

Low Emissions and Active Transport

Policy Position Statement

- Key messages:** PHAA will advocate for the development and implementation of a range of measures to encourage uptake of active and public transport options and discourage the use of private motorised vehicle.
- Cross-portfolio initiatives at the national, state/territory and local levels to make active and public transport options more accessible and user-friendly will be key to this approach.
- Key policy positions:**
1. The transport sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and our reliance on private motor vehicles is also a major contributor to the lack of physical activity in Australia.
 2. Active transport is the mix of walking and cycling, integrated with public transport used for commuting and travelling instead of private motorised vehicles and taxis/ridesharing.
 3. Increased use of active transport, particularly in urban areas, delivers direct and indirect benefits for personal, community and environmental health.
 4. A range of strategies need to be developed and implemented by Governments to encourage increased use of active and public transport to achieve improvements in both environmental and health outcomes.
- Audience:** Federal, State and Territory and Local Governments, policymakers and program managers, PHAA members, media.
- Responsibility:** PHAA Ecology and Environment Special Interest Group
- Contacts:** Dr Lea Merone – Convenor, Ecology and Environment SIG
- Date adopted:** 29 October 2020

Low emissions and active transport

Policy position statement

(This position statement should be read in conjunction with related PHAA policy position statements on Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity in Australia; Physical Activity; and Safe Climate.)

PHAA affirms the following principles:

1. There are two major public health concerns with exhaust from fossil fuel powered vehicles:
 - a. Emissions which contribute to air pollution and are directly hazardous to human health
 - b. Emissions of greenhouse gases which contribute to climate change.
2. Government investment in infrastructure and willingness to regulate is required to achieve public health benefits for the whole community. The role of government is to lead, to invest, and to encourage others to action.

PHAA notes the following evidence:

3. The transport sector is a major contributor to global warming, responsible for 19% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the year to September 2019 (100.3 of 530.82 Mt CO₂-e),¹ and projected to increase to 108 Mt CO₂-e by 2030.² Reducing particulate and other emissions from the transport sector will have benefits for global warming and for health.^{3, 4}
4. The extensive reliance on private motor vehicles built into urban design is a major contributor to the lack of physical activity in Australia.
5. Active transport is the mix of walking and cycling, integrated with public transport, used for commuting and travelling, instead of private motorised vehicles and taxis/ridesharing. Active transport promotes individual and community health and wellbeing.
6. There are three components to reducing emissions from transport:
 - a. To promote less use of motorised transport by reducing the need to travel (working in smaller communities); compact urban design; non-physical/electronic connectivity), more efficient use of travel including multiple destinations in one trip, sharing of vehicles (car-pooling), disincentives to motor vehicle use.
 - b. To encourage active and public transport options.
 - c. To ensure that motorised transport has no (or very low) per person emissions. Replacement of petroleum-using engines with electric engines powered by renewable energy would be the most effective way of achieving this where vehicular transport is required.⁵

7. Traffic calming, speed reduction and smoothing traffic flow measures both reduce emissions and enhance safety, and make active transport more appealing.^{6,7} Separating motorised traffic from slower active traffic improves safety and exposure to emissions.
8. Regular physical activity is associated with enhanced health and reduced risk for all-cause mortality and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, ischaemic stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon cancers, osteoporosis and depression.^{8,9}
9. Access to clean, safe and affordable public transport is also an equity issue. All people need access to employment, services, recreation and social interaction. Current public transport services cater mainly for people living in cities, with fewer services for rural and regional people, those living in outer suburbs, and those needing to travel across or tangential to the central business districts require interurban and inter suburban public transport. Having to travel to an urban centre to travel out again is wasteful of both energy and people's time.
10. Heavy and light rail transport is the safest and lowest emission form of mass transport. It can carry bikes and link with inter-urban transport.
11. Increased use of active transport confers direct and indirect benefits for personal, community and environmental health.¹⁰⁻¹²

Direct benefits

12. As little as 30 minutes physical activity daily helps to improve physical fitness.¹³ Even moderate exercise promotes psychological wellbeing, reduces chronic diseases, improves co-ordination, increases bone strength and reduces injury risk.
13. Use of public transport may promote physical activity in that people need to get to transport nodes, either by walking or bicycling. Thus more use of public transport has health benefits through increased physical activity, community benefits through reduced road trauma and traffic congestion, and environmental benefits through reduced air pollution including GHG emissions.
14. Reduced use of motor vehicles will result in reduced exposure to particulate and other air pollution, noise pollution for drivers, residents and workers along traffic corridors, and other users of public spaces.

Indirect benefits

15. The benefits that will derive indirectly from an improved public transport system are perhaps more extensive than the direct ones. Such benefits may include:
 - a. Building social capital and improving social connectedness, since people are interacting with others whom they see on shared journeys or while walking/biking around their neighbourhoods.¹⁴ This has the potential to reduce socio-economic inequalities¹⁵ and has mental health benefits as it reduces peoples' sense of insularity.¹⁶
 - b. Ultimately, a well-developed and effective transport system could result in reduced commuting time which would provide improved social benefits.¹⁷
 - c. Greater use of active and public transport should result in reduced GHG emissions which mitigates global warming.
16. Implementing this policy would contribute towards the achievement of [UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing](#) and [13 - Climate Action](#).

PHAA seeks the following actions:

17. Active transport to be encouraged by:
 - a. Provisions of quality infrastructure for walking and cycling (safe, connected cycle and walkways), workplace facilities for bike storage and showering, and provision of shaded cycle parking.
 - b. Measures to separate drivers and cyclists (off-road cycleways).
 - c. Public bike share schemes.
 - d. Social marketing to normalise cycling and walking as means of transport, educate about reduced morbidity and mortality associated with cycling, and change the perception that special gear is needed to cycle.
 - e. Improved availability of urban green space.
 - f. Removing and prohibiting unnecessary restrictions on cycling such as requirements to carry identification.
18. Actively encourage public transport by making it as cost effective (affordable and at least no more costly) and amenable (easy to use, quick and convenient) as private cars.¹⁸
19. Make public transport infrastructure attractive for use by ensuring adequate physical capacity and robustness, but also the location, coverage and frequency, ease of success, actual personal and infrastructure safety and a positive public perception of that safety.
20. Make public transport more amenable by:
 - a. Well designed and maintained graffiti-free and secure buses, light and heavy trains and ferries and stops, stations and wharves.
 - b. Integrating public and other active transport modes to accommodate the transport of bicycles.
 - c. Frequency enough service to be useful.
 - d. Having sufficient capacity to carry expected numbers comfortably including those with bicycles.
 - e. Ticketing to enable people to make multiple trips, in multiple directions on different transport modes, with ease.
21. Integrate walking and bicycle use with public transport by designing an extensive, linked (with existing transport corridors and other networks), well maintained, safe to use (free from obstacles, separated from traffic), and secure (well lit, patrolled) network of walking and cycle ways, that follow the routes that people tend to use (rather than following vacant usable land).
22. Use of private vehicles will also need to be actively discouraged by policies that increase inconvenience and prioritise public transport, pedestrian and bicycle travel over private motor vehicle use. Specific examples include:
 - a. Fees or charges that discourage use of vehicles, particularly discouraging entry into and parking in central cities, or where access to frequent and reliable public transport is possible.
 - b. Subsidies and tax rebates for people and businesses that provide active transport and public transport options and support for themselves or their employees. Specific strategies for

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employers to encourage staff to use active transport may include not providing vehicles or parking as part of employee benefits, offering cycle use as part of employment packages instead, and/or ensuring appropriate infrastructure for cyclists (bike racks, change rooms).

23. Any planned replacement of public transport infrastructure and equipment needs to reduce rather than increase GHG emissions.
24. Promotion of low emissions vehicles which can be achieved by:
 - a. Removal of tax rebates for petrol/diesel vehicles
 - b. Incentives for providing electric or hybrid vehicles
 - c. Changed fringe benefit tax arrangements to support active and public transport options
 - d. Phasing out diesel vehicles and replace them with electric vehicles.¹⁹

PHAA resolves to:

25. Advocate for the above steps to be taken based on the principles in this position statement.
26. Encourage its own staff and members to use active and public transport.

First ADOPTED 2011, revised and re-endorsed 2014, 2017 and 2020

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