



# ACTA

Australian Community Transport Association

# 2019 / 2020

# Annual

# Report

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# ACTA

Australian Community Transport Association

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In advocating for a self-sustaining community transport sector which allows access and participation for all people in Australia, 2019 / 2020 has been a year that clearly demonstrates the importance of a single but collaborative national voice for community transport.

It will come as no surprise to any interested party that aged care funding models remain the most significant risk to the sector. I make this point with consideration given to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is somewhat comforting that the language from the commonwealth appears to be changing in a manner that recognises the risk to the sector and more importantly to the end user; the thousands of people frail and or aged who need this service to live well and remain connected to their community.

In advocating for the continuation of block funding ACTA has recently developed an Issues Paper that articulates the specific problems and likely outcomes with a move away from an infrastructure type funding regime.

With ACTA leading this issue across the country the realisation of the impact to consumers, providers and communities is growing to a level that cannot be ignored. This sentiment is now being acknowledged by state governments and state leaders recognising the impact to their respective citizens and local infrastructure requirements.

As a sector we acknowledge and thank the commonwealth government for funding certainty until 2022 however we continue to encourage government for a firm way forward.

ACTA has been keenly following the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and has provided a response to the initial Consultation Paper where again the case for ongoing block funding has been made.

On a more positive note the sector received advice from the commonwealth that the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplement will be extended and will form part of future funding agreements. This is a very comforting outcome given the loss of such a supplement would result in a funding reduction of circa 13% to the sector and would have resulted in a significant reduction in community transport - with the most disadvantaged and regionalised missing out.

ACTA farewelled three Directors throughout the year, Rick Lawford from VICTAS Community Transport Association, Julie Mason from SACTA, and Graham McKercher from the ACT. On behalf of the Board I thank each departing Director, for their service and dedication to the sector over many years.



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ACTA also welcomed three new Directors, Rachel Thompson, and Christine Ryan from NSW (CTO) and Vivian Cunningham from Victoria (VICTAS).

It would be remiss of me not to mention the impact that COVID-19 has had on the sector. Prior to March 2020 the sector was in general operating in an environment where demand was greater than supply and with a significant increase in regulation, namely the new aged care standards. Overnight the community transport business model was turned on its head. It is important to note that the significant majority of community transport consumers are defined as vulnerable as are the thousands of volunteers who provide the bulk of the in-vehicle service.

Outstandingly the sector, as it continues to do, immediately adopted in response to the restrictions put into place by the State and Federal Governments to ensure the health and safety of staff, volunteers and consumers and that the risks to the ongoing sustainability of the sector was identified and minimised.

In difficult times such as these, funding security allowed organisations to make decisions that were in the best and only interest of the consumer and the community without any other consideration nor tension. Furthermore, as we all come through the other side of this issue, block funded essential community services will be ready to respond from day one with the appropriate level of skilled and experienced people and high-quality assets.

With that said, I also would like to acknowledge the support of the federal government in terms of their respective approach to CHSP and more specifically community transport services through the depths of COVID-19 and as the situation evolved. As the peak body we are extremely encouraged by the support and common sense accorded to the and sector as we together, with everybody else, continue to work through life with COVID-19.

Finally, I thank each of the ACTA Directors and Committee members for their tireless commitment. Being an active and supportive member of ACTA requires a significant amount of time, energy and resources and is often unrecognised. This level of commitment demonstrates the importance of a national peak body for this critical service provided to thousands of Australians wishing to remain independent within their community.

**Lyndon Stevenson**  
Chairman



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## New South Wales:

### NSW Matters

- There were some changes this year at the CTO, with long time Chair Bethany Simmonds stepping down and CEO Di Hallett resigning both in June.
- TfNSW have only extended contracts for 6 months, taking our contracts to 31 December 2020. They have done this so that a new contract can be renegotiated with service providers.
- There were a few changes to staff at TfNSW this year. Former Point to Point Commissioner Barbara Wise is still heading up the division responsible for Community Transport, but those reporting in to her have changed, with some staff only their for short periods of time in an acting capacity.
- CTO engaged 180 degrees to conduct research and projects in to the cost to services of volunteers, social return on investment and industry benchmarking across a number of metrics. These reports are current sitting with TfNSW for review and will be widely released in the very near future. CTO have commissioned 180 degrees to collect and collate the impacts of COVID-19 on services with attention to be given to staff and volunteer impacts, financial impacts, impacts on clients, wellness and reablement amongst others.
- The NDIS Residual Transport Subsidy which was given to services to assist with subsidising the cost of transport for those without adequate transport allocations in their NDIS plans came to an end on 30 June 2020. It has been confirmed that this subsidy will not continue.
- The CTO held a conference in October in Campbelltown. The format of this conference was a little different to previous conferences and was well attended.

### National Issues

- CTO continues to be concerned about how the NDIS rollout occurred and the resulting lack of financial resources of participants in being able to access transport services. There is concern that the problems encountered in the NDIS rollout may occur in the near future in the Aged Care sector. CTO has been advocating for a continuation of recurrent and block funding at both a state and federal level.

### COVID-19 impacts

- COVID-19 has been the dominate issue facing all services providers this year. The CTO are working to capture those impacts to inform future continuity planning. pandemic responses and government policy.



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## **New South Wales:**

- Service providers have seen a dramatic drop off in demand for services in both metro and regional/rural areas. Demand is starting to return, but at different rates in different areas.
- TfNSW were initially hands off on the requirements of service providers in responding to COVID-19 risks. Additional requirements are now in place for service providers including cleaning and sanitising, social distancing etc.
- TfNSW is reimbursing service providers for the additional costs associated with meeting the mandated cleaning and sanitising requirements.
- The State Government have not mandated compulsory mask wearing, but have strongly recommended the those catching public transport wear a mask. As Community Transport is a legislated mode of public transport in NSW this means that wearing masks is strongly recommended whilst receiving community transport services.

**Rob Lake—Board Member**

**Rachel Thompson—Board Member**

**Christine Ryan—Board Member**



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## Queensland:

### Updates and Developments

It would be fair to say that this year is a year in two halves, pre and post COVID-19.

Pre COVID our continued focus on obtaining correct funding and or access to NDIS client's core supports for transport. Whilst some changes that were made should and in most parts beneficial to these clients the changes arrived with caveats attached. Whilst this is still a step forward having to use a support worker to access core support funding for transport will quickly erode support funds that could and should be used to assist the participation and social inclusion. Whilst I should be recognised that the government is attempting to right the wrongs of the past the complete lack of consultation with the peak body is still bewildering. What we basically have as a funding process is a quasi-block funding arrangement in which the holder of the plans will capture more of the funds and the client's choice and control still isn't considered. Independence growth will be thwarted as you will require a support worker to access the core support funds for transport.

Queensland government has introduced a Portable long service leave tax. This was recently passed and whilst not yet completely through parliament it will be. For community transporters who made submissions to be excluded from being captured in the net, this was unsuccessful. The impost will be a tax on all wages irrespective of where your funding is derived from of 1.35%. Whilst no real information on the who, the how and the when is readily available, this is a further impost when the taxi and ride share industries are not liable for these additional charges. To add further pain to the sector the Taxi industry has been gifted a 21 million dollar grant to replace wheelchair taxi vehicles over the next 3 years. Further to this even though the access to core support funding for NDIS participants is available, the TSS scheme has been extended to Oct 2021.

The community transport sector in Queensland did secure funding of 7.7 million after July 1 2019 for transport for those clients that did not obtain NDIS funding but still had some disability or mobility requirements. Whilst 67,000 NDIS plans have been provided there are still over 800,000 people within Queensland that have some disability. The sector was extremely grateful that our agitation has been listen to and addressed.

The proposed Deloitte's review of the community transport sector in Queensland has not been released and at this point in time I am unsure if it has been completed, as the Department of Communities during COVID19 was overwhelmed like most. I expect that this will be raised once all things COVID settle down.

Covid has dominated the second half of the year and some if not all sectors have been dealing with the fallout of this. Community transport operators that had a large reliance on volunteers almost stopped service overnight especially if their volunteers were in an age bracket that were susceptible to the virus. Paid workforce operators continue to offer services but numbers were drastically reduced. PPE quickly became an issue as did complying with the social distancing rules



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## Queensland:

applying to passengers and the addition of increased sanitation and hygiene procedures. Entire fleets were still being used but delivered very small trip numbers. The conflicting information that has been flowing from states and federally has made choices at time quite difficult to make and or understand. Meetings were held with providers that could share issues, concerns and positive outcomes. The process managed by TDSA was very well welcomed and received.

### Infrastructure changes and resource Changes

The audit requirements and charges for NDIS transport is exorbitant and for smaller providers especially in rural and remote locations will ensure that less providers will be available in the system to source. This issue still requires attention.

Department of Communities in Queensland has now a very experienced person in this office who clearly understand the needs and requirements of a successful and solid community transport sector. Previously from NSW transport his knowledge and interaction with providers has been most welcomed. The area looking after CT is finally obtaining some traction and recognition. Further work is required by TDSA to ensure that we continue to leverage of these recent changes. Access to Ministers at times is still challenging and even more so with COVID. As this year is an election year hopefully we will be able to continue to voice our issues with both sides.

### Issues

The sector continues to be short changed with length of current contracts and this issue does not allow for good or pragmatic business decisions. Community transport is weighed heavily with leased assets and short term contracts remove the business planning cycle to mimic the funding cycle. Five year contracts are required and needed to secure correct business planning and purchasing. Security for the client base must always be our first consideration. We must not allow transport block funding to be removed.

Having a position paper to deliver at a federal level and also within the states and having success with the recent SACs announcement are just two of the wins that we have had this year as is the acknowledgement that block funding in some format is part of the current governments modelling. We need to continue the push that block funding for the aged care sector remains block funded.

I want to thank my fellow directors for their contribution to the position paper and their work in general overall. Whilst we are all volunteers the quality of what we have achieved should never be underestimated. We have brought about change and continue to champion the issues of our clients. Well done.

**Terry O'Toole**

**Board Member**





# ACTA

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## S T A T E R E P O R T S

### South Australia:

The 2019/20 year has been both one of consolidation & change for the SActa board, having a highlight of the Transport Forum in October 2019 through to the resignation of long-standing member & Chair Julie Mason. Unfortunately for the sector there continues to be a level of uncertainty around both future funding & how Community Transport may look into the future.

- SActa held its Biannual Community Transport forum on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2019 at the Lakes Resort Hotel. The theme was “Navigating the Future” & had a clear focus on what challenges & opportunities are ahead for the Community Transport sector. Guest speakers included the Hon Stephan Knoll MP – Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Local Planning & Minister for Planning, as well as industry leaders from the RAA, ACTA, NATSIC & speakers on the future of electric vehicle technology. SActa also launched its revamped website at the forum. The forum was a great success with over 60 delegates attending & incorporated over a dozen trade exhibitions. Excellent feedback was received from the attendees, sighting a need for similar forums on Community Transport in the future.
- Community Passenger Network (CPN) contracts have been extended to mid-2022 to match the Federal Governments CHSP extensions. These contracts will however be split into 2 components as the Federal Government CHSP component will now come directly from the Federal Government. Whilst this some short-term contract certainty, SActa is continuing to advocate for longer term contracts for transport providers.
- The Under 65 state funding for transport (old HACC funding) is going through considerable change, with only a 7-month contract being issued to end of January 2021. This is due to a review of the current Under 65 y/o programs by DHS here in SA. The Dept has engaged a third party to look at how the programs in this funding contract may be envisioned in the future, engaging all parties to gather feedback & thoughts, with an initial survey already taking place going to all providers. This uncertainty combined with Covid-19 places both service providers & clients at risk into the future with the threat of funding ending or the Dept placing unrealistic expectations on service providers dependent on the results of the review.
- SActa held the Annual AGM at the RAA on November 19<sup>th</sup> 2019, with Julie Mason remaining as Chair. Board positions as below:
  - Position of Chair - Julie Mason (Yorke Peninsula Community Transport)
  - Position of Treasurer - Phil Tomney (COTA)
  - Position of Secretary - Marisa Ellks (Mount Barker District Council)
  - Committee Member - Craig Frost (Red Cross)
  - Committee Member - Charles Mountain (RAA)
  - Committee Member - Sidique Bah (Multicultural Communities Council of SA)
  - Committee Member - Samantha Herbert (City of Charles Sturt)
  - Committee Member - Justine O’Brien (City of Tea Tree Gully)



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**South Australia:**

- SActa continued to engage a paid staff member to monitor both the newly revamped SActa website as well as the SActa Facebook page to broaden the reach of SActa to both members & the general public.
- Both Julie Mason & Craig Frost continued to active members on the ACTA National board, contributing to several projects including changes to the constitution & ways of working for ACTA into the future. Position papers on block funding & NDIS transport issues have been welcomed by SActa members.
- All providers are being impacted by the stronger administrative demands that MAC and preparing for the new standards have created and the flow on pressures including additional costs this creates. These impacts have been fed back to government staff.
- Covid-19 impacts on the Community Transport sector continue to be felt by providers & the lasting impacts will continue to have repercussions leading into 2021.

SActa would like to acknowledge the work of retiring Chair Julie Mason. Over 5 years Julie has worked tirelessly to ensure the ongoing success of SActa & has been instrumental in the revamping of SActa as it continues to evolve. Julie also contributed in numerous ways to the ACTA board & will be very much missed by both peak body organisations. SActa wishes Julie all the best in her retirement.

**Craig Frost  
Board Member**



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## Victoria / Tasmania:

In 2019-2020 the Tasmanian and Victorian peak has made great strides forward in our key strategic goals of member engagement, advocacy and financial sustainability.

The VTCTA 'Steering Best Practice in Community Transport' Conference in Lancefield Victoria was delivered in late 2019. The conference included well respected speakers from a broad range of sectors relevant to Community Transport with a focus on diversity and inclusion, particularly of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and LGBTIQ+ communities. Sponsorship partnering exceeded expectations in supporting the conference and travelled to Victoria from near and far. Attendees also represented our membership across small and large not for profits along with local and state government and peak bodies. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and we look forward to the next time we can all gather together for networking and professional development.

Development of the VTCTA Advocacy Plan for the sector commenced at the 2019 Conference with Daniel Scoullar of Social Change Projects and was endorsed by the VTCTA Committee in June 2020. The key areas of the advocacy plan are CHSP funding equity for Victoria, retention of block funding in aged care and continuation of Equal Remuneration Order along with our community transport peak body ACTA.

These have been the key areas of focus for VTCTA and we are optimistic by the change of language from the commonwealth in regards to retention of block funding, where it appears they are starting to recognise the risk to the sector and the people who need this service to live well and remain connected to their community.

This plan identified the following as the most significant issue and or concerns for the membership; future aged care funding models (block funding) from the commonwealth, continuation of the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) supplement and CHSP funding equity for Victoria.

Our members endorsed at the 2019 AGM the name change of organisation from Victorian Community Transport Association (VCTA) to VICTAS Community Transport Association (VTCTA) to acknowledge both Victoria and Tasmania in our name. The organisation was rebranded with a new fresh and professional looking logo and branding.

When the global pandemic arrived in early 2020 our sector, our services and how we responded to the needs of the people we support fundamentally changed. VTCTA was in the fortunate position to use a flexible responsive approach to the needs of the membership and created avenues for information sharing, support and engagement.



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**Victoria / Tasmania:**

This took the form of regular virtual sector meetings created specifically for community transport providers and VTCTA members. The diversity of the speakers at these meetings was vast, from community transport providers sharing their stories, other peak bodies and Commissioners.

One of the positive outcomes of COVID-19 for VTCTA's was the increased level of member engagement and our ability to support the sector through the unexpected environment. We also developed a COVID-19 Document Bank and facilitated the sharing of resources within the sector.

Charity status was successfully gained in 2020 and this will open our opportunities for funding that will create further financial sustainability for VTCTA to continue to advocate and support the sector.

**Lyndon Stevenson—Board Member (TAS)**

**Viv Cunningham-Smith—Board Member (VIC)**



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## **Western Australia:**

Understandably, the last twelve months' priority for Community Transport in Western Australia has been a time of creating a stronger connection and communication within the sector as we pull together to support the Western Australian community.

The intention to engage with other community transport bodies and develop a WA provider Alliance Group now gathers momentum in post-pandemic recovery plans. Returning Community Transport to 'Business as Usual' is difficult and considering the impact of COVID-19 we need to make changes to ensure a better and stronger sector that will ensure the transport needs of the consumer is considered in future policy development .

Western Australian Community Transport providers maintain issues with long waiting lists for aged home care packages forcing CHSP funding to continue to cover the gaps in the meantime, Community Transport sustainability requires a commitment to the continuation of block funding beyond 2022.

Although in the early stages, our move towards a WA Community Transport Alliance as a collective group will be a high priority for FY20-21. I look forward to achieving a Western Australian Community Transport Alliance as our sector moves towards the creation of a sustainable Community Transport strategy.

**Phil Holman**  
**Board Member**



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**ACT:**

In many ways it is fitting that I open this report with the sentiment and statement that I closed with last year: *There is no magic formula other than a commitment and a willingness for all stakeholders to listen to the community and truly attempt to understand what we don't know – who is missing out and how can we truly integrate community transport into local infrastructure.*

A key focus of the ACT Community Transport Working Group-Alliance (TWG) throughout 2019/20 has been the collaborative advocacy work with ACTCOSS. This work relates to the ongoing work that stems from the ACTCOSS 'Wicked Problems Paper' of 2009, along with a number of related budget submissions over the years. This work also links to discussions in the TWG over a number of years that have also been focused on the need to better understand the evidence base to respond to complaints and issues around unmet need in community transport. Time shows us that fundamentally service access gaps and issues have not changed over the decades and are unlikely too, unless there is a greater understanding of 'transport disadvantage' within Government.

ACTCOSS and the TWG propose that the ACT Government undertakes a comprehensive needs assessment of transport disadvantage in the ACT. The assessment should consider the relationships between transport disadvantage and the different ways of moving around (by car, bus, rail, foot or mobility device, cycle, on demand and mass transit), planning for public spaces and infrastructure and changing travel patterns. This proposed study should explore the needs, preferences and practices of Canberrans with an emphasis on population groups who are acknowledged as likely to experience transport disadvantage. There is a need to consider which of the groups are most vulnerable during times of disruption, change to broader transport networks and who is most at risk of being completely disconnected.

The intensity of the 2019/2020 summer bush fire season and now the COVID-19 environment only signifies more than ever that there are many people who miss out on services or become physically isolated due to chronic health and other vulnerabilities and/or comorbidities. Transport systems that are truly integrated will understand transport shifting gaps such as older people at risk of losing their license, people living in particular areas of Canberra including areas of growth, where there is inadequate infrastructure to support the last mile of a journey. The impact of social distancing in community transport is having and will continue to have, an impact on meeting services demands.



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**ACT:**

The advocacy around a Transport Needs Analysis should provide an evidence base to inform government policy and investments in both transport and urban planning going forward, to ensure that they maximise the ability of people with barriers to travel getting where they need to go, as easily and freely as possible.

As you can see from the long term foot print that has championed the voice of community transport in the ACT, some change is not as rapid as is the ever changing world that we are currently living in, and that alone is reason to continue the advocacy that is required so that all members of the community can access transport – without disadvantage.

**Jo Cochrane**  
**Board Member**



# ACTA

Australian Community Transport Association

## S T A T E R E P O R T S

### **NATSIC:**

2019-2020 has been a year like no other for the globe.

The reporting period started with NATSIC, being successful in securing an NDIS, Information, Linkages and Capacity Building, Job Market Fund Grant, for the APY Lands in North West South Australia. This grant realised and cemented our social enterprise business plan.

In July 2019 NATSIC established our Community Health and Well-being program, to cater for our growing social investment activities around NDIS; donations activities and NATSIC community transport related advocacy and activities.

During the reporting period NATSIC secured grants from NSW CHSP growth fund round and another larger NDIS ILC Grant for the Tiwi Islands located 80kms offshore from Darwin. These grants secured NATSIC short to medium term operations.

During the first quarter of the reporting period NATSIC also established its Disability Sports Program, a small grants program to assist individuals, teams and clubs to participate in organised events. This program is self-funded and organised fund raisers are held to generate funds, to be re-distributed to program recipients.

NATSIC has cemented its Donations Program and during the reporting period has generated around \$1.1 Million dollars in essentials goods being donated to NATSIC, for distribution to First Nations communities throughout Australia. NATSIC thanks our partners who support this program by their contributions of essential goods that are needed. Items included, blankets, clothes, personal Hygiene, nappies, books, toys and backpacks full of items for kids who have been displaced from their home or community.

NATSIC supported Aboriginal communities in NSW during the bushfires during the reporting period with a staff being deployed for 12 weeks on the fire grounds as well as providing much needed goods and financial support to on the ground support services.

Whilst NATSIC had this new growth in our social activities, our transport programs continued. NATSIC attended and or presented at NSW CTO, SACTA and VCTA conferences and also at an International Disability Conference.

Whilst NATSIC was growing in its Social Enterprise activities a number of other programs came to an end and therefore staff were no longer able to be retained from these program areas.





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**NATSIC:**

COVID -19 pandemic has had an impact of NATSIC in relation to programs being delayed as access to our communities was halted, under the Biosecurity Measures that were put in place to protect our vulnerable First Nations communities. I am pleased to say that no NATSIC staff were stood down or lost their jobs during the reporting period due to COVID-19.

The biggest impact has been that NATSIC decided very early into the pandemic, to postpone our 2020 Transport Dreaming Conference - Connecting Nations, Driving Innovation which was to be held in Sydney. It has been rescheduled to April 2021.

Finally, NATSIC has rebranded its logo and this was to be formally launched at our 2020 Transport Dreaming Conference.

NATSIC like to thank all members of ACTA for their ongoing support and commitment to improving transport inequalities faced by First Nations people and communities.

May the second half of 2020-2021 Financial Year be a better year and that the new norms have a positive impact on CT providers throughout Australia

**Harry Harun & Jim Golden-Brown**  
**Board Members**



# ACTA

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## THE BOARD

### THE BOARD as at 30 June 2020:

#### Board Members:

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