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18 MacKenna Street,
Lyneham 2602
Australian Capital Territory

April 14, 2007

Mick Gentleman, MLA
GPO Box 1020,
Canberra 2601
Australian Capital Territory

Dear Mick Gentleman,

RE: INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES

I would like to take the opportunity to submit a few of my thoughts about Canberra's public transport system.

I have lived in Canberra for six years and in that time have never owned or regularly used a car (and indeed, two years ago I ceased to go in *any* car whatsoever). This way of life is possible in Canberra, for someone who is physically able, has some time to spare, and does not need to often travel beyond the local area (I live in the inner north, and if I did not, would have left Canberra a long time ago). I do not rely on the buses.

The urban design of Canberra makes it very difficult for people living in the majority of suburbs to live without a car; for the same reason, an effective public transport system is also a challenge.

However, just because it is a challenge doesn't mean it can't be done. Public transport is an essential service, and not something to treat as unimportant and leave half-done (as it currently is). The Terms of Reference (1a) of this inquiry mention ACTION's role as a mass transport provider, and providing transport for the masses is what it should be doing; at the moment, of course, it is not. It should be about providing more than just peak-time services to centres of business, and working towards being the mode of transport of choice for most trips of more than a few kilometres. For most people, who are not forced by economic or other reasons to catch buses, public transport is too far away, too infrequent, and too slow.

Fundamentally, a good public transport system relies on good urban design, and if Canberra continues to develop the way it currently is (i.e. towards a CBD surrounded by an ever-increasing expanse of suburbs) then providing one will become harder and harder. But we've got the city we've got, and have to make the most of it: so let's see ACTION provide the most reliable, comfortable, and extensive bus system in Australia — it is a political challenge, not a technical one.

Yours sincerely,

Sam Wilson