

Eamon Lindsay  
6 Pillar Place  
LYONS ACT 2606  
Email: eamonlindsay@netspeed.com.au  
Phone: 02 6281 6611  
Mobile: 0438 737 700

17 May 2007

Inquiry into ACTION Buses  
Standing Committee on Planning & Environment  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
CANBERRA ACT 2601  
Email: committees@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Committee,

In response to your call for submissions regarding the above enquiry, I would like provide record my own experiences as a customer of ACTION Buses and also a comparison to bus services in other cities. I make particular reference to the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry, with regards to how well it meets the needs of different segments of the community while recognising that ACTION's role is a mass transport provider and comparison to other bus transport operators in Australian jurisdictions.

In meeting its role as a provider of mass transport, there is very little resilience for ACTION to respond to breakdowns and driver shortages. During peak times nearly all the available buses are on the road. Whenever there is a breakdown, there is no spare capacity available to provide an advertised service.

One example is the frequent non-operation of the 21 service that departs Woden on a circuit at 07:47am on weekdays. This service seems to be 'sacrificed' in the event of a bus shortage to a service in Gungahlin. I have informed ACTION staff of the non-operation of this service at Woden Interchange and the Customer Service Section. Their reaction is also one of frustration and powerlessness caused by constraints as a result of the December 2006 service cutbacks. They have advised me that all they can do is for me to be patient until services are resumed to normal operating capacity. I therefore hope that the cutbacks of last year are only temporary. An issue I am very concerned about is that staff often refer me to the ACT Government and not ACTION management for an improvement in services.

I have been a regular patron of ACTION services for over 15 years and have been greatly alarmed how my own services face constant disruption.

An improvement I would suggest to ACTION is the use of an SMS service to advise intending passengers on a particular route whether a service has been delayed or cancelled, allowing them to make alternative arrangements (this is provided in other capital cities). If the resource difficulties that are affecting ACTION are so severe, ACTION might also consider issuing advice that a service is subject to disruption. Even at my own bus stop at Lyons, there are usually about five to seven people waiting for a bus that frequently does not operate.

I have also received anecdotal advice from fellow bus travellers that the IRISBUS and SCANIA busses have significant reliability problems with constant breakdowns. As these buses break down, this creates a cascade effect which is particularly magnified during peak periods. Nevertheless, the new equipment makes a pleasant change from the Renault buses given the wide climatic extremes experienced in Canberra.

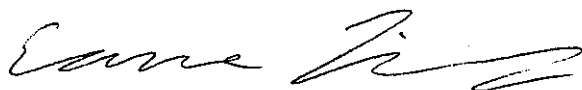
In comparison, bus services in Melbourne, particularly to the outer suburbs are greatly limited during weekday evenings and weekends. Often there is no service at all. To its credit, ACTION still provides a relatively adequate off-peak services to suburbs some distance from the major interchanges. This service provision is crucial to those who do not have access to a private vehicle.

Due to the inherent restrictions on the types of passengers ACTION can serve (it is very difficult to drop off children to a school and then proceed to a workplace), cars are still the preferred means of transport in the South Woden and Weston Creek areas. From my own observations during weekday traffic periods, the traffic can back up from the Melrose/Hindmarsh Drive intersection towards Launceston Street in Lyons.

Given that issues relating to climate change and the depletion of world fossil fuel reserves, it is imperative that public transport be supported by the ACT Government. Only then can commuters have faith in a system that will get them to their destinations at the advertised time. It is my erstwhile hope that ACTION will continue to provide improved services through the ongoing support of the ACT Government.

I thank you for considering this submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eamon Lindsay', written in a cursive style.

Eamon Lindsay