



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

INQUIRY INTO ACTION BUSES

**Submission by
BELCONNEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

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Introduction

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is a non-profit organisation which seeks to foster better communications and represent the views of the Belconnen community to government.

To produce this submission, the BCC circulated notices at meetings, on our website and through an article in the Northside Chronicle asking for people to submit "stories" on public transport in Canberra. Specifically, we asked for stories on:

- How the recent changes to the ACTION timetable have affected people's ability to use public transport in Canberra;
- Occasions when people wanted or needed to use ACTION buses, but were not able to;
- Times when ACTION bus services were delayed or failed to run, and the perceived cause of these problems; and
- Stories about high quality bus transport in other States, or anywhere in the world, which could be usefully adopted in the ACT.

By asking for stories rather than general feedback, it was hoped that this would produce more specific examples of positive and negative experiences of the population when using public transport services.

Over 25 submissions were received from the public. The full text of these responses are included in Appendix A with full names and addresses removed for privacy reasons. An analysis of these submissions follows.

Analysis

Some clear themes came through from the submissions:

- **Hourly services are not acceptable for regular bus users**
When bus services run hourly, the penalty for running late becomes too great. It also becomes impractical to just wait at a bus stop without checking the timetable first. As a result, public transport becomes the "transport of last resort".
- **Buses are perceived to be less punctual and less reliable**
Significantly, buses are not just running late, but can also leave earlier than their stated departure time.

There is also a disturbing perception that some bus services simply never show up, and that ACTION doesn't necessarily have visibility of when this happens. Since ACTION does not publish service levels on items such as "% services ran" or "% services on time", it is difficult to gauge their performance from month to month.

- **Buses are overcrowded, particularly in commuter peak times**
Overcrowding is an unpleasant, but admittedly fairly common scenario faced by public transport users around the globe. However, Canberra buses are now sometimes so full that passengers cannot physically be accommodated on the bus. This situation is compounded by the fact that:

- A bus that cannot pick up passengers may strand them at their bus stop for up to 60 minutes; and
 - A person travelling on an off-peak ticket who misses a bus at 3:45pm may have to wait 2½ hours for a bus home, or purchase an additional ticket.
- **Senior citizens now find it difficult to access public transport**
 - In particular, there are concerns that senior citizens find it hard to meet medical appointments using public transport because of all the reasons listed above.

A complete list of complaints received and how often the complaint was mentioned by those who submitted information is provided below:

Complaint	Frequency
Hourly services are not sufficient	18
Buses are overcrowded	14
Buses run late	10
Buses are too full to stop for passengers	9
Buses run early	6
Waiting times for buses are too long	6
Weekend services are inadequate	6
Bus connections are poor	5
Hard to meet medical appointments	5
Bike racks are often full	3
Bus stations feel "dangerous"	3
ACTION does not take complaints seriously	2
Afternoon peak time (4:30-6pm) leads to long wait for seniors	2
Buses do not run as scheduled	2
Evening services are inadequate	2
Not possible for workers to commute during the day and on weekends	2
Schedule changes are not properly communicated	2
School bus services are inadequate	2
Bus ride can be "close to what you may expect in a fairground"	1
Buses are too expensive	1
Buses are unreliable	1
Buses show wrong route numbers	1
Customer service officers are not easily accessible	1
Different route numbers at night time are confusing	1
Hard to find ticket outlets	1
Insufficient seat width and leg room	1

Complaint	Frequency
No "panic button" service or other way to contact people for help at Interchanges	1
Passengers won't vacate seats designated for seniors and the less able	1
Toilets and enclosures are poorly located and maintained	1
Weekend services force change of bus at interchange	1

Table 1. Complaints about the state of public transport.

Some complaints and suggestions about specific route numbers were also provided:

Suburb &/or Route	Problem	Notes	Freq.
Latham 16/116/216	No weekend service on Dalley - Macrossan Crescent loop	Adds an additional 20 minutes walk for those at top of the loop. This isn't possible for the elderly and infirm	2
Belconnen/Florey 314	Reduction of peak-time 314 services	Services from Belconnen to Fraser during weekdays at 5.01 and 5.19pm replaced by a single service at 5.08pm	2
Page 73/74	Reduced access to buses for Page senior citizens since 73/74 does not run after 1:48pm	313 is only other viable option, and this now only runs every hour	1
Melba	Access to National Museum is very difficult during the day	eg. For a 12:40pm to 5pm volunteer shift, this would have required an additional 3 hours 20 minutes of waiting time	1
Nicholls	Lack of services between Nicholls and Civic	Asking for the original hourly service to be reinstated	1
Giralang 30	Only route to Giralang; last service leaves Barton at 5:50pm		1
Fraser 13/313	Large gap between 313 services at 3:30pm and 4:20pm	Seems illogical since a large number of students are going home at this time	1
Dunlop 43/243/45	43 & 45 should be staggered in time, rather than their hourly services passing through Dunlop at the same time		1

Table 2. Specific route problems identified as needing improvement

Additionally, the following general suggestions for improvements were submitted for consideration. I will not discuss these in any detail, but I commend them to you for your examination:

Suggestion for Improvement	Notes
Expanding the customer base for buses	
Implement an "optimum route finder" for public transport in Canberra	The Brisbane and Perth public transport web sites are cited as models. The route finder should include walking directions to and from bus stops.
Examine rules on the use of motorised scooters as a pedestrian vehicle	The Australian road rules currently allow low-power electric motorised scooters to be treated as pedestrian vehicles if they meet certain strict conditions. By making portable scooters more easily available, it would allow people to extend the distance they would be prepared to travel to get to a bus stop.
Create a "family" bus pass	Would probably be designated as an off-peak ticket, or for use on weekends only.
Allow "unlimited use" senior day ticket in exchange for increased ticket price	Suggested price of \$2.00 per senior ticket for unlimited daily travel.
Trial recreational weekend bus service to facilitate bicycle travel.	Route would either traverse the perimeter area or take a broad figure 8. Service frequency would be fairly low
Use ADART (Autonomous Dial-A-Ride Transit) system	More detail available at http://www.bitpipe.com/detail/PROD/1088144681_766.html
Making the bus system more efficient	
Drop 300 bus route in favour of more 312/313/314/315 thru-routes	Most people prefer to avoid changing buses if possible
Fit GPS units to buses	Useful for two reasons: (1) to have real-time awareness of bus positioning; and (2) to log bus travel timings over an extended period to spot bottlenecks, inefficiencies and connection problems.
Timetable 300 buses so that they leave just before thru-route buses	This may help alleviate overcrowding in thru-route buses such as the 116, 216, 313 & 315.
Implement SmartCard system	Models cited include the TransPerth system, the upcoming SmartCard system for Victoria, and the OysterCard system used in the London Tube.
Restrict or prevent the purchase of single-tickets on buses	A 'restricted' option would allow ticket purchases at regular stops, but not at Bus Interchanges where all tickets would have to be bought at the service desk or an automated ticket machine.

Based on the feedback received, there are two main groups of public transport users who are not having their needs met by the current ACTION system, the daily commuters and the active elderly. Each group has very different needs:

- Daily commuters need frequent, high-capacity services to get them to and from their destination. Total time taken is the critical issue with commuters.

- The active elderly are quite different. For them, a typical outbound trip will be timed to meet an appointment, but the return trip will not be urgent. However, they do need punctual buses to plan their day and want bus services that drive near their house to minimize unnecessary walking.

Solutions & Conclusion

To meet the needs of the daily commuter, an hourly service is wholly inadequate. Services need to run every 20-40 minutes (with 40 the absolute maximum) to make commuting an attractive option. In addition, services must have adequate capacity and should travel as directly as possible from start to finish to minimise delays.

By contrast, services aimed at the active elderly can act as "sweeper" services, taking a more circuitous route to collect and drop off people as close as possible to their homes before returning to their group centre or the Belconnen Town Centre. It is not necessary for their routes to run as frequently as long as the services are punctual and reliably show up.

Other recommendations for the improvement of ACTION include:

- Upgrading the ACTION web site to allow people to self-determine the most efficient way for them to utilise public transport;
- Restricting or forbidding the purchase of individual tickets as people get on a bus to reduce delays. Part of the solution might involve the implementation of a SmartCard system like Perth's TransPerth or the Tube's OysterCard.
- Removing the *afternoon* restriction on off-peak travel in exchange for increased off-peak ticket prices and an increase in the capacity of bus services from 4:30-6pm. This is necessary because the reduced number of services in the middle of the day makes the off-peak cut-off difficult to meet for seniors with late appointments.

Lastly, we believe that for ACTION to achieve excellence, clear statistical benchmarks such as the percentage of bus services which run on time (and run at all), should be set by the government and the results published monthly. This is the only way that Canberra's government and users will be able to fairly and objectively evaluate ACTION's performance now and into the future.

Appendix A: Stories received from the public

Submission 1

Would Action please consider a trial service whereby a bus is run on the weekend around the perimeter of one of the Canberra areas such as Belconnen so that it is possible for people to go bike riding knowing that the bus is travelling the circuit and that it is dedicated for bike riders in that people can board the bus with their bikes and board or get off the bus at any designated point. On the circuit the bus stops could be relatively far apart.

The purpose of the circuit would be that anyone can ride across Belconnen, collect the bus at the end of their journey to get them back to some where near where they started. They can then ride home from where ever they leave the bus.

If the bus route was some form of figure eight around Belconnen so that it collected people towards the centre of Belconnen and returns them to the edges of Belconnen most people would be able to get off the bus at the end of the day and then ride down hill to their commencing point. If you lived in any of the Belconnen suburbs you could ride to the lake or along Ginninderra Creek and catch the bus back to a stop up hill from your home.

I believe the service would be very attractive to families. It would provide a unique way of seeing Canberra. It could be trialled in one area first and then adopted throughout Canberra as a weekend activity.

A special bus pass could be purchased for the day giving unlimited use of the bus during that particular day. Family passes could also be sold. The bus would only need to run during daylight hours.

Having bicycles in the bus is not such a problem if everyone using the service is expecting them to be there and a reasonable time is allowed at each stop for people to get on and off the bus without undue pressure. The bus stops however do not need to be as closely spaced as existing stops.

If it was going to be trialled a trial should be chosen for perhaps early to late spring when the weather and conditions are suitable. I believe that the system would be well patronised and as far as I am aware it would be a unique service.

H N

Submission 2 (Gungahlin)

My husband works at Parliament House and we live at Gungahlin. The majority of our incidents with Action Bus timetable have been disappointing. All buses from Gungahlin do not have a connecting time with the bus to Parliament House meaning it takes him around an hour and a half to get to work, when it would normally take 30 minutes maximum. All Gungahlin buses arrive in Civic at least 3 minutes after the bus to Parliament House.

We find buses can be 20 minutes early or 20 minutes late.
For 2 of us to catch a bus to work would cost at least \$12 a day when we can find parking in Civic for \$6 a day.

Action really needs to look at a family pass, entitling all the family to use Action at a cheaper rate than the standard, if they are going to compete with car parking rates in Civic, plus reduce time.

If only the Government had originally put in their original Monorail to major Centres (e.g. Civic, Woden, Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Queanbeyan and Gungahlin. (Tourist Drive – Airport, Parliament Triangle, Parliament House, AIS, National Museum, Federation Square.) the roads wouldn't be in such a mess. You have built all these beautiful bottleneck one lane roads out of Gungahlin, that bottleneck into Northbourne Avenue; just one accident causes a frantic on our roads. You know have the road space to put in a Monorail from those beautiful bus lanes and bike lanes that no one uses. I and the majority of Canberra would use a system with a 5-15 minute travel time to work but an hour and a half is ridiculous. You are never going to get the monopoly on buses unless you increase their speed which is not possible.

You can still look at using the buses to these major areas but utilise the drivers as Monorail Driver, wouldn't want to see anyone out of a job.

The monorail in Sydney is fantastic, increases Tourism and no-one has any complaints. Bring Canberra into the 20th Century?

B&M K

Submission 3 (Latham)

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our experiences on the ACTION bus network.

We are both seniors and regular bus travellers as we do not own a motor vehicle. We live in Latham on the Dalley Crescent/Macrossan Crescent loop.

We travel principally on the 16 services between Kippax and Belconnen and to the City. We regularly use the 903 services on the weekend.

Thank you

N&M G

CHANGES TO ACTION BUS NETWORK — 4 DECEMBER 2006

Prior to 4 December 2006 travellers on 16 services had a half hourly service on weekdays and an hourly service on weekends. We had a Sunday morning service which left Kippax for Belconnen at 08.00 am.

Weekday services: This route has not changed. The half hourly service is now an hourly one between 10.45 and 04.45 pm. An hourly service may seem acceptable when on an outward journey, however, on the return journey it is not pleasant to see elderly people waiting for half to three quarters of an hour in the heat (or cold) for a bus home.

Week-end Services: ACTION has discontinued the week-end service to bus travellers living on the Dalley — Macrossan Crescent loop. Travellers along this loop now need to walk to (and from) the Latham Post Office to catch a weekend service. The Dalley — Macrossan Crescent loop covers six stops and takes about

two minutes to complete — the reasoning behind the cancellation of this service is hard to understand. This means:

- all travellers, young and old, able bodied or disabled, now need to walk to the Latham Post Office to be able to use public transport on weekends — for those living at the top of the loop this means a walk of twenty plus minutes. For the elderly and infirm this is impossible.

While buses run from Belconnen until 11.30 pm on a Saturday, walking from the Post Office in the dark is a cause for concern especially for the elderly and the young

- travellers from 'new' Latham (across Ginninderra Creek from the Dalley — Macrossan Crescent loop) who used the 16 services on week-ends now have an additional 20 — 25 minutes to get to their bus service
- Sunday Services: The first bus Latham travellers can catch to Belconnen and for forward travel is at 09.45 am - this is unacceptable for those without access to a private vehicle, people such as students and young workers, workers in general, and people with Sunday morning commitments.

Anzac Day: ACTION travelled to a Sunday timetable on Anzac Day — elderly people wishing to attend Anzac Day Services would have had to rely on private transport instead of their regular bus service.

EFFICIENCY OF SERVICE

On Monday, 7th May I had an appointment in the city at 02.30 pm which took three quarters of an hour.

My husband and I travelled on Seniors Off-Peak tickets as we planned to catch the 116 which leaves the City Interchange at 03.41 pm. We planned to pick up this service at the Canberra House stop on Alinga Street. This service would have gotten us home at 04.17 pm.

We, and another person, were at the bus stop at 03.30 pm.

Although we waved the 116 down it did not stop (we assume that it was already full). However, this meant that we could not use our Off-Peak tickets unless we waited until after 06.00 pm.

We subsequently found out that a 313 did not run at that time (possible break-down?) and that the 315 which we did catch to Belconnen was actually carrying passengers for that additional service.

To say that that bus was overloaded & unsafe from the City to Belconnen is an understatement. The driver certainly did his best to accommodate those needing to travel although he did have to leave people behind at each stop.

If this situation is typical of the current operating procedures of ACTION, it is only a short time until there is a serious accident because of overcrowding.

CONCESSION FARES

Under current concession fare arrangements we are able to travel between 09.00 am and 04.30 pm (on weekdays) for a cost of \$1.40 each. This cost is quite affordable as it stands.

However, while we understand that the time restriction is to encourage older citizens to travel in 'off peak' times there are issues which arise from time to time. For example: if a senior citizen has an early appointment, say 08.30 am, that senior citizen is not able to travel on a concession fare but rather has to buy a one way ticket (each way) which then costs twice as much for forward and return travel. Additionally, if a senior citizen has a late appointment, or gets delayed, they either have to pay for a one way ticket on the return journey or wait until after 06.00 pm to return on their concession ticket.

Our preference is that the concession fare arrangements for seniors be extended to a full day's travel even if this results in a small increase in fares, say to \$2.00 per senior ticket for unlimited daily travel.

N&M G

Submission 4 ()

[transcribed from handwritten original]

Sir,

We are aged pensioners who use the bus every day, and have found that since the change of timetables, it's made our outings quite stressful – The waiting time of an hour has left the bus to be overcrowded, and it's not unusual to find the senior seats taken by young ones who won't remove themselves unless asked to by the driver.

We try not to travel between 3pm and 4.30pm to avoid the schoolchildren, but as our tickets cut out between 4.30pm & 6.00pm, if we're late from an appointment, its too long to sit around the bus stops until after 6pm, plus quite scary before we can get a bus home –

At our ages 76 & 72 we think we should have good public transport, and at all hours of the day.

Thanking you

NH

Submission 5 (Page)

Dear Mr. Bounds of BCC

Thank you for your readiness to listen to peoples' bus stories.

I'm very supportive of public transport and happily leave the car at home. Well, that's what I used to. I used to get a Shopper Offpeak ticket and went to Civic and Mawson shops, to Tuggeranong or wherever I needed to go. That was until a couple of weeks ago when I waited in Civic at the Bus Interchange for the 313 to Page, which now only runs hourly beyond Belconnen Interchange for Offpeak customers.- The bus was late when it arrived, it loaded a wheelchairbound person and a few more people and suddenly drove off, the driver shouting something to the next people in line. I thought he was going to stop again further along the platform because he was in an awkward position. Can you imagine my bewilderment when I realised the bus had left completely because it was late? -

It is not encouraging for bus users to experience such things and have to wait for another full hour.

I must admit, though, that I was lucky. I took the next bus in line to Belconnen Interchange. At UC we could overtake the 313 and at the Interchange in Belconnen I could dash into 313, which brought me reasonably on time home. But what about our elderly who can't dash? And I must also admit I haven't used the Action Buses since.

HM, Page

Submission 6 (Florey + multiple suburbs)

[transcribed from handwritten original]

Dear B.C.C.

I was reunited with the Action Buses in the last quarter of 2005. I was driving a car and got sick of the rising fuel costs and instead of complaining; I decided to make the change from car to buses without any regrets.

The buses are stress free, you get to enjoy the views from the buses. You appreciate the variety of birds in Canberra and seeing Autumn by the bus is magnificent.

By catching the buses I can see my ideas on how to make them more friendly to shoppers would make it more appealing to people doing their shopping. I keep fitter catching the buses. By refusing to drive my car I am one making a difference to the earth's atmosphere.

I've made a lot of friends on the buses and most drivers are amicable.

The changes to the bus timetable make it harder for me to do everything in one day. The buses get busier from lunch time onwards and the overcrowding starts by the middle of the day. Politicians don't meet the bus travellers. They are too busy ignoring what the bus travellers want. They treat the bus travellers as numbers not people.

I've take the time to meet my fellow bus travellers and I know more about these bus travellers than any politician. I started my complaint book and have been able to receive 35 complaints. My complaint book went missing for 6 weeks. One of my bus traveller friends had my book, but weren't able to contact me because my phone number was not in the book. Because of the changes I don't see them as much. I would have to meet more bus travellers to receive their complaints. I need a loud voice to help me make this happen. That loud voice could be MIX106.3 or FM104.7 to help support me with my endeavour.

Greenhouse gases is a big issue to every single person. Let's take ACTION and work together to reduce the toxins poluting out earth's atomisphere.

I have enclosed the listed 35 complaints.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to write to you.

JT

List of complaints since new timetable 4/12/2006

Tina – (Lathlain St Bus 116): Connections very poor.

Sam – (Lathlain St Bus 116): Standing/overcrowding becoming more frustrated by the poor changes.

Baljeet – (Kippax 116 Bus): If I miss this bus, I have to wait too long, 1½ hours for the next one.

Deanna – (Southern Cross Drive Bus 314): Inconvenient times for working people during the day and Sundays.

David – (Bus 116): To long waiting for buses. No service for Gold Course estate in Holt.

Anna – (Bus 116): Inconvenient, you have to wait an hour or more if they're late if you miss the previous bus.

Tegan – (City Bus Terminal): I'm sick of the buses only coming per hour because if I get there, even a minute late they're gone and I need to wait another hour, & then if I'm early they're late!

Erica – (Bus 16): This service is appalling and it's not the bus driver's fault. It is Jon Stanhope's (NO HOPE). School runs need to be better. The them (the politicians) to catch a bus once in their lives.

Chris – (Bus 116): New timetable mean that if Bus comes too early (during a 2 hour lunch break), I miss the bus to go anywhere, I end up spending my 2 hours at work. This is no shelter or shaded areas outside my work place.

Sandra – (Bus 116): The hourly service is making travelling by bus very inconvenient. Bring back more of the ½ hour services. The overcrowding on the buses is dangerous, it's not fair on the drivers. Bring the Kippax service back via Krefft Street on the weekend. To go to Kippax on the weekend, it can take up to 3 hours there and back. You have to travel to the Belconnen Interchange, wait at least ½ hour, then you travel about 1 hour to get to Kippax. The Bus service is not good enough. People living in the Latham Loop to Kippax have no weekend service at all.

John – (Bus 116): I agree with everything that Sandra has said. The service needs better connections. Bring back some of the old services.

Barbara – (Southern Cross Drive Bus 314): After 9am the service is hectic. Afternoon after work, Woden to Belconnen is okay, but from Belconnen to Florey too many gaps.

David – (Kippax Bus Stop): The time tables are shocking for the weekend and public holidays, The service is too scattered. The waiting time during the week is too long. Getting on an alternate bus so that waiting for another ½ hour to ¾ of an hour is too long, and by catching the alternate bus you end up having to walk further to your house, an extra 30 minutes.

Julie – (Belconnen Interchange Platform 9): I would like the time tables to go back the way they were. More buses on the weekend, especially during the night time.

Sally – (Southern Cross Bus Stop 314): More frequency of buses. Hourly not suitable.

Nikki – (Southern Cross Bus Stop 314): Waiting too long for buses. My time is precious, like every other bus travellers.

Jeannette – (City Interchange): Catching a bus to see Doctor in Ainslie. Jeannette saw she had 5 minutes before the bus was due to leave and she saw her bus pull out early. The caused her to ring her Doctor to change her appointment. Since the introduction of hourly timetables buses either leave early or arrive late.

Sharon – (Belconnen Interchange): The buses are becoming more unreliable since the hourly timetables commenced.

Dianne – (Belconnen Interchange): My teenage children often see the bus driving past them because of overcrowding.

Kathy – (Belconnen Interchange): I am a full time student who finds the buses in the middle of the day around 1PM are too crowded.

Derek – (Belconnen Interchange): The bus timetable changes are very poor and the people who arranged these changes should try catching the bus to see if they like it.

Qua – (Bus 906): Frequency of buses very inconvenient.

Stephanie – (Belconnen Platform 14 Bus 906): Timing of buses is very poor. Connections need to improve. Very disappointed with the hourly timetables, especially through the week.

Jus – (Florey Bus 116): Frequency of buses poor. No complaints prior December 4th 2006 to the Bus Service. Route 116 can be unreliable, arriving 5 minutes early or 5 minutes late.

Michael – (Lathlain St): Catches 16/17/33/13/43; The 900 Services (Late Services) not convenient. You shouldn't have to phone to get it. (The commuter pays for the phone call.) Works at a Deli and saw a bus driver eating there; is it his break? OR Is this why they are late?

Sam – (Lathlain St): Having to wait an hour or walk for ½ hour after the next bus which is another ½ hour wait. After school overcrowding. Bus drivers doing 12 hour shifts.

Lisa – (Belconnen Bus Interchange 314): catch 14/17/56 to travel to her jobs. I am a house cleaner. Every hour isn't good enough. Timing and getting from house to house, I'm either rushing in order to catch the next bus or otherwise I'm forced to wait.

Nicholas – (Belconnen Interchange Bus 314): Timing is poor, once out of school, either the bus has already left earlier and then I have to wait another hour.

Kate – (City Interchange Bus 117): The Bus service is inadequate if I need to go shopping on Sundays.

Corina – (Belconnen Bus Interchange): I'm annoyed with the timetable changes, the buses run late more often, the politicians forget our time is important to us.

Tammy – (Belconnen Bus Interchange): I hate the hourly gaps because you either have to rush around to make sure you catch the next bus or if you're late you have another hour to wait.

Helen – (Belconnen Bus Interchange): These new timetable changes are not encouraging more people to catch buses. The overcrowding is dangerous.

Denise – (Belconnen Bus Interchange): I'm finding the buses either pull out early or run late. This can be very inconvenient when appointments have been made and you need to keep them.

Ashleigh – (Belconnen Bus Interchange): I hate the weekend service where you have to catch a separate bus to the Belconnen Interchange in order to catch a separate bus into the city. The people who made these changes should not be allowed to sort bus schedules without physically catching the buses themselves.

Submission 7

[transcribed from handwritten original]

Dear Sir or Madam,

I would like to bring to your notice that buses won't pay in Canberra, as it is spread out to much. Let us go back to the old time table, and give the people a service they deserve. Senior citizens don't drive and depend on public transport. It is an eye opener to see these people pushing their groceries from the mall to the bus interchange, the sooner they get their bus interchange to Woolworths the better.

By cutting out buses they had to pack people in like sardines. You have to get back to the real world, and give people a service they are intitled to, and stop leaving people at bus stops especially school children because the bus is full. The parents see the bus coming they then drive off thinking the children are OK, little do they know the bus is full and it drives past.

The next message might come from the police to say their child has been hit by a car and killed.

Had this been done the right way and got the drivers and supervisors to put the timetable together for the government to follow, this would never happened.

The way it is now the government has wasted more money on their buses and made the service worst.

For god sake lisen to the people and get things right the first time, and stop wasting money.

Yours Sincerely
CT

Submission 8

Hello to Belconnen Com Council transport inquiry

I am a senior.

I use the bus service every fortnight to travel from Woden to Belconnen and every month to travel from Civic to Belconnen, plus other occasional uses.

I notice that whenever I use these buses between town centres there are around 30 or more passengers at OFF PEAK times.

I use my bike a lot and really appreciate the opportunity to put my bike on the bus bike-rack for the long haul between town centres. I once tried to use the bus bikerack during peak hour - and it was a fight to get one of the two spaces available.

Canberra is now well into the population size where it would benefit from light rail between the town centres. I attach a photo essay on that topic based on a city significantly smaller than Canberra with a not too dissimilar demographic spread. The city is Orleans in France, 100km south sou-west of Paris.

For high volume travel between town centres, buses are not the most efficient or attractive vehicles.

For distributed travel between town centres and the suburbs there are also much more efficient and attractive transport models now available.

For localised services within town areas, the authorities should look at piloting the fully automated transport technology developed and tested in Corpus Christi, Texas (a city itself around the size of Canberra) in the early years of this decade. It is called ADART, Autonomous Dial A Ride Transit. This technology could be

adapted for localised travel in Canberra - so that we would be world leaders in public transport.

Instead we now lose about \$75 million p.a. in subsidising a public transport system that the general public will not accept because of its lack of responsiveness in service (if you have to look at a timetable, you have lost most Canberra commuters). The buses are well run but they cannot deliver what most Canberrans want from public transport.

Anyway, at least have a look at the photo-essay below on how a European garden city smaller than Canberra has solved its public transport issues in a way that the public flocks to and finds attractive:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/philip.bell/PhotoEssayOnLightRailInOrleansFrance>

[Slide transcript from online presentation follows]

Here we are in the central "rond point" or crossroads of Orleans, a small city 100kms south of Paris. This is a story about light rail in Orleans, My story is told from the viewpoint of a resident of Canberra, Australia - a city of over 300,000 people but with no light rail and with the highest level of car dependence of any city in Australia. Orleans is a small city of 250,000 people with a dense but pedestrian-friendly city centre.

A large part of the Orleans population live in garden city outskirts such as La Source. It was here that we stayed in 2005 with two host families (arranged through Servas, a program to promote international peace and understanding). La Source is just like one of the outlying town valleys of Canberra - a garden city with much open space and parks. We stayed at Boliere near an ornamental lake and close to the end of the light rail line.

The recent introduction of light rail has transformed the centre of Orleans, which is now partly car-free. This is the central plaza. Orleans' new light rail line is 18 kms in length, the longest in Europe. Note the size and number of doors on the light rail - making it much much quicker than a bus to get on or get off.

The Orleanais have reclaimed the streets. Note how carfree and carefree is their demeanour as the light rail approaches up the street. Because light rail moves so predictably, pedestrians tend to ignore it as they move around the city spaces. The conductor has to clang his bell to ask pedestrians to move aside, please, so he can proceed.

Boarding the light rail we enjoyed a garden city view for our trip home to our host family at La Source. The light rail experience has won such support from the people of Orleans that they want more. A new east-west light rail is now under construction, to be opened in 2010.

En route we passed through the Parc Floral de La Source - a large public flora reserve. After staying in Orleans for a few days, this city started to look more and more like France's equivalent of Australia's bush capital - a city which Bill Bryson described as "being hidden somewhere inside a park."

As you can see, the light rail carriageway has been developed to enhance the city's landscape. It was not cheap to build. It took a long time to complete. The political leader who pushed it through was thrown out of public office because of controversy over expense and delay in completion. But now all is forgiven. The city has a magnificent asset. The citizens have demanded a second light rail on an east west axis across the city - and plans are well advanced for its implementation.

Once an effective rail system is in place, a city is no longer captive to the demand for ever more roads with more lanes and more congestion. Carriageways can be reduced in size and traffic calmed to a more pedestrian-friendly size. Roads no longer operate as major barriers to communication across neighbourhoods.

Light rail has become so popular - it was standing room only for the first half of our trip. Light rail can move much larger numbers of people than can buses, and can move them much faster.

A recent price list shows a 30 rides ticket for seniors costs E20, that is, about A\$1.20 per ride. Light rail can carry large numbers of people at very reasonable cost.

We passed several university campuses along the route. Light rail works best when it links major centres of attraction, such as town centres, universities, hospitals, technical colleges, major sporting venues, busy shopping centres. When a light rail is first built, not everyone

will be handy to it. But over the longer term, light rail reshapes a city to a more sustainable settlement pattern - because most people want to live near such convenient transport.

This is the Orleans light rail route map on the upper wall of the carriage. Everyone knows where the rail will take you and also that the next tram will be along in just a few minutes. That's part of the recipe for successful public transport. If you have to look at a timetable - or if you are not sure where a public conveyance might take you, public transport is less likely to be your first choice. Note the terminus at the La Source hospital, "Hopital de La Source".

This is where we alighted in La Source to walk around the lake to our host family's home. Note the shallow ramps for pram and wheelchair access at the light rail station. The scene here shows local police interviewing fare evaders. Our advice was "Make sure that you 'compost' (machine stamp) your tickets" - otherwise a fine may ensue.

Also on ADART

http://www.bitpipe.com/detail/PROD/1088144681_766.html

I am not hopeful of intelligent change to our public transport system when we have such a fool for a Minister.

Marry these two together and we would have an attractive public transport system.

PB

Submission 9

Dear Belconnen Community Council

I am extremely unhappy with the destruction of a perfectly good bus service which was attracting more people to use it, for the sake of a relatively minor saving.

Copied below is an email I sent to Action at the time of the introduction of the new timetable:

"I would like to most strongly protest at the cancellation of the 314 service from Belconnen to Fraser during weekdays at 5.01 and 5.19 p.m.. This means a gap of over an hour between the departure of the 4.32 p.m. and the next service at 5.38 p.m. This is a peak travel time and the two services are always full or near full.

I read yesterday that only 9% of Canberrans use public transport, compared to 15% in NSW. In the light of such cancellations, this is hardly surprising. At a time when we are being urged to consider the implications of green house gas emissions and to avoid using cars if at all possible, this is an extremely unfortunate decision, especially as there is no public transport alternative to Action buses in the ACT."

Action did then introduce one extra service at 5.08 p.m. but this has not eased the overcrowding on the buses at that time of day. Frequently there are a considerable number of people packed standing in the bus, if indeed they are able to get on. If they can't do so, they face a considerable wait until the next bus comes along.

This is hardly going to encourage increased patronage of Action transport.

MB

Submission 10

You made a request for bus stories for the government's enquiry. There are three issues I would like to address.

1. The cancellation of the 315 on weekends has ensured we do not use a bus on weekends anymore. With our main journeys from Melba to Civic it is far more convenient to ride a bike both ways or take the car. The changeover at Belconnen Interchange is long and unsettling and not worth the effort.
2. The bike rack survey if there is one will be flawed. At the beginning of the installation the system worked with the number of buses available. However currently we are having difficulty getting our bikes on a 300 route bus (300, 312, 313, 314, & 315) of any number as the new buses with bike racks are now scheduled on all routes and it is faster to ride home to Melba than wait for a bike rack bus at Civic. I have been informed by Action that you are not allowed to put your bike on a non 300 route bus which often has a bike rack. When a bike rack 300 bus does turn up there are usually bikes on it already. We have had instances of four 300 route buses in a row without bike racks so we no longer rely on them.
3. Action should ditch the 300 route and add additional through 300 routes to increase patronage. Changing buses should be avoided at all costs particularly Belconnen & Woden.

Regards R&J K

Submission 11 (Page)

Dear Stephen,

We would like to register our thoughts on ACTION buses.

We live in one of three aged care facilities in Burkitt Street, Page. We use buses as much as possible, partly because of fuel costs, partly because of the cost and sometimes the unavailability of parking, particularly in the city, and also because of greenhouse gases. We often need to go into the city for medical appointments, and the bus times on the return trip are very important.

The recent changes to timetables have caused us problems. However ACTION has re-instated No. 41 9am Belconnen to City service which is a big help to us as we can board the bus just after 9am at Cohen Street and use our off-peak pensioner concession, and as it has just left the Belconnen Interchange, we are always sure of getting a seat – important for older people.

Coming back from the city, a number of buses on the 300 route or 116/117 go to Belconnen Interchange, and provided we get there before 1.48 pm we can catch a 73/74 bus right to our door. However, after 1.48 pm, we can only use 313 or we would have to get from the Interchange some other way – walking this distance is out of the question for many older people and taxis are expensive for pensioners. Previously the 313 ran every half hour during the day, but now they are only approximately every hour. This means that a couple of medical appointments in the city make a very long day. 313 is also an important route,

going from Fraser West right through to Lanyon via City, Woden and Tuggeranong.

It would be a big help to the residents of the three aged care facilities in Burkitt Street if one of the seven 73/74 buses could be re-scheduled to leave Belconnen later in the day and if more 313 buses could be scheduled during the day. The 73/74 route is extremely important to the residents of these facilities as it goes not only to Belconnen Interchange, but also to Jamison Centre, Calvary Hospital, Hawker shops, Florey shops, Page shops, etc.

Lack of buses makes the use of cars necessary, whereas a better public transport system could be a big help in cutting greenhouse gases and would generate more revenue for ACTION.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views.

R&J M

Submission 12 (Melba)

President Stephen Bounds
Belconnen Community Council

I have used ACTION buses regularly since 2003 to travel to and from the National Museum of Australia, where I have been doing voluntary work in the Education Section.

I have found the service of the buses on Routes 314 and 34 very satisfactory with usually only about 15 minutes wait between connections.

I moved house earlier this year and now have access to both 315 and 314 buses. Even so, since the reduction in services with the introduction of the new time table, I have found it most difficult to use buses to and from the Museum, to the extent that I may have to discontinue my voluntary work there.

For example, On Wednesday of last week (2 May) the roster required me to be there from 12:40pm to 5pm.

Had I taken the bus I would have been travelling or waiting around for an extra 3 hours 20 minutes.

I managed to use the family car instead.

I do not like driving in peak hour traffic, particularly in the winter time.

I hope the old timetables will be reinstated.

NS

Submission 13

Brisbane has a great website where you just put in the street address of where you are, where you want to go and by what time and it lists all the options for getting there using public transport. We could do a similar thing here but it would be much simpler as we only have buses. I have found it difficult to find out the quickest way to get places when you need to change buses even when you ring action they just tell you to catch the bus to the interchange and then catch the next bus from there as it is often much faster get

off on route and either walk across the road or down a little to catch the bus going your way.

Submission 14 (Palmerston)

Hi my name is JvD, and I usually catch the 36 from Narrabundah College to Civic on Thursday afternoons at 4:35. Usually on a really good day, the bus is only 8-10 minutes late. Then today, it didn't come at all and we had to wait for the one after it to arrive. by the time we got to civic and then caught another bus home, I arrived home over an hour later than I should and my friend arrived terribly late for his football training. Then when the next 36 did come, the writing on the front oand side of the bus said it was a school bus, so we didnt know if we could catch it or not, but luckily we flagged it down anyway, because when we got onto the bus and asked the driver if he was going to civic and asked him if he knew anything about the other 36 that didn't turn up, he said that he didnt know but this was the next 36 bus. and when we told him that the bus said school bus, he didnt seem to care, it was as if he intended to do it or somehting. Action Buses are hopeless and the govenment is doing nothing about it. We need a better system.

Hi my name is JvD and I want to complain about Action bus services. I catch the 38 to Narrabundah College every morning from Russell at 8:18, and at the end of last term, the 3rd of April, and I had an extremely important specialist maths exam at 8:50. The bus I always catch gets us to school at about 8:45 so i had no worries about getting to school in time for the exam, but lo and behold, the bus didn't turn up. on the most important day of the term the bus didn't come. I, along with at least 7 of my friends were all stuck in Russell with our most important exam for the session starting without us. So we were all extremely angry, but then the 38 after it, about 8:34, was about 4 minutes late, so we were well and truly stuffed for the exam. We turned up about 25 minutes late for the exam and we should have not been let into the exam and failed, but luckily for us, because there was so many of us, and it was beond our control the teachers let us sit the exam after everyone else had finished and left. Action Buses nearly made myself and 7 of my friends fail a vital subject at school all because they cannot be bothered to make sure that the buses are all running when they're supposed to. What can we do when the only method of transport in the ACT doesnt run properly. The government only has to provide one mode of public transport and they can't even do that right. We need a better system.

Hi my name is JvD and I wish to complain about Action Buses. I live in Palmerston, and I usually catch the 56 route to and from Civic and Belconnen. The buses are always late and they do not come anywhere near often enough, espically on weekends. There has been numerous occasions where I have organised to go and see a movie or just catch up with my friends in Civic or Belconnen, and the buses are really late or don't come at all and I have to wait another hour or so for the next bus to go and I completely miss the movie and miss out on a good opportunity to see my friends who I rarely get to see anymore because I changed schools and they all stayed at the same one. There have been quiet numerous occasions like this and it is not good enough. I have rung Action on quiet a few occasions and asked them what happened to the bus, and everytime they tell me that the bus was there and I must have missed it because it definitely was there. But I was there about 10 minutes before the bus was supposed to get there everytime and the bus most definitely did not come. The government only has to provide one mode of public transport and they can't even do that properly. We need a better system.

Submission 15 (Palmerston)

I used to live in west sydney and the westbus bus company had no problem in providing buses for the whole of western sydney. My mother worked for the Windsor area of Westbus and whenever they got a complaint of any form, phone, email, post anything

they had to give a copy to a government adviser, along with how they looked into it, and how they responded to it. They had to look into every complaint and here in ACT whenever I ring up to complain about the bus not turning up (which happens quiet frequently) they just shrug you off by saying that the bus was definitely there when i have been waiting there for 20 minutes and it definitely wasn't there. In sydney whenever a bus driver wasn't able to do his run for any reason, they had to get someone else to do it. While here in ACT the buses just dont turn up quiet frequently because the bus driver didnt turn up or something. The buses in sydney all have GPS locaters in them and it is recorded so the depot can see where they are at any given time, even the next day they can go and look back and see especially when they get complaints about it being late or not arriving. The ACT system is shocking and lazy. The govenment only has to provide one type of public transport and they can't even do that. There has to be a better way to do things!!!!!!!!!!!!

I just want to say that the knew sytem/timetable as of Feb. 2007 is just as bad as before. I catch the 56 to and from Civic, and it is really bad, it doesnt come anywhere near often enough. Every afternoon I catch the 56 to Palmerston from Civic, at about 4:39, or sometimes 3:50. If I miss one of these I have to wait 30-50 minutes for the next bus. and every bus is packed full of people. The buses should go about every 15 mins or something, but no, we have to be packed on like a tin of sardines and have to wait for huge periods of time for the buses.

Submission 16

Apols for lateness of this response

I moved from WA beginning of March & was astounded in the lack of information available when I tried Action web site
I then rang their information service to find out that I had to know the timetable number before the could tell me the times

ended up having to drive to the area & obtain it from a bus stop myself, as they had no idea of route from the address I gave

Initial trips while in Woden, expected buses had disappeared off the road with no explanation and was told by another passenger that it was common

Find busses between interchanges frequent but find connoting not satisfactory times limits your travel options especially at night

having to find a different numbered route for night time is confusing

Have found drivers to be friendly & helpful but sometimes rides are close to what you may expect in a fairground

One & half seats between 2 people & leg room non existent worse that planes

Ticket outlets are not always easily found

For Australia's capital city Action is well behind the times

Check out web site for Transperth, below, Similar set up to "Where Is" You can plan your trips down to the time it takes & from your front door

I participated in the "Smartcard" system & definitely think it is the way to go

[Transperth](#)

BB

Submission 17 (Nicholls)

Dear Sir,

This is a reply to answers you were seeking to your story in the Chronicle regarding passenger experiences with ACTION buses. Even though I do own a car, whenever possible, I always use the buses. It is actually cheaper and environmentally better for me to use the buses instead of my car. This was so until December last year, when they cut out all the off peak buses from Nicholls to Civic and back. We only ever had an hourly service, which was not all that much, but now they have cut even those buses out. I am actually not a Belconnen resident, but live in the Gungahlin area. However, I guess it does not matter all that much where someone is living, if they are using the buses. They are trying to encourage people to use the buses instead of their cars, but if there are no buses running off peak, for the people who are retired (like myself), the unemployed, the disabled, or people who do not have a car, then cutting out the buses is not the way to go.

At least they have not cut out the buses from Nicholls to Belconnen and back and they only run once per hour as well.

There are now virtually no car parking spaces left in Civic, for people who want to come there at 9.00 a.m., so even taking your car is virtually no longer an option. At least parking under the Belconnen Mall is free for the first 3 hours. Our local government now seems to regard Gungahlin as a bus interchange. There is one seat under cover if you want to catch a bus to Civic, but if you have to change buses at Gungahlin for another bus back to one of the Gungahlin suburbs, there is one seat under cover outside the Raiders Club, but the bus stop itself is a further distance away. If the bus driver sees no one standing at the bus stop and no one needs to get off, he could just drive straight past, if you were sitting under cover on the seat, and you would miss your bus to your home.

I have no complaints about the drivers themselves. They are generally all very friendly and do a good job. It is the fact that they have cut out so many buses, is what is causing all the problems. I used to live in Watson, when I was still working six years ago and there I had the use of two different buses that came to the bus stop outside the Watson shops and I could virtually get a bus every 15 to 20 minutes, and half hourly off peak, although what the service is like there now I do not know.

I think they should re-instate the off peak bus services in all areas, even if they only run once per hour, which I think is not too much to ask. I know they probably cut out all the off peak buses as a cost cutting measure, but it certainly is not helping people who totally rely on the buses or for those people who are quite happy to use the buses instead of their car all the time. One minor complaint I have is that the bus from Nicholls to Belconnen comes just before 9.00 a.m. and then you can not get a cheaper pensioners' shopping ticket. I can walk a longer distance to catch another bus that comes via Ngannawal to the other side of Nicholls, but it does not come now until 9.30 a.m. (15 minutes later than it used to). It almost seems as if they do not want to run the off peak services just after 9.00 a.m. for people to get the off peak cheaper fares.

Last month I sent a letter via the post to Mr John Hargreaves, who is our Minister for Transport, but I never even received a reply from him. I will make a copy of that letter at the bottom of this e:mail. I have deleted my street address, since I am not too keen to put this in an e:mail over the Internet. I actually wanted to ask Mr Hargreaves at the Gungahlin residents meeting, which I attended, what they intended to do about all the

buses they had cut out, but unfortunately I did not get the chance to do so at the meeting and therefore wrote the letter instead.

Maybe if the various Community Councils can do something together to get our bus serviced re-instated, I for one would be very happy.

Yours faithfully,
DB

Dear Mr Hargreaves,

On Wednesday 11 April, I attended the meeting held for Gungahlin residents, at which you were the guest speaker. As many issues were discussed, there was not all that much time for the audience to ask too many questions and I left the meeting at 9.35 p.m.

Since you are the Minister for Transport, some of the issues regarding transport were touched on during the meeting. I agreed with you that a light rail system would be far too expensive to install and it would also mean that most Gungahlin residents would all have to catch a bus to Gungahlin first (and vice versa) and then change over to the light rail system. It is far preferable that we have a bus service direct from our suburb to the major bus interchanges at both Belconnen and Civic. At least the buses to and from Belconnen are still running during off peak periods.

Having said that, I have not been able to go to Civic since they introduced the new bus timetable in December last year, since they then cut out all the buses to and from the Nicholls suburb during off peak times. As far as I am aware, there is now only one bus from Civic that goes off peak via Harrison to Gungahlin once per hour. If I was to catch this bus, I would still have to get off at Gungahlin and hang around until there is a bus to Nicholls, which is not much good in really hot or cold weather. It would just take too long to get myself home from Civic in that case. The buses to and from Nicholls used to only run once per hour previously, which is not all that much anyway. With the severe shortage of parking places now in Civic, coming by car is virtually no longer an option either. I am retired and actually always take the bus to Belconnen or Civic whenever possible.

Is there any chance when they revise the bus timetables that they could restore the bus services to and from Civic to Nicholls during the off peak hours please?
I know not as many people travel during off peak periods, but one bus per hour to all the suburbs surely is not too much to ask. If there are enough of the smaller buses, why do they not use those during the off peak periods to save of the cost of fuel?

I hope to be able to receive a positive reply from you in due course, and thank you very much for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,
DB

Submission 18 (Kaleen)

Following are my comments for the Belconnen Community Council's submission on the ACTION bus service. I have made my own more detailed submission covering these points. My comments relate to routes 30 and 31 from Kaleen/Giralang to the city and Barton

1. The buses at peak hours are often overcrowded with some passengers having to stand for most of the journey. The morning route 30 from Giralang to Kaleen to Civic, Russell

and Barton sometimes leaves people standing at bus stops because there is no room for them on the bus. Peak services in the evening are also packed with many people standing.

2. Services are not frequent enough. The northbound route 30 (the only route to Giralang) runs half-hourly in the evening peak with the last service leaving Barton at 5.50 p.m.

3. Services frequently run late due to traffic congestion. It is quite common for services in the morning and evening peak to be 10-15 minutes late. The solution would be a bus lane down Northbourne Avenue which would be relatively quick and easy to construct. However the Minister has recently stated that he will not allocate any money to a bus lane as he believes new roads are more important.

Comment: The government likes to present itself as environmentally responsible. It has set a target in its Sustainable Transport Plan to increase bus use by 9% by 2011. This is an ambitious target which cannot be achieved in one year. It will require regular improvements to the bus service over the next four years. Sadly, the government's actions on transport are completely contrary to its stated policies and objectives. Instead of encouraging people to use public transport, the government is making the service less and less attractive. The result is greater use of private cars, more pollution and more congestion.

CB

Submission 19

I assist with Meals on Wheels every fortnight and I used to travel in on the bus, do some shopping, then help on one of the runs and catch the bus home.

When the services were half-hourly there was no hassle, but since buses have been going hourly I find it difficult. My shift would finish about five minutes after a bus had gone, which meant I would have an hour to wait before I could head for home.

Once, I was on a long run and didn't get back until 1.10, too late for my normal route. I thought I would take another bus, 314, which means a longer walk at the other end, but I was anxious to get home. The 314 was due to leave at 1.22, but only turned up at 1.40, so it was 2 o'clock before I got home - 4 hours after I had left in the morning. The result of this is that if I am in a hurry, I take my car to Meals on Wheels, which is not what I want to do.

It is very difficult to work within the constraints of the present timetable. There is no such thing as relaxed shopping at Belconnen Mall, because I am always conscious that I only have an hour to do banking and shopping. If I rush to do everything and even then miss the bus, then I have an hour of wasted time on my hands.

Once I was catching a bus to Belconnen when a young mother came up with a baby in a pusher and a toddler. She was very disappointed when one of the old buses turned up, with no room for her pram as another mother had taken the space. There was nothing for it but to take her children home and return for the next bus. That was in the days of the half-hour timetable, which was bad enough, but now she would have to try to fill in an hour with restless children before making another attempt to get the bus.

Canberra is the capital city of Australia and should be leading the nation in efficient public transport. It's ridiculous to force people to use cars, causing more pollution and costing a heap, when a regular bus service would serve everybody well. I would like all members of the ACT government to leave their cars in the garage for a week and try to get around Canberra on public transport; then they could see the problems first hand.

I hope these comments will help you in your submission.

Yours sincerely,
SE

Submission 20

Hello,

My comments about buses are as follows:-

1. There exist some odd financial incentives for contractors to keep driving.
2. It is hard to go from work to evening activities by bus.

In more detail:-

I happened to be talking to some colleagues (at morning tea in a large government department) this morning about a possible move of this section, and where people preferred to work. There was also talk about why people drive rather than catch buses to our current location in Barton.

Most of my colleagues are IT contractors, and a comment that was made by a several of them together was, "Of course we'd never travel to work here by bus even if we could, because it would be detrimental to our financial situation, because, as contractors, we have arranged salary packaging to cover car buying/leasing, and it is important that we clock up enough mileage for this to work. In fact, some guys will make extra journeys into the country, just to ensure they clock up the requisite kilometres." These folk, who tend to be interested in "green" solutions for many things, admitted that this was counter-productive for encouraging use of public transport.

This dis-incentive should be investigated. The right answer may not be to stop it totally. (I dare say these guys wanted a new car to take their family on holiday or whatever, and thus the salary-packaged car was very attractive.) But perhaps the requirement for a certain mileage could be changed, or some bonus could be given for trading some of that mileage into bus passes, or something inventive like that.

My own reasons for not using buses as often as I might, centre on the concern that, although we are near a bus-stop in Cook, a. both my husband and I currently work on the south side, and it is more efficient time-wise for us to travel together, and call at these two destinations, than for us to each to travel on two or three buses, and b. (more importantly), both time-wise, and probably energy-wise, since one or both of us are often out and about in the evening, visiting friends, eating at a restaurant, attending a sporting or cultural activity (eg a music group or a language course), there seems little point in our both travelling home by two or three buses each, to go out again - by car or bus (and for most of these situations, we'd never make it in time by bus - for instance we get from Symonston and Barton to a gymn in Dixon by 6:00 pm (only one that offers circuit classes), and a Yoga class in Page by 6:30 pm, of a Tuesday evening), or not feasible trying to get from our workplaces to these locations then get home by bus at say 10:30pm.

Nevertheless, I think there will exist some creative ways to give Canberra a better bus system without disadvantaging anyone.

Thanks very much,
MF

Submission 21

Dear Stephen,

Your call for submissions on the state of our public transport system is well-timed. Only this morning I penned a letter of grievance to ACTION, and a friend of mine has also written to the Editor of The Canberra Times (a great letter which I hope will be published tomorrow). I only hope I am not too late to have my experiences and views included in your submission to the enquiry.

It is only in recent months that I have responded to the ACTION marketing which promises a stress-free, comfortable and efficient alternative to private transport. Until the change in the timetable it seemed to be working quite well. Now, however, the story is quite different. This week alone, my bus (route 41) has been consistently running late and massively overcrowded. Today I was one of at least 20 people left to stand, and I was wedged up the back of the bus. I suggested that roof-racks might be an alternative!!

A couple of days ago, on the same route and in similarly cramped conditions, the driver was required to take evasive action in traffic, which caused a male passenger to be propelled into my lap. While this incident may seem amusing, it demonstrates the potential risk of injury caused by overcrowding.

At lunchtime yesterday I was stranded in Woden, waiting on a very tardy "expresso" bus to take me back to work in Civic. When it did eventually arrive, the driver tried to cram on as many passengers as possible, leaving at least a dozen unlucky passengers waiting for the next bus would turn up "who knows when?" It was on this bus that I heard a school girl remarking on how a school bus service operating from Woden Interchange had been reduced from two to one, when the need was for increase to three. Apparently, students who could not squeeze on the first bus had to then wait an hour at the Interchange until the next bus turned up. This is not only inconvenient, but totally irresponsible, given the escalating level of juvenile crime at the Interchange.

Anyway, thanks for the opportunity to vent. Hope this gives you some case study examples for your submission. If you'd like me to be more specific, please let me know. Also, if the abovementioned Letter to the Editor doesn't get published, I may be able to provide a copy. It is a very interesting insight from a former ACTION employee!

Good luck!

SG

Submission 22

Pensioner on low fixed income. For health reasons I am unable to drive, so public transport is essential, and I don't want to be housebound!

1.) Buses too infrequent for keeping appointments.-My local service- 1 per hour for a the Capital City!

2.) Why such large buses during off peak times? Most services in UK rely on "Hoppers" small buses, Fewer unoccupied seats; low fuel consumption; low initial cost and 15 minute intervals, certainly versatile and could be more easily manoeuvred around the narrow streets of Canberra's northern suburbs.

3.) Most European local authorities seem capable of managing budgets to finance free travel for senior citizens - To quote Liza Dolittle "Would'nt it be nice?"

Good luck with your submission

Submission 24 (Macgregor)

Hi here are my thoughts on the action services, but especially relating to route 313 which I use from Macgregor to Belco or Civic.

The first is - why can't the 313 go THROUGH Kippax instead of turning from Florey Dr straight up Southern Cross Dr? For older people, those with young children and those like me who have arthritis and have trouble walking, this is really necessary. It is quite a walk to the shops from the closest bus stop.

The 903 and 905 which are the weekend equivalents of the 43 and 313 both go through Kippax. Other routes 16, 17, 43, 46 and 44 all go right through the shops.

Currently there seems to be a timetabling problem with the 300 buses and how close they are to the 312-315 or 116,117 buses. Often two are at the interchange in Civic at the same time. At peak hours the 300 should come a couple of minutes before any of the others so that those who just want to go to Belco will get that bus and there would be room in the next one for those who want to use the whole route. This would also apply in the other direction to Tuggeranong I would assume.

At the peak hour of the school day, a 313 leaves Civic at 3.30 and the next is at 4.20. This doesn't seem logical with the number of students going home at that time. It is often difficult too for people who really need a seat to get one. Sometimes bus drivers have to drive past the bus stops because the buses are too full for any more passengers. This happens a lot at UC on the way to Belconnen.

I know the 46 during the day time was scrapped for the 43 and 45 to come back. However both these buses pass through dunlop at the same time, or a couple of minutes apart, so that there is still an hours' wait for those wanting to go somewhere. Is it possible to co-ordinate different timetables, so that where the routes meet, the buses come at different times? Some other examples are 36/48 along Phillip Ave in Watson, the 36/38, the 45/315 and 34/48/80 at UC. This is especially applicable if bus times are an hour apart.

When creating weekend and night timetables and routes it seems that a couple of routes get combined into one, so that some areas aren't as well serviced; those who live there still have to walk a lot further to the bus stop. It is currently confusing as one of my weekend bus routes does bits of about 3 other routes, and the other one does some different bits.

Having said all that, I am really pleased with the weekend services to my home busstop, except for the long tortuous routes they take. These are the 903 and 905. For my purposes they leave Belco at half hour intervals so that I have a much better service than I do in the middle of a week day. AND they both go through Kippax. This is what we need all day every day.

best wishes

ML

Submission 25 (Fraser)

Dear Mary, Bob and Belc Council

I am a resident of Fraser East and a regular user of ACTION buses. You will agree that a vibrant and safe public transport is essential for making Canberra green and residents feel safe.

In this regard, I wish to bring to your kind attention the poor administration of ACTION bus services. Please see the attachments.

I hope that the issues highlighted in the attachment will be presented by you to the ACT Government's inquiry into ACTION buses. I would appreciate if you could get full and honest facts, responses and outcomes from ACTION while keeping my identity confidential.

To understand the seriousness of the problems, please make surprise visits to interchanges after 8 pm and late evening on weekends. A significant number of people

need to travel late evenings and weekends. If no satisfactory solutions are available, many have no option but to use a car.

Thank you.

Best regards,
B

ACTION's Inaction: Problems with ACTION bus services

1. Crime in ACTION Interchanges:

- Interchanges are not really safe for commuters, especially after hours and weekends.
- Countless reports in the last several years in local press of robbery, assaults, gangs etc and there does not seem to be a reduction/ end.
- I personally saw spilt blood on several occasions shortly after a crime occurred.
- Numerous bus drivers attest to the fact that criminals are having free run. Some of them are victims of crime as well.
- I wrote to ACTION on this issue and their response and approach are very disappointing. Please see the attached correspondence.
- Cameras does not seem to function or useful.
- ACTION does not seem to take crime seriously.
- ACTION's response on this issue is no different to one usually given by services operated in a Third World economy.

2. Poor Customer service:

- ACTION customer service office and its officers are badly located in interchanges, not easily approachable
- Late night and weekend users of buses have no way to contact ACTION customer services on phone for any help.
- Facilities like toilets and enclosures are badly maintained and located.
- Many toilets and enclosures are unsafe during evenings and weekends, not to mention late nights.
- Printed materials are having too many errors lately.
- There is no hope of good customer service let alone an innovative one.
- Drivers do not seem to be properly and professionally trained
- Some drivers seem to be mentally challenged.
- As a user of buses for several years I notice that ACTION is not very pro-active and changes happen very slowly.

3. Problems with bus design, maintenance and schedules:

- Many of the buses are not properly heated or cooled. Drivers switch them off as they fancy and without consulting passengers.
- Seats are not very comfortable even in new buses. Many corridors take than 40 min – 1 hour to travel.
- Brand new buses have a spot shortly after driver's seat where it is hard for most standing passengers to hold their balance when the bus accelerates or slows down and some tripped over. A simple support beam could help without compromising wheel chair access. Its ridiculous ACTION did not do anything so far.
- Inter town services take more than an hour to cover major centres and there are no head rests for passengers!
- Seats are not cleaned as frequently as necessary. It is especially annoying for office goers to sit on dirty seats.
- Buses used after school trips are filthy but put back in service without cleaning the mess.
- A minority of not-so-old buses are particularly badly designed and uncomfortable to travel. They are still in service.
- Schedules changes are not properly communicated.

Submission 26

I have had the good fortune to work from time to time in Geneva, for periods up to 6 Months.

Geneva is a city about the size of Canberra, and even has a lake and a water jet. The city and suburbs are somewhat Y shaped (a Y on its side, with the stem pointing west), due the insertion of the lake and the River Rhone exit more or less in the middle of town. It has a (small) international airport not far from the middle of town (like here). It is not a national capital, but it does have major international organisations based there (bits of UN). The major difference between Geneva and Canberra would be the proximity of French towns of reasonable size around Geneva, which might be seen to effectively increase the population – although the suburban transport links do not run far into France.

Geneva has a very good bus service, a tram route which serves the south arm of the Y and the stem and extends now over the river to the north side and a mainline train service with a terminus at the airport and a major station at Cornavin in the middle of town. The train service is part of the Swiss Federal Railways system and connects Geneva to the rest of the country. It also has TGV service into France

Key features of their bus system

1. The buses are frequent and run to a strict timetable. People actually plan journeys based on the timetable. This timeliness is important (more important than speed of travel)
2. Tickets are not sold on most bus routes. There are ticket machines at the stops, and most people buy a monthly pass anyway (\$55 when I was there in late 90s). This minimizes delays at stops.

3. There are many bus lanes and bus priority lights. A bus driver can apply a parking ticket to a vehicle parked in a bus lane.
4. The buses are well patronised.
5. The bus routes are rich. You can get to most places. I did not have a car there and did not feel the need of one.
6. The buses run late at night.
7. Car parking is difficult and fuel is expensive. (\$1.40 per litre in 97, as I recall). A large fuel tax was imposed after the populace voted FOR it in a referendum

The same remarks apply to the trams, except for 5.

I believe Geneva is not a bad model for Canberra. I get somewhat annoyed that our politicians travel overseas on the public purse and yet seem to learn little when they are away.

In Canberra, we could have: buses like the above, a frequent TGV like service to Sydney, a bus/tram/TGV hub at Kingston, a Tram or light rail route airport/Kingston/City, and maybe another Tram/Light rail route down the long bit of Canberra. Our rail connection to Sydney is a joke. It is silly that we fly to Sydney and the aircraft taxi time at each end usually exceeds the flying time, and then at neither end are you where you want to be.

LS

Submission 27

Greetings

I would like to make a submission in relation to ACTION buses.

I have been a resident of Canberra for nearly 40 years. I do have a car, but have not always had a car. I have had a car when my children were small. I then was forced to travel by bus around Canberra. I found this most unsuccessful as buses never seemed to coordinate at the Bus Interchanges, and I was always late to pick up my (no so small) children. I worked in school hours. I tried to find another solution rather than taking a bus to work, etc. I decided to cycle everywhere I could around Canberra. I have been cycling to and from work for nearly 30 years. I love cycling. However, when it rained, I took the bus and timed my trips and found that I could always get to my destination (which was always 14k each way) quicker than the bus. I find the buses in peak hour are packed, and on occasions the buses have deliberately driven past my bus stop, not picking up passengers, and passengers left stranded to wait 20 or 30 mins for the next bus.

I have been a senior/pensioner for 4 years. I am astounded that I cannot travel on the buses until after 9am. Why is this? Do I become a senior citizen only after 9am and after 6.30pm? To me this is unacceptable. I have recently returned from Melbourne after living there for 4 years. This sort discrimination did not exist in Melbourne.

Recently, I have been working part-time but now a 20k cycle from home (one way), so I thought I would utilise the bus racks. The first day I used it to go home, so I thought the City Interchange would be my best bet and I could just get any bus going to Belconnen, and then ride to Page. This was some 2 weeks ago. The rack was easy to manage, but only after waiting for over an hour for a bus to come along with a bus rack. This was between about 2.30 and 3.30. The second time I used it, the bus driver as insulting and rude – must have been having a bad day – so I said to myself that I would only use it again on an emergency, e.g., breaking one's leg or something.

This is a city of cars. I have done my own survey on cars travelling to and from work and I have established that probably about 9 out of 10 cars carried only one person – the driver. I say that the ACT Government encourages the use of a car. Easy to find a car space for the day, easy roads and reasonably cheap to park (too cheap). For sure the bike lanes are great and a lot of them in need of repair, but great, nonetheless. If the ACT Government were fair dinkum about people getting out of their cars and taking a bus, or cycling, they would pump money into our transport system, e.g. make the buses connect at interchanges, cheaper fares, not be age discriminatory, like myself, put racks on all buses, don't growl at the kids for using a "normal bus". These costs associated with pumping money into public transport can't be as expensive as the new Gungahlin overpass! Public transport should not be about making money – it should be about moving the community about cheaply and providing a service – a fairer service for people least able to afford a car. Get with the 21st century.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion.

Regards
JT

Submission 28

The Belconnen Senior Citizens have a carpet bowling morning twice a week which starts at 9.30am. The 47 bus which leaves Belconnen at 8.46am arrives back at 9.28am (it is usually running at least 5 mins late). It would help considerably if the timetable was brought forward at least 5 mins which would help the senior citizens from Giralang and Kaleen so as not to hold up proceedings. They still have a 5 minute walk from the bus stop.

The recent change of timetables was very inconvenient for doctors appointments, which are to suit doctors not the buses.

JA

Submission 29

[paraphrase of phone conversation with Ken Smith, a BCC committee member]

I used to receive 8 or more calls a week complaining about the bus services, this has now dropped off greatly – only 2 calls of complaint since the changes were introduced.

The restoral of services on 30 April 2007 appears to have largely alleviated problems in the West Belconnen region, particularly for access to bus services for the active elderly.

I don't believe the 43/45 routes will ever be money-making routes. However they serve an important purpose as a "sweeper" service which collects local passenger traffic, particularly to and from Kippax, taking pressure off the major trunk routes of 312/313/314/315. As a result, punctuality has improved, on the 312 and 315 services in particular.

My only complaint is that the government has not publicized the changes well enough, with the result that many people are not aware of the improvements!