Northern Territory Council of Social Service

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It's a long walk to town

NTCOSS applauds Transport Minister Gerry McCarthy's recent proposal for free public transport for all Territorians. "This action would encourage greater community involvement, and bring substantial environmental benefit by reducing the number of cars on the road and the associated pollution" said Central Australian Policy Officer for NTCOSS, Jonathan Pilbrow today.

However, Mr Pilbrow said that more bus routes and greater frequency of services were needed for the system to be fully effective. "Affordable and accessible bus services are essential for disadvantaged Territorians to obtain essential services, seek and hold employment, and simply do their weekly shopping."

"The limited service currently provided by the public buses should be re-examined, with a view to increasing hours of operation and frequency of service."

"The lack of availability of public and community transport forces low income people to rely on other more expensive forms of transport, such as taxis and minibuses, to meet their everyday needs." It can be particularly hard for mothers and their babies to get into town for shopping and accessing services, when they do not have access to public transport ", said Mr Pilbrow.

"People miss out on public transport in the larger centres in the NT because there are no bus routes close to their homes. Some town camp residents in Alice Springs are more than two kilometres from a public bus stop. In regional towns like Tennant Creek and Katherine there are no public bus services at all."

"While NTCOSS congratulates the NT Government for it's recent decision to extend the school bus runs which service town camps, more must be done."

"Next month's 2009/10 NT Budget, presents an enormous opportunity for the Government to make public transport more affordable and accessible" concluded Mr Pilbrow.

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