

Forums

QCOSS FORUM REPORT TRANSPORT DISADVANTAGE

30 AUGUST 2011

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Overview

It has been several years since QCOSS held a specific forum focusing on transport. With the introduction of the new Go Card system and the increasing cost of living pressures facing Queenslanders, it was timely that QCOSS organise a forum on this issue. The aim of the forum was to bring together service providers from a range of backgrounds who could provide QCOSS with information about the current transport issues facing disadvantaged Queenslanders as part of the roll out of the 2011 forums.

Transport disadvantage is a significant issue within the community. It involves difficulties accessing transport (both public and private) and difficulties in maintaining private transport. The transport disadvantage issue is one of equity. Access to transport enables individuals to access employment, education, health services, recreational activities, family and friends and is therefore a critical resource for building an inclusive and healthy society.

The Transport Disadvantage Forum is an important part of QCOSS's policy development process. Feedback from the forum will inform QCOSS's *Access to Transport* policy paper, which is currently being updated. This will also inform the development of other advocacy products, such as the QCOSS Budget Submission, and be used to inform face-to-face advocacy work conducted by staff. The forum was an opportunity to drill down into issues and workshop possible policy recommendations.

There were many issues raised during the forum. A significant issue raised was the affordability of public transport. It was argued that public transport in Brisbane is too expensive, especially for people facing economic hardship from unemployment or underemployment. Related to this was the issue of fare increases and the removal of daily, weekly and monthly ticketing/caps. Another important issue was accessibility. It was argued that the frequency and availability of services is poor, particularly for people living further from the city centre. It was argued that QCOSS should advocate for the extension of concessions to all health care card holders as a priority action as well as for the reintroduction of capped or daily, weekly or monthly tickets.

Policy issues

Public transport

The conversations at the forum were dominated by the issue of Public Transport, specifically the high cost of public transport in Brisbane/South-East Queensland and the lack of concessions for disadvantaged people within the community who rely on public transport as a primary means of mobility.

During the workshop participants were asked to list all of the issues facing service providers and clients as a brainstorming activity. What follows is a list of all of the issues raised.

- The cost of using public transport in Brisbane is high, higher than any other city in Australia.
- Unemployed people need public transport to access services and attend job interviews and training.
- Two participants submitted to the group a table (see below) that they had created showing differences in the pricing for public transport in different capital cities in Australia.

TABLE 1: Comparison of public transport fares in Australian cities (Source: Michael Swifte & Tony Corbett)

	Brisbane	Melbourne	Sydney	Adelaide	Perth
Zone 1 Single trip	\$3.90 (\$2.65 with Go Card)	\$3.80 (valid for 2 hrs of use)	\$3.20	\$2.80	\$2.60
Radius of Zone 1 from GPO (estimate)	2.5km	10km	10km	N/A	8km
Concession fares for health care card holders	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Availability of return ticket	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Availability of daily ticket	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Availability of weekly ticket	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES

- Newly arrived migrants/refugees have to attend a significant amount of training services to assist them in the settlement process.
- People relying on public transport as their primary source of transportation have higher usage needs. Need to access shops, recreational activities, services, employment, education and training, which requires transport systems that are cross suburb, not just in and out of the city and capped fares.
- Service frequency is poor, particularly in areas outside of Brisbane, such as Toowoomba.
- Transport zones are too small.

- Paper tickets are more expensive than the Go Card, which discriminates against people who have difficulties in maintaining or using a Go Card, such as people who are homeless.
- The Go Card policies governing fares are complicated and not well communicated.
- Translink does not respond to criticisms.
- There is no return ticket or daily weekly or monthly ticket available.
- Some parents have difficulty in managing the Go Card. Young people tend to overuse the card on weekends because there is no daily cap, leaving no money on the card to go to school during the week.
- There are accessibility problems for people using wheelchairs.
- There are accessibility issues for people using prams.
- Construction of low density satellite suburbs on the urban fringe are not able to be serviced by adequate public transport infrastructure, forcing people into car ownership.
- There is no daily cap on fares, disadvantaging people who have to travel to many different locations during the day and thus have to get on and off frequently.
- Cost of the Air Train is prohibitive.
- Focus on fare evasion is misguided.
- The high cost of public transport is posing difficulties for service providers who provide support for clients to access transport (ACT government was suggested as an alternative model to alleviate this problem).
- It is difficult and expensive to travel cross suburb because of the way the public transport system is set up. Passengers have to travel into the city and out again to travel to nearby suburbs.
- People entering the workforce in jobs in industrial areas where they are required to start early in the morning have limited public transport options because of the poor servicing of these areas early in the morning and a lack of capital to purchase a car as an alternative while establishing themselves in new jobs.
- Shift workers have limited access to public transport because no buses at night.
- The situation with public transport is worsening in terms of cost and accessibility.

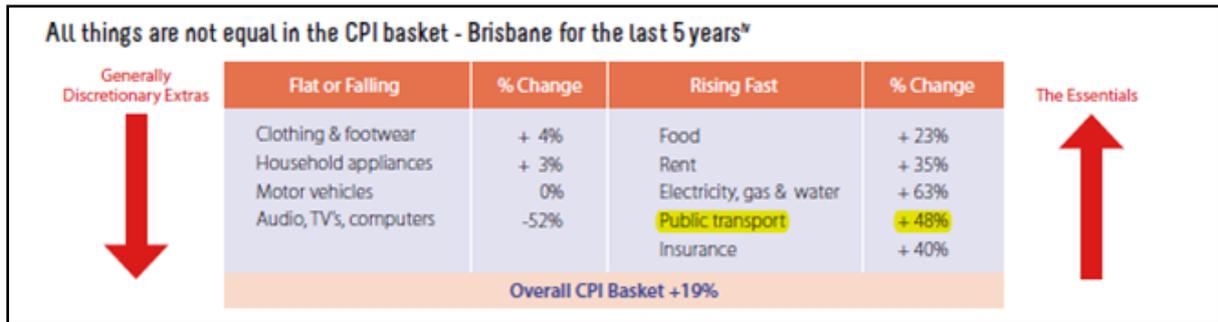


Figure 1: Changes in CPI for selected items in Brisbane over the past 5 yearsⁱ

Community transport

While the majority of the suggestions were over public transport, it was noted by one participant that there was a lack of volunteers to support community transport initiatives to help older people with their mobility.

Recommendations

While there were a number of suggestions about how to alleviate transport disadvantage with regards to public transport, there was an overarching consensus amongst the group that QCOSS campaign on one or two key issues:

- a fairer concessions system: introduce concessions for people holding health care cards (to capture the unemployed, underemployed and those facing special circumstances)
- change the Go Card ticketing/fare system: including a daily cap and/or daily, weekly or monthly ticketing.

It was also recommended that QCOSS support the following initiatives:

- Initiate a survey of service providers to have findings that can support any advocacy activities around public transport
- Gather case studies to illustrate the issues
- Start an online petition
- Form a campaign group to work together

What happens next?

The feedback from these forums will feed into our sector development and policy work in the coming year.

In particular, it will feed into our platform of policy positions, which are updated as required, and our Pre-Budget Submission in November. The Pre-Budget Submission, and our broader policy platform, underpin QCOSS advocacy work for the coming twelve months and help us to respond to various government consultation processes quickly and meaningfully.

Your input to this process each year is invaluable. If you have any further questions please contact policy@qcross.org.au.

Attendees

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Tony Corbett	Youth Worker
Michael Swifte	Youth Worker
Robyne Apps	TDSA
Penny Neller	MDA
Ken Houliston	The Spot Community Services
Craig Rowley	MS Society
Vera Somerwil	NSA
Rosemary Woods	CentreCare CFCS
Adam Barnes	Brisbane Youth Centre
Jenny Schultz	Micah
Kylie Robertson	Micah
Rosanna Tigani	Micah
Robyne Apps	TDSA
Linda Parmenter	QCOSS
Stephen Hutchinson	QCOSS
Brendon Radford	QCOSS

¹ QCOSS 2011. *Cost of Living Report 2011: Ensuring low income households a basic standard of living*. Issue 1 / May, Queensland Council of Social Service: West End.