

DR MARISA PATERSON MLA SPEECH

25 November 2021

'Her Way' Recommendation Report

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

I seek leave to table my 'Her Way' Recommendation Report.

I hereby move the motion in my name on the notice paper.

'Her Way' is a campaign I've developed to support women in my electorate who want to make better use of public transport and active travel.

There are many people in our community who want to rely less on private cars, but don't quite know where to start, or how to overcome barriers and constraints – whether these are real or perceived.

I want to help them create that change; and there are many reasons to do this - at an individual, community and government level.

At a government level, many of those reasons align with a wide range of the ACT Government's key strategic policies, ambitions and intent, including to:

- reduce transport emissions,
- address climate change,
- positively impact preventative health outcomes, and
- contribute to a more livable city.

It's also timely to encourage and support transport mode change to coincide with the disruption that will be caused by the construction of light rail stage 2.

As we all know, the construction of light rail stage 2 will create increased traffic congestion and disruption, particularly for people travelling to the city centre from the southside.

This WILL cause stress and anxiety.

No one likes wasting time in a traffic jam, and I want to do what I can to help my community avoid this.

I commend Minister Steel and his 'Disruption Taskforce' for the work they're doing in this space, and the clear, open, transparent and timely communications being provided to the community about the construction works.

However, I also believe that traffic congestion is everyone's responsibility. We all contribute to the traffic jam in which we're stuck. I once heard a quote: 'You're not *stuck* in the traffic jam. You *are* the traffic jam'.

Madame Speaker, the best way to reduce traffic congestion is to reduce traffic.

In addition to the timing of light rail disruption, the end of one year and start of another, together with a return to offices after the COVID-19 lockdown, also presents a good opportunity to reassess our modes of transport and travel.

At a personal level, there are equally many reasons why people in our community want to make changes to their travel modes, and why I want to support them to do so.

After releasing a public Discussion Paper about active travel and public transport on the 9th of August, I received over 100 comments outlining why and how people would like to make changes, and the barriers and constraints that exist.

Among the reasons given by respondents about their desire to change their travel behaviour were the type of lifestyle they want to live, the type of city in which they wish to live, and the quality of life they wish to lead.

They're not alone in this thinking, and nor is it new. One of the most prominent urban planners of recent times, Jane Jacobs, applied these principles throughout her career, including in Greenwich Village, New York, in the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, this was a time when there was considerable debate about transport disruption and its impact on community.

Fundamentally, Jacobs sought to create safe, amenable, walkable and livable neighbourhoods, particularly through applying a female lens. She is often heralded for having coined the phrases 'social capital' and 'eyes on the street' reflecting her advocacy for the linkage between peopled, active streets and safe, friendly neighbourhoods.

Public transport and active travel present a lifestyle we *should* aspire to. Whether or not we personally want to make greater use of public transport and active travel, it is good for all of us to support those in our community who do want to make these changes.

The more people who use public transport and active travel, the more livable our city is.

For each person who chooses public transport or active travel over private vehicle use, there are reduced emissions from which we all benefit; there is more road space and carparks available for those who continue to drive; our neighbourhoods are more pleasant, safer, and provide greater amenity through the movement of people on foot, by bike and by scooter; and our local businesses and economy prosper.

My car plays a really important role in my life, arguably a critical role in my ability to facilitate my children's lives (between school, friends, and sports all over Canberra and regional NSW) and also much of my role in this job is driving between meetings all over Canberra.

However, I also recognise that I rely on my car perhaps more than I should; and that I can use my bike or public transport for some of the short trips I make close to home, or plan/prioritise a day a week to engage with different modes of transport. And the point is, that I actually *want* to do this!

Through this process I have actually had to question and look at the habits I have created. For example, one reason I have not engaged in active travel or public transport is that I had in my head that I need my car in case a child needs to be picked up from school for whatever reason – but when I think about it, I can honestly say in 13 years of my children going to childcare and school, I can count on one hand the number of times my children have needed to be picked up from school early. So perhaps, I can let go of that anxiety a little and put a contingency plan in place in case I don't have my car on hand and a kid needs to be picked up – it's actually not the end of the world.

So for some of us perhaps there may be a different way.

I acknowledge that not everyone *wants* to change any aspect of their travel behaviour, and not everyone has an ability to do so.

But I want to help support those who *do* want to make changes. And I know, through the results of community input to my 'Her Way' Discussion Paper, that there are plenty of people who want to make those changes.

But they don't know where to start.

The comments provided by the community have been instrumental in helping me better understand how women want to change their travel behaviour, what the key constraints are, and how to best help them to overcome these.

Through my online survey, women were asked questions about their current mode of transport, their appetite for change – and to which mode or modes, for which types of journeys (to work, to the local shops etcetera), flexible working arrangements, and barriers and constraints to their transport options.

Most respondents – 60% – currently travel by private vehicle to and from work, followed by bike riding – 15%; a combination of modes – 9%; and public transport – 7%.

For non-work-related journeys, an even larger percentage (71%) travel by private vehicle, followed by being a passenger in a private vehicle (a further 11%) - making a total of 82% of non-work-related journeys being taken by car.

Many of these journeys are often short, and local.

What was encouraging from the results of the survey is that a high percentage of those respondents – 51% – indicated interest in choosing a different mode of transport, primarily by riding a bike, followed by interest in catching public transport and then in walking.

This is a great place to start!

What we need is not a small handful of people doing active travel perfectly; but hundreds, if not thousands, of people taking small steps.

Key barriers and constraints to enabling these people to make greater use of public transport and active travel include concerns about safety, distance and logistics – having too much to carry, or too much to do on the way; often referred to as ‘trip-chaining’.

Time considerations are a real factor in how respondents to the ‘Her Way’ survey choose to travel. One respondent said:

“Every minute of every day is planned and precious. We have no choice but to choose the most efficient way to do everything”.

I think we can all relate.

Safety concerns were woven into nearly every aspect of barriers and constraints for women about their travel options, and my report recommendations reflect this.

The 43 recommendations in my report are grouped around key themes of ‘communication’, ‘infrastructure’ and ‘creating the ecosystem’.

Some of these include to:

- Provide resources and tools to support people to prepare personalised travel plans;
- Improve communication about the ACT Government’s real-time digital technology apps;

- Design and conduct a dedicated marketing and communications campaign, to further normalise the use of public transport and active travel;
- Continue to invest in the ACT's active travel network, ensuring connectivity and safety, and trialing pop-up separated bike lane interventions;
- Improve communications about secure bike parking locations, and ensure all bike parking facilities are located in areas of high passive surveillance;
- Finalise the End of Trip facilities General Code and associated guidelines;
- Provide more lighting at bus stops, interchanges and as part of the development of light rail stage 2;
- Explore opportunity for increased safety on buses at night-time;
- Review Park and Ride demand and capacity;
- Ensure first and last mile solutions are integrated seamlessly with light rail stage 2;
- Continue to work collaboratively with stakeholder groups;
- Trial street closures for increased people-based activity, similar to that recently undertaken in Manuka;
- Encourage the use of e-bikes;
- Support a culture of flexible working arrangements;
- Establish a process to incorporate diverse and inclusive voices into policy, design and infrastructure outcomes; and
- Continue to encourage and facilitate public transport and active travel to schools.

As part of my own continued work in this space, I'm intending to engage further with Early Childcare ACT and the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association, as well as to continue collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders for some great outcomes.

I also intend to establish a focus group with some of the 'Her Way' respondents to support each other, share our stories to inspire others and to learn from key stakeholder groups.

Regarding stakeholders, we're lucky to have so many skilled, knowledgeable and committed organisations in the ACT who are working in the active travel and public transport sectors.

These organisations carry out really important advocacy work, as well as a broad range of community programs, projects, campaigns and activities.

I thank these groups for their ongoing commitment and tireless efforts, and for their support of and input to my 'Her Way' campaign.

Some of those groups are: Pedal Power ACT, the Amy Gillett Foundation, the Heart Foundation, ACTCOSS, YWCA; Conservation Council ACT, the Physical Activity Foundation, Girls on Bikes ACT and Women's Health Matters.

I've engaged closely with these groups in the last few months. The 'Her Way' report recommendations have been strengthened and verified through their input.

Finally I would like to thank Anna Gurnhill from my Office for the work she has done in coordinating this campaign and her contribution to positive active travel outcomes in the ACT.

Madame Speaker, I call on this Assembly to call on the ACT Government to note my 'Her Way' Recommendation Report, including the comments and input provided by community members.

I further call on the ACT Government to seek to incorporate the 43 recommendations – where-ever possible – in existing and future programs of work, including:

- Initiatives of the light rail stage 2 Disruption Taskforce
- Active travel infrastructure, initiatives and behaviour change programs;
- Public transport design and delivery;
- Urban planning design and delivery; and
- Incorporating a range of user perspectives in those activities, programs, projects and initiatives.

I also welcome the opportunity to remain involved in considerations by the ACT Government which relate to the purpose, objective and recommendations in the 'Her Way' Recommendation Report.

Thank you.

Closing Speech

Thank you, Madame Speaker, and colleagues.

I welcome the level of support for my 'Her Way' campaign.

I think its important to recognize in closing that today is International Day for the Elimination of violence against women. This global campaign recognises that violence in our community is gender based. That women are most often the target of violence and harassment in our community. And this fact has significant implications on the choices women make in engaging with public transport and active travel. Personal safety heavily influenced women's decisions around public transport and active travel.

Women still often bear the brunt of household labour, however, this doesn't not mean that women should be counted out of this conversation. Which is exactly why I have targeted women. I don't understand why the Canberra Liberal have such a problem with me talking to women about this issue. I am seeking to amplify women's voices, to amplify the barriers and constraints. Its not simply good enough to say that because women are busy with the household that we count them out of this conversation.

Women and girls form 50% of the population. That's 215,000 people in this city. It is critical that 50% of the population feel safe and that we do all we can to ensure that.

Through the Her Way campaign I intended to give women in my electorate a voice, and to let them know I am listening. And I commend Minister Steel for being 100% supportive of this campaign and the report. Madam Speaker, Mr Parton spoke of some of the barriers to engagement expressed by the

participants in the report. I am proud that I have been transparent with the findings of this report. I asked women to give their time to provide this feedback, and I am proud to table their voices in the Assembly. I am proud to be part of a Government that is open to how we engage with the barriers – because it is the only way to overcome them. It is just so disappointing that Mr Parton, the Shadow Minister for Transport – that this is the best he can come up with. It is negative and it is not constructive.

This motion is about how we can improve people's lives in ways that ultimately lead to better social, environmental and economic outcomes.

Walking and riding bikes in our suburbs and town centres is about much more than just a mode of transport, and a means to an end in and of itself. It's also about the interactions that we have along the way; it's about the type of city in which we want to live; it's about a certain lifestyle and quality of life we want to lead; it's about the vitality and amenity of our neighbourhoods; and it's about improving individual physical and mental health and wellbeing outcomes, and its about protecting our environment.

Many cities across the world aspire to be leaders in their rates of participation in active travel and public transport. Every city has its own unique contexts, circumstances, environments and dynamics which need to be carefully navigated and negotiated. And the ACT is leading the way in Australia.

Canberra is already the envy of many Australian cities and jurisdictions and already leads the nation in our rates of people riding a bike to work. Our existing shared path infrastructure, and continued commitment and investment by this Government to expand, maintain and improve connections across the network plays a key role. However, we still have a way to go. And I hope that this report makes a contribution to the next steps we take.

We have our own challenges in the ACT to overcome: Our city is dispersed, we don't have a high density in comparison to other major cities; we have relatively long distances to cover in our daily commutes; and our winters are cold and daylight hours relatively short.

We need to develop local solutions that meet local needs, and which are based on global best-practice and experiences that have proven successful elsewhere, but which are also realistic for our city.

I commend the Government on funding in this year's Budget to establish flexi-hubs in Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

Flexi-hubs are one example of a local solution to a local problem, and can help overcome the barrier of distance, enabling Canberrans to work in a formal office environment, closer to home, and which can be reached easily by public transport or by bike or foot.

One recommendation of my 'Her Way' report is that this initiative be reviewed at an appropriate time, to consider additional flexi-hubs in my electorate of Murrumbidgee.

I also commend my Federal MP colleagues, Alicia Payne and Dr Andrew Leigh, for their current petition, calling on the Federal Government to make a major contribution to boost funding for more cycling infrastructure for the ACT.

You can sign their petition via Alicia Payne's website.

Her Way is about supporting and empowering those who do want to make changes, and ensuring that the appropriate programs, infrastructure and other services and facilities are in place to enable them to do this. It's about providing that opportunity and contributing to the type of city in which we wish to live.