LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT, AND CITY SERVICES
Ms Jo Clay MLA (Chair), Ms Suzanne Orr MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Mark Parton MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into EV Vehicle Adoption in the ACT

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To: LA Committee - PTCS
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To the STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT AND CITY SERVICES

I present my comments on the Inquiry into EV Vehicle Adoption in the ACT.

The main points I address below are:

- My perception of the reasons people I know are not buying EVs (availability, not cost)
- My opinion on what the government can do to encourage EV adoption (AC chargers in residential/office car parks)
- My opinion on what the government should not be doing to encourage EV adoption (subsidising vehicles)

I've driven my Model 3 SR+ from Canberra to Brisbane and back, Canberra to Adelaide to Kangaroo Island through Great Ocean Road to Mallacoota and back, so I can assure you that the limited range of contemporary EVs is not a reason that people aren't buying EVs. From my perspective the reasons that most people in Canberra aren't driving EVs come down to the limited supply (especially of SUVs, Utes and small cars) and fossil fuel lies such as "EVs need regular battery replacement" (they need battery replacement about as regularly as diesel cars need engine replacement).

As more people drive EVs regularly, we'll get over the misinformation from the fossil fuel industry (all those lies such as "batteries are worse for the environment", and "EVs need regular battery replacement which is really expensive", and "you can't use an EV if you don't have a garage").

There's not much the Australian government can do about EV supply. We could try subsidising purchases, but that it just throwing money into the market to divert production from other countries. In the meantime the people who want an EV are still waiting for them because production is so low. In five to ten years the market will be better supplied with vehicles in many more market segments (SUVs, Utes, econoboxes), and the second hand market will be better supplied locally. That's time the ACT government can be preparing for the migration from ICE to EV.

As the number of EVs increases the infrastructure to support long road trips will improve. As an example today we have Tesla and Chargefox 150kW+ chargers in Goulburn, and an NRMA 50kW charger in Mittagong. There are enough EVs driving the Canberra-Sydney route that there are sometimes queues of cars waiting at Mittagong (a few days ago I saw a picture of someone waiting for five other EVs at the Mittagong charger, that represents a wait time of around 2 to 3 hours depending on how selfish the other EV drivers are being). EVIE Network is already commissioning two DC fast chargers at Sutton Forest (the Macdonalds which is a popular stopping spot for people driving Canberra-Sydney in ICE vehicles), that will be two extra DCFC making that route viable for shorter range vehicles.

The Government doesn't need to do much to help other than helping the commercial charger networks get development approvals completed faster.

As far as government interventions go, the best thing to do will be to support installation of 7kW–22kW AC chargers in office, mall, apartment, and townhouse car parks. Installing DC fast chargers is not going to address the direct needs of apartment dwellers, and it will be an extra component of emotional friction to adopting EVs. DC fast charging is not comparable to petrol stations: you can't just turn up and plug in and wait a few minutes for the car to charge. Slow AC chargers in "every car space" on the other hand will allow apartment dwellers to enjoy the benefit of the "always full battery" where they no longer have to think about whether they have enough charge in the battery to get to where they're going — just get in the car and go.

To support installation of AC chargers in "every car park" the Government might want to explore options such as direct subsidies, or land tax discounts for properties that have installed a high proportion of AC chargers, or perhaps even mandating that bodies corporate assist individual owners with installation of AC chargers. It might make life easier for lawyers in the ACT if the government explores recommending or legislating a certain number of installation styles so that we don't end up with 101 different legal situations for every 95 charger installs.

I commend the project to install 50 chargers across Canberra, though I'd like to see more support for installing AC chargers especially in apartment complexes, office car parks, and the various retail car parks around Canberra. In my opinion the best type of AC charger to support is the Type 2 socket, where the EV owner brings their own Type 2 charging cable. This will reduce the financial risk of vandalism/copper theft since the charging cables aren't going to be present when the chargers aren't being used. There are many commercial installers available in Australia with various financing models from direct purchase ("free" chargers to attract cashed up customers with nothing to do for a few hours) through to network-owned chargers that are billed per charge (this allows the chargers to pay for themselves). AC chargers are ideal for situations where vehicles are expected to be parked for several hours at a time (eg: a carpark serving a cinema, office, or residential carparks.

As far as affordability goes, my previous car was a Honda Jazz ($20k purchase price), my current car is a Tesla Model 3 SR+ ($72k purchase price). I would not normally buy a car in this price range but I saved up my lunch money for 8 years to buy it because I want people to see more EVs on the road. I expect this will be the last car I own. The price of EVs is not the great barrier that many people think it is: sure, you'll hear from a lot of people that "EVs are expensive" but the main issue is that EVs are in short supply so the manufacturers are focussing on the higher margin market segments (luxury sedans, large SUVs and hatches). As production increases, the cheaper cars will arrive. Subsidising purchases will continue to be a case of giving rich people free money for quite some time to come. I appreciate the stamp duty exemption that reduced my $77k expense by a couple of thousand dollars, but it was help I didn't really need.

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[redacted]

PS: I welcome further discussion via email if you need clarification on the claims made and opinions I expressed in this submission.