995 and 2005 the average weight of an adult male in Australia increased by 4 kilograms and the average weight of a female increased by 3 kilograms.

Almost 60 per cent of the adult population in Australia is overweight or obese with this figure predicted to increase to 65 per cent by 2020.

It is estimated that 20-25% of Australian children are either overweight or obese.

Despite these changes the legal Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) of bus and coaches has not changed, making it almost impossible to comply with legal mass limits and

this is made more difficult for coaches with no control over the weight of baggage stowed by passengers.

The legal mass issue is further magnified in the context of individual legal axle weights and the movement and management of people and luggage as they are loaded and unloaded from the bus.

Penalties associated with being over mass are very high and impact on the coach sector's commercial viability to operate. On most occasions the operator has no control over the weight of the vehicle and when operating at legal seating capacity is often outside the mass limits.

The BIC calls for the following increases according to vehicle type:

- > 2 Axle 16t GVM to 18t GVM
- > 3 Axle 22.5t GVM to 25t GVM
- > Other configurations to allow for innovative vehicle design

INDUSTRY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

> Vehicle Access

Tourism Access Working Group

The BIC seeks a participatory role for the coach sector in the Tourism Access Working Group established under the work plan for the Federal Government's National Long Term Tourism Strategy.

A “comprehensive and integrated approach that takes into account the needs of the tourism industry” as stated in the work plan needs to take into account the role of land transport tourism infrastructure in delivering tourism business and the BIC looks forward to our sector becoming involved in this process.

National Parks

The BIC seeks the development of a single permit system for access to all National Parks and calls for the current system to be reviewed under the regulatory reform and harmonisation process being undertaken as part of the National Long Term Tourism Strategy.

States across Australia have different requirements to gain access to National Parks. This creates duplication, excessive paperwork and administrative costs. This duplication and lack of a national approach is impacting on the viability of some coach operations to undertake National Park tours. This is compounded by the multitude of park guide training requirements to gain access to National Parks or the other alternative of paying the cost of a local guide to gain access.

Airports

The BIC supports a national approach to access to airports. Access to airports should be limited to accredited bus and coach operators only and this should be strongly enforced to minimise security risks.

Coach drivers should be able to park their vehicle and meet their group in the arrivals terminal or establish a group tour desk to direct passengers to the coach and provide an acceptable level of service provision.

Access fees should be reasonable and monitored to ensure fairness.

Cross border anomalies

The BIC supports a review of the cross border anomalies which exist between States with an aim to achieving a common national approach or, at a minimum, mutual recognition under the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

These anomalies impose unnecessary burdens on coach operators who conduct cross border services.

Areas in need of harmonisation include:

- > Vehicle standards
- > Accreditation requirements
- > Driver licensing
- > Driving hours





INDUSTRY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



> Regional and Remote Social Exclusion

Remote Area Services

The BIC supports the development of a land-based subsidy scheme for coach operators, equivalent to the Remote Air Service Subsidy (RASS) for aviation operators, where there is no direct access to rail or air travel in regional and remote Australia. The lack of a land-based scheme equivalent to the RASS, for bus and coach operators moving passengers and goods to regional and remote areas of Australia, is an oversight in urgent need of redress.

Some regional and remote areas, which could only be serviced by coach, have no services at all.

A service subsidy scheme of this nature would necessitate the development of a route map for regional and remote Australia applicable where:

- > no air and rail services exist
- > no coach services exist
- > unviable coach services exist
- > anti-competitive activities are taking place

Rail Subsidies

The BIC seeks a national review of passenger rail subsidies to identify their impact on existing coach services and routes and their value in tourism revenue measured against coach tourism revenue for similar routes.

These anti competitive subsidies provided to rail operators by State Governments impacts on the viability of bus and coach services in remote and regional areas and as a consequence compounds the problem of social exclusion for those towns without access to a railway station nearby.

Subsidies of up to \$250 a passenger exist on some routes and this, as well as removing the operating margin for vital bus and coach services providing transport access to remote and regional areas, takes tourism dollars out of regions by encouraging destination to destination tourism by rail or air.

Regional Accessibility Planning

The BIC supports the development of Regional Accessibility Planning Committees (RAPC) at the Local Government and regional level to assist in the determination of transport needs and planning of transport services in regional Australia.

The aim of RAPC is to generate better utilisation of existing transport services, make better use of

existing government funding and identify where social exclusion is occurring and provide a transport remedy as required.

The delivery of RAPCs requires Federal and State Governments to fund a RAPC co-ordinator role for 12-18 months in a Local Government area to form the committee, undertake the above analysis and develop a local transport plan.

RAPCs would be made up of Local Government, transport providers and stakeholders with the aim to develop local transport plans based on:

- > an audit of existing transport services and assets
- > a transport gap analysis

> Accreditation

The BIC supports the National Tourism Accreditation Framework for tourism businesses to lift the standard of the Australian tourism experience and inform potential customers.

The BIC will work with Governments towards the development of an enforceable accreditation module

for the bus and coach sector within the Tourism Accreditation Framework that aligns with current operator accreditation systems in each state to minimise duplication and compliance costs, raise industry standards and target rogue operators.



INDUSTRY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

> Licensing and Driver Authority

The BIC supports a National Heavy Vehicle License and Driver Authority system that is mutually recognised by all States to facilitate seamless employment of drivers between States.

The BIC also seeks a single national parks training course, including a formal Tourism Coach-Captain qualification to cover the entire national park system across Australia that is mutually recognised by all jurisdictions.



> Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport

The BIC seeks recognition from the Federal and State Governments of the different nature of the long distance, charter and express services provided and recognition of the difference in the relative compliance burden of the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport compared to route and school bus services.

burden on operators is significant. The accessible transport standards also impact on the luggage capacity of the vehicle and the mass of the vehicle which have operational and financial implications.

With the cost of purchasing and fitting a wheelchair lift on a coach estimated at \$50,000, the compliance

Unlike route bus service operators, who have the ability to factor DDA compliance costs into their contract bidding with State Governments, non-contracted long distance, charter and express operators must meet these costs on their own.

In order to address these issues BIC proposes:

- > A defined exemption from the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and specifically the Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport for chartered bus services as applied to chartered boat services, limousines, hire cars and small aircraft. At present charter services rely on the definition of a public passenger service for exclusion
- > The creation of a cross-operator DDA compliance pool, which would allow an operator the flexibility of calling on the services of other operators' services to meet the accessibility needs of passengers with disabilities
- > The retention of a tour operators' right to determine the suitability of a person with a disability taking part in a tour without fear of a complaint being made where infrastructure for the tour is inadequate or the nature of the tour is unsuitable, e.g. an adventure tour



TRATHMORE

WICKET

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AIR CONDITIONED

SCANIA

CB 80

custom

custom
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