Victorian Community Transport Network

2026 Victorian State Election Platform

Connecting Communities, Advancing Social Justice, Reducing Transport Disadvantage

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Executive Summary

Community Transport is an essential but often overlooked part of Victoria's social and transport infrastructure. It is invisible in policy and therefore receives poor to no level of funding when it could address such issues as ambulance ramping, social isolation and loneliness, poor access to services esp in rural and regional areas, children's school attendance where transport is the issue and people's capacity to get to a job. Every day, community transport providers enable those experiencing transport disadvantage to access healthcare, education, employment, shopping, volunteering, social participation and community life.

The Victorian Community Transport Network calls on all political parties and candidates contesting the 2026 Victorian State Election to commit to a stronger, more equitable and better coordinated community transport system.

The evidence is clear. The Victorian Community Transport Mapping Project found that community transport is a distinct service model supporting transport disadvantaged Victorians, yet it suffers from low visibility, fragmented funding, workforce challenges, unmet demand and inequitable access across the state. The report identified the need to address inequity of access for socially excluded Victorians, improve collaboration, build workforce sustainability and increase recognition of community transport as a unique service sector.

Community transport is not simply transport. It is social infrastructure that promotes inclusion, independence, wellbeing and participation. The Australian Community Transport Association [ACTA] identifies community transport as providing mobility for people who cannot readily use mainstream transport services, supporting social connection, participant choice, ageing in place, early intervention and improved community outcomes. Community transport providers collectively support hundreds of thousands of Australians every year through millions of trips.

The Victorian Community Transport Network therefore calls for a comprehensive Victorian Community Transport Strategy built around recognition, investment, equity and sustainability.

Why Community Transport Matters

Transport disadvantage is a social justice issue.

Without access to transport, people cannot access healthcare, maintain social relationships, participate in community life, engage in education or employment, or remain connected to their communities.

For many Victorians:

- Public transport is unavailable, inaccessible or unsuitable.
- Taxi and rideshare services are unaffordable, lack safety and trust or unavailable.
- Family and informal supports are not always available.
- Driving is no longer an option due to age, disability, illness or cost.

Community Transport fills this gap.

The Victorian Mapping Project found that community transport exists specifically to support transport disadvantaged people and communities where mainstream transport options fail. The project highlighted the extensive but often invisible network of providers operating across Victoria.

Community transport should therefore be recognised as both:

- Essential transport infrastructure; and
- Social inclusion infrastructure.

Election Priority 1

Establish Ministerial Responsibility for Community Transport

The Problem

Community Transport currently falls between multiple portfolios including transport, ageing, disability, health and community services.

This fragmentation results in:

- Lack of policy leadership.
- Poor coordination.
- Inconsistent investment.

- Limited sector visibility.
- No single point of accountability.

Our Ask

The new Victorian Government should:

- Formally allocate responsibility for Community Transport to a designated Minister.
- Establish a Victorian Community Transport Advisory Council.
- Develop a Victorian Community Transport Strategy.
- Report annually on transport disadvantage and funded Community Transport outcomes.

Why It Matters

Community Transport cannot achieve its full potential while responsibility remains fragmented across government.

Dedicated ministerial leadership would provide strategic direction and policy coordination across education, employment, transport, health, aged care, disability and social inclusion.

Election Priority 2

Official Recognition of Community Transport as a Distinct Service Model

The Problem

Community Transport is frequently confused with:

- Client transport.
- Patient transport.
- Taxi services.
- Shuttle services.
- Commercial passenger transport.

The Victorian Mapping Project identified lack of visibility and recognition of community transport as one of the sector's most significant challenges.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Adopt the ACTA formal definition of Community Transport in all policy and strategy.
- Recognise Community Transport as a unique transport and social support model.
- Establish viable funding streams for Community Transport in education, employment, DFFH, transport and health portfolios.
- Embed Community Transport within education, employment, transport, health and social inclusion and service planning.
- Include Community Transport within all relevant accessibility and mobility policies

Why It Matters

Community Transport delivers far more than transport.

It provides:

- Individualised support.
- Door-through-door assistance.
- Safety monitoring.
- Social connection.
- Preventative wellbeing outcomes.
- Community participation.
- Connection to employment opportunities
- Access for vulnerable children to school and kindergarten

These outcomes cannot be replicated solely through mainstream transport services.

Election Priority 3

Address Transport Disadvantage as a Social Justice Issue

The Problem

Transport disadvantage contributes directly to:

- Social isolation.
- Poor health outcomes.
- Educational disadvantage
- Missed medical appointments.
- Reduced community participation.
- Employment exclusion.

- Geographic inequity.

People living in rural, regional and outer metropolitan areas are disproportionately affected.

The Victorian Mapping Project identified addressing inequity for socially excluded and transport disadvantaged Victorians as a central challenge facing the sector.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Recognise transport disadvantage as a social justice issue.
- Develop a Victorian Transport Equity Framework.
- Include transport access measures in social inclusion policy and funding.
- Invest in transport solutions targeted to vulnerable communities.

Why It Matters

Mobility is a precondition for participation.

Transport disadvantage should be treated with the same importance as housing, health services, education and digital exclusion.

Election Priority 4

Develop Sustainable and Fair Funding Models

The Problem

Current funding arrangements often fail to reflect:

- Geography.
- Distance travelled.
- Client complexity.
- Operational realities.
- Rural and regional costs.

The Victorian Mapping Project identified fragmented and complex funding arrangements as a major challenge facing providers. The Victorian Government whilst not recognising Community Transport and its widespread infrastructure in policy has not taken opportunities to fund and utilise what already exists to tackle many social problems such as children not attending school due to lack of transport, ambulance ramping, the cost of missed appointments across services and the cost of inefficiently

using client transport [ie. funding a service to transport clients just to its own service] and costly staff to transport clients to services.

The National Community Transport Pricing Model demonstrated that flat-rate funding frequently fails to cover the real costs of delivering community transport, particularly in rural and remote locations. The model found that distance, geography and participant support needs significantly influence service costs.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Adopt evidence-based pricing methodologies for funding the existing Community Transport infrastructure and extending this infrastructure to regions not fully covered.
- Support a needs-based funding approach across all relevant portfolios.
- Fund services according to genuine delivery costs.
- Recognise regional, rural and remote cost differences.
- Support innovation and service sustainability.

Why It Matters

Fair pricing creates:

- Better service availability.
- More equitable access.
- Long-term provider sustainability.
- Improved outcomes for transport disadvantaged communities.

Election Priority 5

Strengthen Volunteer Infrastructure

The Problem

Volunteers remain the backbone of many community transport services.

However providers face increasing challenges in:

- Volunteer recruitment.
- Volunteer retention.
- Training.
- Compliance.
- Insurance.

- Coordination.

Without investment in volunteer infrastructure, service sustainability is at risk.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Create a Volunteer Transport Support Fund where it funds Community Transport services.
- Fund volunteer recruitment and retention initiatives.
- Invest in volunteer training and coordination.
- Recognise volunteering as critical transport infrastructure.
- Support regional volunteer development programs.

Why It Matters

Many community transport services would not exist without volunteers.

Investment in volunteering is an investment in mobility, social connection and community resilience.

Election Priority 6

Support Service Sustainability for Unfunded and Underfunded Providers

The Problem

Many community transport organisations receive little or no direct state government funding despite providing essential community services.

The Victorian Mapping Project highlighted the complexity of funding arrangements across the state and the varying sustainability challenges faced by providers.

The current approach to utilising Community transport in Victoria is inefficient.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Establish a Community Transport Sustainability Fund.
- Provide operational grants for unfunded providers to strengthen the existng infrastructure and ensure consistent standards of service delivery.

- Create pathways for emerging services to access state government funding across all relevant portfolio areas.
- Support innovation and local service development.

Why It Matters

People who are transport disadvantaged in Victoria should have equitable access to Community transport services which are of quality standard.

Election Priority 7

Invest in Low-Emission Community Transport Fleets

The Problem

Many community transport fleets are ageing and increasingly costly to operate.

The transition to zero-emission vehicles presents opportunities but remains financially challenging for many community-based organisations.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Provide electric vehicle incentives for Community Transport providers.
- Fund charging infrastructure.
- Support regional transition programs.
- Establish dedicated fleet replacement grants.

Why It Matters

Modern fleets will:

- Reduce operating costs.
- Improve environmental outcomes.
- Increase service reliability.
- Support Victoria's emissions reduction goals.

Election Priority 8

Build a Strong and Sustainable Workforce

The Problem

The Victorian Mapping Project identified workforce challenges as a major issue affecting the sector.

Providers face:

- Workforce shortages.
- Increasing compliance requirements.
- Training pressures.
- Recruitment challenges.

Our Ask

The Victorian Government should:

- Develop a Community Transport Workforce Strategy.
- Fund sector training and capability building.
- Support leadership development.
- Create workforce attraction initiatives.

Why It Matters

Sustainable workforce development is essential for service continuity and future growth.

Our Vision for Victoria

By 2030, every Victorian experiencing transport disadvantage should have access to affordable, safe and appropriate Community Transport regardless of age, disability, income or postcode.

The Victorian Community Transport Network calls on all political parties and candidates to commit to:

1. Ministerial responsibility for Community Transport.
2. Formal recognition of Community Transport as a distinct service model across all relevant portfolios using the ACTA definition of Community Transport.
3. Recognition of transport disadvantage as a social justice issue.

4. Sustainable and equitable funding reform to fund and expand the infrastructure across Victoria in all relevant portfolio areas.
5. Investment in volunteer infrastructure.
6. Support for current unfunded providers who have no current government funding but maintain infrastructure.
7. Transition funding for low-emission fleets.
8. Workforce and sector capability investment.

Community Transport is not simply about moving people.

It is about access to healthcare, social inclusion, economic participation, ageing well, independent living and connected communities.

Mobility is a social justice issue. Community Transport is the solution.

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