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Dr Hanna Jaireth
Secretary
Standing Committee on Planning and Environment
ACT Legislative Assembly Committee Office
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Dr Jaireth,

On behalf of Deane's Buslines Queanbeyan I wish to lodge the following submission for consideration as part of the Inquiry into ACTION Bus services and the ACT Government's Sustainable Transport Plan.

Deane's Buslines operate an extensive route and school bus network encompassing the Queanbeyan/Canberra region. Our major route service networks are Canberra City to Canberra Airport, Queanbeyan to Canberra Airport via Fyshwick, Queanbeyan City local route service (including LocalLink, a demand responsive bus service), Queanbeyan to Canberra City, Queanbeyan to Woden and Queanbeyan to Bungendore.

The first point I would like to make is that our services from Queanbeyan to Canberra City and Woden currently operate on a restricted "pickup" and "set down" basis within the ACT from Monday to Friday, with no restrictions on weekends. Restrictions basically mean that Deane's Buslines cannot "pickup" or "set down" passengers on route within the ACT except in areas that ACTION do not service, for example Oaks Estate, HMAS Harman and Canberra South Motor Park.

As previously mentioned restrictions do not apply on weekends and we are free to "pickup" and "set down" passengers without restriction on our timetabled routes charging customers our fare rate which is sectionally based.

In the past the TWU have successfully lobbied the ACT Government for the restrictions citing concerns that Deane's Buslines would be in direct competition to ACTION if allowed to "pick up" and "set down" passengers in the ACT, I disagree with this comment as we only operate three route services in the ACT, and at the end of the day all we want to do is provide bus customers an opportunity to catch a bus to their desired destination. In my opinion it does not make sense that a bus on route should not be allowed to pick passengers up.

There are a number of positive outcomes for users of Public Transport in the ACT if the current restrictions were lifted

- Frequencies on particular routes would increase.
- Provide services to destinations not serviced by ACTION for example Fyshwick to the Airport.
- Increase in services would not incur a cost to the ACT Government because the service is already being operating by Deane's Buslines.
- Less criticism of ACTION as a result of service reductions.
- Deane's Buslines would be able to charge the ACTION fares (although there would need to be some discussion on certain fare types i.e. pre purchased tickets etc)
- ACTION may be able to use their resources better if there is not a duplication of services.

Further an issue that I believe needs to be addressed is Canberra Airport. Deane's Buslines commenced the AirLiner Shuttle Bus Service between Canberra City and the Airport in 2001 at a time when no other operator including ACTION was prepared to do so. The Company has, despite substantial operating losses, kept operating services and as the Airport precinct has grown so has the patronage, to the point that the service is now viable in its own right. Deane's Buslines has invested heavily in new vehicles to operate what we believe is a first class service.

The biggest disadvantage to customers under the present system is that they cannot pay a "through fare" from their origin to the Airport precinct. For example, a customer wishing to travel to the Airport from Belconnen would have to pay the ACTION fare and then another fare to the Airport on the Deane's AirLiner Shuttle Service.

Deane's Buslines believe that a system involving Fare Harmonisation between ACTION and the AirLiner Shuttle Service is the answer to this problem. Fare Harmonisation would allow customers to travel on both the ACTION and Deane's network to the Airport precinct for the one fare.

Fare Harmonisation whilst in its broadest text is a simple concept to implement, such a scheme requires careful planning and cooperation from all stake holders. In 2006, Deane's Buslines presented a proposal to ACT Urban Services in relation to Fare Harmonisation. This proposal was meant to spark discussion between the various stake holders, at the end of the day our proposal was considered unreasonable and we were asked to present an amended proposal for consideration. Our initial proposal was submitted in an effort to generate discussion between the stake holders, with the view that common ground would be established through a consultative process. At present Deane's are the only stake holder driving this issue, with out input from the other stakeholders the value of this proposal will never be fully known and potentially at the end of the day the travelling public will be the biggest losers.

Although the administration of a Fare Harmonisation scheme would not be easy the difficulties will be far out weighted by the benefits, for example:

- Deane's Buslines have an established service already operating seven days a week with the required infrastructure and vehicles.
- The current service is at no cost to the ACT Government.
- Deane's Buslines operate from the City to the Airport half hourly Monday to Friday (soon to be every fifteen minutes during the peak periods), more cost effective than ACTION due to our lower running costs.
- Deane's Buslines carry the fare box risk, not ACTION.
- Fare Harmonisation will result in the best public transport option for customers.

Finally it is not the intention of Deane's Buslines to become a competitor to ACTION, we only have a small number of route services within the ACT. We see our role as enhancing the public transport system within the ACT, we have buses running along fixed routes that are able to pickup and set down customers if required, instead currently we drive straight past them except on weekends.

Fare Harmonisation is the commonsense approach to services operating to and from the Airport precinct. It utilises services already in place at what I believe to be a minimal cost and low risk to the ACT Government.

There appears to be a lot of emotion involved when the subject of Deane's Buslines is raised about having their restrictions lifted and Fare Harmonisation; however at the end of the day it is about the customer and providing the best sustainable and viable transport system that will encourage customers to use public transport.

If you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on 62993722.

Yours sincerely,

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