

VIEW FROM CANBERRA



May 21

Why we do the things we do

As we near a federal election it is timely that we give a 'nod' to the importance of the advocacy work undertaken for the bus and coach industry. The success of the Tasmanian Bus Association in the Tasmanian state election on 1 May is a recent example of consistent advocacy work netting significant commitment from the re-elected Tasmanian Liberal government to invest in more buses, more services and upgraded infrastructure. The Tasmanian government has promised \$81.5 mil in new route and school buses over the next 4 years and over \$60 mil to implement smart ticketing, bus shelter upgrades and new park/ride facilities. The quick and decisive action undertaken by TasBus to circulate an 'election primer' to all parliamentarians by mid-April (just 2 weeks after election announcement) was no doubt a winner advocacy move.

To know why we do the things we do, we need to look at why the federal government (past and present) do the things *they* do.

Advocacy and having a strong presence in Canberra is important because it drives growth in our industry and keeps away bad regulation that will make it harder to run your business. Above all else we do what we do to make our industry stronger and your businesses more viable in the future. The more money that gets invested in public transport the more that people use it, and this generates more demand for your bus services and your bus products. We see this as the virtuous circle of policy for our industry.

In 1996, the BIC was initially established to provide a stronger voice for the Australian bus and coach industry in national policy making and advocacy in federal and state parliaments. Our remit was focused on road transport related regulation, the management of public transport networks and improving safety across the heavy vehicle sector.

In 2006, our 'foundation charter' morphed into a national '*moving people strategy*'. The core of this strategy was to generate a multi-party approach at the federal level to address the problems effecting Australian households and businesses such as traffic congestion, car dependency and the environmental sustainability of our transport systems.

This work paid off and in 2008 the federal government invested more into PT than all combined investment since the federation of Australia. In general terms, a federal government supports PT indirectly. Examples of this include road infrastructure (sustainable transport networks) and net-zero emission cities (tackling congestion, new energy, ensuring a healthy population).

By 2010, our *moving people strategy* began to embody outcomes such as planning for and creating 'liveable' cities and regions, providing adequate transport options for all (socially disadvantaged and people with disabilities) and reform of road pricing (charges to better reflect the real costs associated with road travel and allocation of revenue for improved PT services) – just to name a few!



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The BIC has always argued that the federal government has a role to play in investing in public transport infrastructure, with a view that the states/territories are responsible for the public transport provision. Getting the nuance of this argument right, at times, has been challenging.

A significant part of the BIC's mandate is to also advocate for sensible regulation and national law on heavy vehicle technical issues. Much of this work goes on behind the scenes and often for many years before we get the outcomes needed; and it means being incorporated as a member on select government working groups to ensure the bus industry agenda is heard by all stakeholders. The ultimate aim of our technical advocacy is to save time and money for bus businesses.

Some of the visible technical wins include increases in bus mass limits and the production of federally funded industry advisories such as the Bus Fire Mitigation Advisory, Bus Fire Emergency Evacuation Protocols and upgrading of bus door safety standards. But these outcomes are really only a small part of the work, as it is the things that are **not** seen that can have the largest effect on Industry. All vehicle regulation, standards and national laws undergo cyclic updates and/or reviews in some form and a key role of the BIC is to minimise the impact and where possible maximise the outcomes for industry viability. For example, a seemingly simple change to a clause within a regulation may have a potentially massive negative impact on our industry and it is the BIC's role to work with the regulators to assess and where required, alter clauses to achieve the intended outcome, minimise the effect and in some cases maximise the outcome for industry.

Over the coming editions of the View from Canberra, we intend to provide more detailed reports on *why we do the things we do*. In the meantime, readers can keep informed by subscribing to our national e-bulletin by contacting communications@bic.asn.au.

The BIC secretariat is committed to the moving people vision that enhances the sustainability and liveability of Australia's cities and regions by using bus and coach transportation. Readers can connect with us on 02 6247 5990 or by email to enquiries@bic.asn.au.

Bus Australia Network

