



**Getting it right: but who and what do we ask?**

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**Abstract:**

Current transport planning for the future implicitly and often explicitly assumes whatever is planned and implemented will be right. Rarely are such assumptions tested. This paper questions current planning processes and various forms of community education and consultation in use in Australia. Some current concerns as to whether we are getting transport right are reviewed and alternative education and consultation strategies are considered. Some alternative strategies are applied to derive alternative goals for transport planning.

The implementation of alternatives to dominant car and truck based transport and at the root of the problem of getting transport right, initiatives to reduce the need to travel, apparently involve reducing current benefits of car and truck based travel in order to provide space and funding for alternatives. There appears to be no other choice. Hence, the impacts of such changes must be worked through to assess whether they are as bad as might currently be perceived and even so, are these impacts worth the effort now to avoid worse outcomes later.

Current community based decision making demonstrates the need to include the community in decision processes. Iterative educative consultation envisages that proponents demonstrate the need for, and the mitigation of the impacts of, their proposals to satisfy those who might be impacted. Better consideration of initial needs and impacts, and hence various options and benefits and disbenefits and for whom are essential to these processes.

However, such processes are often disqualified due to time constraints or information uncertainties yet in an era when environmental and social impacts are taken into account, ongoing "political" debate about proposed solutions using current methods of "consultation" are often very conflict laden and adversarial and therefore time and resource wasting. The alternative processes offer a route to getting it right more often.

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### **Introduction**

Many and various interests have participated in a variety of forms of community consultation in relation to provision of improved urban transport planning. In particular, public transport, cycling and more recently walking are real alternatives to ever increasing reliance and dominance of urban areas by increasing numbers of cars and trucks. Despite continued involvement in community consultation and advocacy activities by environment, social justice and special interest groups, planning proposals continue to fail to meet their expectations of the potential being offered by proposals including those for more public transport and cycling. These groups appear to be seeking different measures to those making proposals so that many public transport and cycling proposals are not necessarily a benefit to current and potential users. As might be expected, these users appear to require improvements in levels of service for their benefit, qualities not necessarily and perhaps rarely if ever, provided by proposals. This is especially likely when proposals do not, or as it is often argued, cannot reduce the levels of service for existing dominant modes in order to improve levels of service for alternative modes.

This analysis suggests that current debate about transport planning and its impacts is essentially a political conflict between current dominant modes and their users on one hand and usually, existing but minority alternatives on the other. Accordingly, reference to, and assessment of, benefits and disbenefits would appear to provide some direction. However, current dominant users are politically dominant. Thus even providing evidence and research in support of the benefits and disbenefits involves imbalances in funding allocations including for the necessary research to establish the validity of various claims in support of the alternatives.

An alternative analysis based upon assessment of future volumes of traffic, the extent of equitable choice between the modes and ensuing environmental, social, economic and health impacts suggests that there is a lack of clear goals for transport planning such that current planning is not in fact planning for long term goal oriented outcomes. Rather current transport planning is continuing to implement short term politically expedient extensions and expansions of current dominant transport systems primarily based on roads in order to attempt to reduce failures, for example congestion, by attempting to meet current demand rather than accepting the need to better provide for under-used modes, eg walking, cycling and local buses. In this analysis, conflict over transport planning is inevitable if for example, short term proposals do not address long term goals. A goal oriented transport planning system would focus debate on the goals and then, as a performance measure, meeting and monitoring achievement of those goals.

From this second perspective, it is arguable that current transport planning has no explicit long term planning goals which can form the basis for a goal oriented transport planning system and accordingly, that most current conflict derives from expedient, unexpected expansion of the dominant transport network or from provision of alternatives in addition to rather than partially or wholly instead of the dominant modes.

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The implementation of alternatives to dominant car and truck based transport and at the root of the problem of getting transport planning right, initiatives to reduce the need to travel, apparently involve reducing current benefits of car and truck based travel in order to provide space and funding for alternatives and to discourage continued growth in rates and extent of use. There appears to be no other choice. Hence, the impacts of such changes must be worked through to assess whether they are as bad as might currently be perceived and even so, are these impacts worth the effort now to avoid worse outcomes later. Clearly these are impacts on the whole community. However, transport infrastructure impacts are both local and general. Accordingly, integrated approaches to involving these different levels of community require differentiation of these impacts in the decision making processes.

Current community based decision making demonstrates the need to include the community in such decision processes. Iterative educative consultation envisages that proponents demonstrate the need for, and the mitigation of the impacts of, their proposals to satisfy those who might be impacted. Better consideration and definition of initial needs, goals and impacts, and hence various options and benefits and disbenefits and for whom are essential to these processes in order to get transport right.

### **Why plan .... for whom and why them?**

Conceptually, planning is commonly assumed to reflect concerns for the future. However, planning is about the development of designs or strategies, procedures for action in the future. Similarly, town planning is "the calculated control of urban physical conditions in the social interests of the community at large" (Macquarie, 1981). There is no requirement for planning to address possible or even likely outcomes for the future. However, most planning decisions inevitably have important and lasting consequences. In many cases including most of the older Australian cities and towns, the location of streets and roads have not varied for centuries as may be ascertained by consideration of the combination of physical attributes and historical remains in cities such as Beijing, London and other long lived cities throughout the world. The long term impacts and effects of planning decisions are therefore of fundamental importance. These decisions can predict and control the consequences for the distant future.

Therefore, long term goals and impacts are essential to a planning decision system yet current transport planning appears not to have them as the long term predictions and consequences of current transport planning are not explicit. Whether created by animals or humans, it should be noted that the first "roads" essentially reflect the coincidence of individual trips to or from common destinations and reflect a need to make the trip. While roads and streets have historically reflected first walking and then wheeled modes, only recently have other modes such as canal, rail and finally flying modes also required consideration and as infrastructure was increasingly implemented, "planning" was increasingly required, reflecting in particular the direct relationship between engineering

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and planning in the increasing provision of major engineering "solutions". The increasing impacts of the modes and the location and imposition of infrastructure with respect to other urban activities have major implications for both local and regional communities. However, engineering is not well equipped to deal with identification of such issues especially when they increasingly conflict with primary engineering goals.

The necessity for these impacts and the consideration of alternatives and in particular new or increased capacity infrastructure and therefore most likely increased impacts at the local level is therefore of fundamental importance to decisions about such impositions. Clearly town planning that only considers "the social interests of the community at large" (Macquarie, 1981) may ignore the social and other interests of local communities. Accordingly, the extent to which it is the interests of the community at large which control the decisions is an important if not fundamental measure of the extent to which town planning meets its obligations to exercise "calculated control" which impacts negatively on local communities.

Reflecting the increased needs of increasingly dominant modes, implementation of major proposals whether policy or planning, may therefore become inevitable and unstoppable if the local impacts on local communities are effectively excluded and the regional impacts are incremental. However, continued incremental cumulative increases in regional impacts cannot then be avoided. If however, continued increases in local and regional impacts are occurring, this may be a symptom of getting it wrong. However to make that judgement, goals and measures for achieving them are required including provision for valuing local impacts of proposals. Rather than taking the broad community interest, the first goal would be to ensure local community interests are met.

#### **Current problems ... symptoms of getting it right ... or wrong?**

From recent examples such as the proposed reduction in urban speed limits (BFA 1996) and many major infrastructure projects such as the "Busways" in Brisbane, local community interests are often the last to be met. Therefore they are rarely met, inevitably leading to local protests and when necessary, community activity in defence of local community values. Typically however, project proponents view this activity as only reflecting local values and defend their proposals as being in the greater public interest. Rather than demonstrate the long term planning benefits and disbenefits of proposals and by so doing expose the proposals to extensive public critique, proponents have accepted the need to consult with the community using various forms of consultation including selected reference groups, public displays and statutory provisions.

However as proposals generally respond to demand for more capacity by proposing to provide increased capacity and, having reached the stage where political expediency and economic requirements become essential, expedient urgency requires reduced time for such consultation processes and eliminates the time needed for adequate information.

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education and understanding to develop to allow the necessary "working through" of complex and uncertain issues (Yankelovich 1991) Rather than being a useful stage in the development and assessment of proposals, short consultation usually only serves to exacerbate conflict by providing potential opportunities which mostly cannot be realised

Encouragement of widely differing views is however supported in order to assist better assessment of proposals (Christie 1992) and planning can provide a mechanism for addressing and assisting continuous change if underlying causes of environmental and other concerns and conflicts are addressed (McDonald 1992) Effective community involvement can assist in the making of "inherently unpopular long term" decisions by modifying the "political and social influences (which) promote the short term and fail to serve the long" thus helping to overcome the "broader potential flaw in democratic forms of government: (the need for) decision makers (to) rise above the fray to become statesmanlike, not mere mirrors of public opinion" (Peterson 1993) The "fray" is an essential contributor to decision making processes as conflict generally operates to encourage various groups to participate (Chu and Rickson 1994)

Equally, the requirement to "plan" for the long term provides an opportunity and incentive "for policy-makers to cast problems of public choice into an explicit framework for decision. Policy choice often involves choosing among competing objectives. The problem is that policy-makers can often use *their general facts* about policy to provide cover for making implicit and unarticulated trade-offs" (Weale 1992: 147)(italics added). The process of planning to avoid getting it wrong should therefore include adequate and broadly sought review and encourage maximum involvement to assist in achieving what are often considered difficult choices and in particular, support from both local and regional communities. An explicit decision framework not only forces planners to disclose conflicting issues. It also provides a framework for continuing debate and research including the continued assessment and monitoring of outcomes against goals and the potential development of new goals

**If new goals ... what do we ... and they ... want?**

The effort needed by the various community and interest groups to undertake extended consultation activities demonstrates that in most if not all cases, their efforts are severely hampered by lack of resources: both time and money. Further examination demonstrates conclusively that many different groups are undertaking similar projects often at the same time but in different places or at different policy levels. The necessary quality and need for concise argument is diluted by the need for the various groups to develop an understanding of the issues and the complexities involved in the very short time available for consultation. Responding to ongoing programmes of consultation and continually making submissions reduces the capacity for effective advocacy

These circumstances have led to an assessment and reconsideration of the consultation problem. Existing groups provide local, state and national community involvement and opportunity for responses with membership based, constituted bodies operating with varying degrees of formality with regular meetings, activities and projects. If these activities are effectively operating but not attaining their goals, linking their activities is clearly needed to reduce duplication. However as with all groups, such links inevitably increase the workload and potentially reduce the specificity of the individual group. An approach which links and supports local groups without reducing their specificity is needed.

Rather than exhaustive ongoing consultation or phases of extreme levels of conflict and protest, increased resourcing and continuing involvement in planning by community groups and effected communities recognises the interaction between iterative education and community participation which offers scope for a continuing process of education of those who currently control current decision making processes. Continuing participation in decision making thus provides a more certain future guided by communities exerting public judgement informed by better informed experts. The notion of "learning our way out" (Milbrath 1989) significantly recognises acceptance of the broader community's need to learn rather than implicitly and explicitly accept unsubstantiated assumptions of ability to solve difficult problems.

The role of communities critically examining and deciding issues at both local and regional scales is important to learning and also to responsible government. Questions and doubts about proposals are continually raised and improved outcomes sought for all participants. If responses are considered unsatisfactory, communities may exercise responsibility for local and regional outcomes seeking short and long term outcomes by exercising informed decision making.

Education of communities participating in such decision processes is emancipatory for the additional participants and a threat of potential loss of power to current participants. However education "should always be slightly subversive. And above all, it should make people self reliant and self confident and equip them for reshaping society" (Hoogendijk in Sterling 1993: 94). It is increased self reliance and self confidence which, while a potential threat to some, is fundamental to examination of getting it right including the identification and the monitoring of existing and new goals.

#### **Should children have a say?**

If transport and urban planning are to have a goal orientation, the future inheritors of our current decisions should arguably be involved. Recent Australian research has shown the impact on children's independence, access and mobility of traffic engineering dominance of urban planning (Cunningham, Jones and Barlow 1996). The evidence is that walking and cycling by children have substantially declined as traffic has increased leading to

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health, social and safety impacts not only for them but for the whole population. These impacts can only be redressed by giving walking and cycling a prominent role in transport policy (Cleary and Hillman 1992).

More recently, arguing the case for a shift "from automobility planning to accessibility planning", Cervero notes that "John Whitelegg, who directs an environmental epidemiology research unit in the UK, calls child health the 'acid test' of sustainability. Maybe to our list of accessibility-based performance measures there should be some attempt to measure the changing welfare of our children, and the links of transport-land use policies to those changes" (Cervero 1997). Using the observation that pedestrians and cyclists are ubiquitous in urban areas, children are particularly so in urban transport. Walking and cycling and disability users' needs can predominantly be met by providing accessibility for children in urban areas in addition to the appropriate standards and guidelines (Bicycle Federation of Australia 1996).

**Which goals .... who decides?**

Assessment of objections to proposals in urban areas makes explicit the conflict between proposed benefits of proposals for the broad community and the disbenefits for local communities. This is frequently inherent in the nature of the projects and their goals. Clearly it is difficult to foresee how new or widened roads or an increased capacity airport could avoid having local impacts in an urban area. Inherently, most such decisions implicitly devalue or ignore local impacts in favour of the support to be gained by broad community acceptance. Objection is often characterised as a "not in my back yard" or "nimby" response yet, because the negative impacts are generally well understood, it is rare to find community groups that actively seek such proposals in their own back yards.

More common are advocacy groups seeking or seeking to stop usually minor and/or incremental changes in their own back yards. From transport planning, examples of the former include child safety interests and bicycle and public transport advocates seeking different use of existing road space and of the latter, community groups resisting removal of car parking, proposed road widenings and alterations to road hierarchies to increase traffic. However, rather than provide for these local groups, their goals are not met because of concern of objections from, or inability to meet the needs of, the broad community. Continued reliance on the broad community interest serves to protect proponents from the most informed and effected interest groups, who as "typical citizens will think, as well as act, local. They will be preoccupied with what goes on in their backyard, because that is where they are likely to have most effect" (Weale 1992:43).

"Nimby" resistance implies that in general, negative impacts and disbenefits at local level are well known and accepted. It is very unclear however whether or even if enough awareness and knowledge is available for cumulative incremental impacts at regional

level to influence broad community decisions. Similarly, in the absence of competitive alternatives to using a car, current behaviour is at very least, a very unreliable guide to community decision making and the broad community interest, when for example, many people do not have access to a car.

Accordingly, using current typical objections as a guide, goals upon which transport planning proposals could be based and which are likely to be acceptable at both local and regional levels are those which ensure "no increase" or "no noticeable" negative impacts and better and more efficient use of existing facilities as decided at a local level.

Goals with "no increase" in negative impacts would include various technological improvements such as reduced noise and pollution per unit allowing more units if additional units had no increase in congestion and no reduction in local walking and cycling amenity. Goals with "no noticeable" negative impacts might include minor increases in noise and pollution if deemed acceptable and tolerable at local level and evidence was accepted that the minor increase was unlikely to materially increase health risks or contribute to regional cumulative impacts. Better or more efficient use of existing facilities might include conversion of existing traffic lanes to dedicated bus+bicycle, light rail or freight lanes of more capacity without increasing impacts locally or requiring road widening or economic disbenefits.

If such goals allowed existing trips to be increased with limited or negligible negative impacts at both local and regional level, planning and engineering proposals resolving the increased need and meeting the goals would arguably meet less resistance at local and regional level and positively contribute to expectations that. Alternatively, should such goals prove difficult to achieve, a more informed resolution could address not increasing capacity, improved technology, reductions in convenience and/or trip reduction strategies or acceptance of a reduction in the goals with monitoring by the local and regional interests. Current transport planning in Australia may be getting it wrong simply because by accepting the dominant modes without explicit goals, the community is not given a range of alternative options to work through.

#### **Dutch and English transport policy and urban planning**

While application of examples from elsewhere is often regarded as problematic, European transport planning has undergone considerable change in response to demonstrated social and environmental threats and it is certainly not clear that these threats will be avoided in Australia. In practice, the concern with air pollution in Sydney may already vindicate recognition of change strategies implemented with varying degrees of success elsewhere. Equally, even if these threats are not regarded as real or likely, the efforts required to avoid them getting worse in Europe and the USA provide valuable examples and warnings.



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Arising from concerns with economic, resource, land scarcity, traffic congestion and environment implications, the national government of the Netherlands developed a National Environmental Policy Plan with which to begin to address increasing evidence of the need for an integrated goal oriented policy to provide a framework for decision making (Weale 1992). Of particular interest to transport, urban and environmental planning, the Dutch government has developed the "ABC Location Policy" which aims to concentrate employment-intensive land use by reducing allowable car parking and encouraging locations around public transport routes, freight corridors and interchanges (Dutch Government 1994).

The same strategies are being introduced in the UK to increase support for existing urban centres and to reduce unplanned new peripheral development. These strategies emphasise the potential to reduce travel through land use and transport planning (HMSO 1995), to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres and to focus development and in particular retail development in locations where business, consumer and community benefit from locational choices (ISO 1996). These strategies are leading to applications at local level which confirm that "there needs to be a set of goals that can inform all aspects of strategic planning and provide a framework for more detailed planning policy based upon the core contributors to the quality of London's built environment" (HMSO 1996).

If increased impacts from and increased costs of providing for continually increasing traffic volumes are indicated as concerns which emerge at local and perhaps increasingly at regional levels, the strategies being utilised to reduce these costs and impacts may well provide exemplary strategies for application here. Given the commonality of the issues and of the impacts, the application of strategies and policies in Australia to reduce the necessity for travel and, in particular, travel by car, is essential and can be achieved by similar integration of transport and planning decisions in an explicit framework; a further goal to improve the likelihood of getting it right.

**Where are we now?**

Current transport planning is primarily based on extending and expanding existing dominant modes without concern for the local or long term impacts. This suggests that alternative modes have not been adequately considered, and if they have, evidence does not exist of the adequacy of levels of service. It is for example often argued that Australians are strongly committed to using cars yet Sydney CBD has a very high public transport use rate. Whether this is because of or despite attempts to provide increased car access over time is problematic, the evidence is that people will use alternative modes if the levels of service are competitive. Australian cities and larger towns have high car use simply because that is the mode most people choose to use, usually because it is the most convenient.

Particular modes are not inherently convenient however. Planning and provision has inevitably made them so. Accordingly it is usual to find high levels of walking and cycling in smaller Australian towns where conditions suit but as traffic increases, provision is increasingly made for that traffic in response to its perceived importance to and for decision makers (see for example Socialdata 1994 in Tolley 1997, p139) and walking and cycling rates reduce through lack of priority and provision of suitable, safe and convenient conditions. Because it has become too easy to use a car, such places cannot generate a local public transport system. The roads are converted from 2 lanes to 4 lanes and eventually to "no parking clearways" and walking, cycling and public transport have no space or convenience at all. Yet rather than convert from 2 lanes to 4 lanes, the opportunity exists to use kerb lanes as buslanes with speed restrictions to allow sharing with cyclists. This can also be adopted by removing traffic from kerbside lanes to reduce through traffic capacity by car and increase total people capacity and freight where appropriate. These types of strategies are eminently suited for application here. They are being implemented in Europe to ensure increased accessibility and mobility are maintained but, to avoid destroying urban amenity, not necessarily by car.

Dutch and English transport policy and urban planning have accepted that long term environmental, urban amenity and social need are fundamental to the economic development and protection of urban areas. By emphasising locational policy linked to transport needs, and by providing alternatives to the car, cities and towns are enjoying their heritage and amenity without loss of mobility or accessibility. As in Australia, most cities and towns were designed before cars existed and hence walking and cycling scale still exists. It is only the recent car based planning which makes cars essential and this can be, and has been, reversed in order to achieve accepted community goals. These alternative images have formed an increasing part of tourism and hence many groups and arguably the majority of the community is aware of these alternatives, if not from personal experience, then from education via the media.

#### **Education via the media**

Increasingly, people have more access to a wider range of information. Education is therefore no longer constrained to formal and professional education. Information is no longer the property of exclusive groups. Community groups and in particular those which establish and encourage extensive networks with like and related interest groups, have very extensive access to information and images from other places. More informed communities are a challenge to professional and other expert elites, raising alternative scenarios using similar and sometimes better resources, and often drawing upon successful experience from other places.

Images of polluted cities, congested traffic, huge freeways clogged with traffic are potent images with which to challenge those who propose solutions based on increasing roads and new freeways. Equally, many groups have access to images of cities with extensive

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pedestrian priority zones supported by practical freight access restrictions, high quality public transport and cycling facilities and decision making which have elicited very strong community support for these safer, healthier, and more convenient and convivial environments.

Evidence from these alternative scenarios is increasingly indicating that both alternatives are viable. The choice is between the traffic oriented, polluted and congested traffic solution of more, larger roads catering for continually increasing volumes of traffic making longer and longer trips or alternatively, the recognition and acceptance that individuals cannot continue to make longer trips and can accept restrictions on car use if provided with much better public transport for longer trips, better cycling and walking priority for shorter trips and locational planning which provides locally accessible, viable levels of facilities. However the choice must be available for communities to choose.

**Local community politics and Local Agenda 21**

In particular, the UK has provided an example of allowing local communities to have a choice in transport policy. After many years of unsuccessfully resisting road proposals through formal channels, the past decade has seen the formation of large loose alliances of many different interest and community groups and recently the acceptance in policy terms that previous political processes were not serving the needs of so many people (Jacobs 1996). Supporting more radical direct action by radical groups, communities have recognised the need to participate in the political processes if their community interests were to be preserved or achieved.

Increasing local political participation has also been supported as a key outcome of the 1992 Earth Summit by the global action plan, Agenda 21 which calls for local authorities to "consult with their communities" to develop their own "Local Agenda 21". Over 200 councils throughout the UK have taken up this challenge (Jacobs 1996) to encourage local people and local communities to participate. *The Good Environment Guide* (Staffordshire Environment Forum 1997) for example encourages people to "look at what you do every day, and perhaps reconsider some of your choices and actions to help reduce harmful impacts on the environment and increase beneficial ones (It is) all about people in Staffordshire taking action themselves, to make this a better place in which to live".

However, only 43 out of 770 local governments in Australia have been working on Local Agenda 21. Reasons for the slow adoption include "the lack of national and state government and local government associations' and agencies' encouragement and support of Local Agenda 21" (Whittaker 1997). Developing a Local Agenda 21 also requires local authorities to substantially increase community decision making capacity which is "perhaps the greatest challenge" (Tuxworth 1996).

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Many UK councils "have moved on from the traditional adversarial approach of British planning law to adopt a more open process that allows local people to raise their own concerns and needs. The involvement of other sectors or 'stakeholders' also presents new challenges. Businesses and statutory bodies find themselves sitting around the table with community organisations they may previously only have confronted. The real challenge is to move from consultation to active public and stakeholder participation, with authorities delegating power to community-based fora" (United Nations Association in Jacobs 1996)

*The Good Environment Guide* notes that "(w)e need to reduce the *need* to travel. Not to stop people doing things, but to make things more accessible by better locational policies, and by encouraging alternative ways of getting there. The transport problem cannot be 'solved' by us as individuals alone. We can make a significant difference by our individual actions." Delegating more power to community groups to make decisions can allow such individual actions to lead to expectations of increased support for decisions to enhance and protect quality of life (Selman and Parker 1997)

#### Political expectations

Expectations of participants are of particular importance to the likely outcomes of new concepts. However, as been shown in many instances, the failure of, or lack of opportunity for, different groups to work through their needs and concerns together has led to exaggerated expectations of the differences and commonality of the different views. It appears in practice that most people do recognise the threats of continually increasing traffic in urban areas. They also appear to agree on the solutions if current policy rhetoric is a reliable indicator. There are bike plans, public transport plans and plans for "improved" accessibility. However, it is rare that the ensuing improvements provide substantive alternatives to the existing dominant modes. One reason is that, due to the lack of opportunity to work through the differing needs and concerns, implementation of the solutions is presented as problematic and even when "consultation" is implemented, experts, perhaps inadvertently, dominate the process and interpret and decide the outcomes (for an example from *Landcare* see Ewing 1996)

The increased expectations of new participation structures developing from Local Agenda 21 in the UK are revisiting concerns with "accountability" and "representativeness" of participants and with role differentiation given the role of elected representatives (Tuxworth 1996). In Queensland, for example, Queensland Transport has implemented an innovative round-table of participants representing 15 coalitions of interests, the Regional Transport Reference Group, to advise on implementation of the South East Queensland Integrated Regional Transport Plan (Queensland Government 1997). The RTRG has existed for 6 months and is still working through issues such as the roles and accountability of QI and RTRG delegates, for example with respect to confidentiality given the somewhat paradoxical position of delegates being representative

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of their coalitions yet unable to see full information until it is "signed off".

It is therefore essential to recognise that these attempts at improved consultation and government accountability are innovative, require commitment to achieving better outcomes and require risks to be taken in order to achieve the changes and better outcomes sought while recognising that these new processes have limited potential by themselves and thus require complementary changes at wider and broader levels as well (Tuxworth 1996).

As recent policy changes in UK transport policy have shown, when sufficient evidence exists of governments and authorities not meeting community concerns and needs, community action by large and broadly based alliances has the power to change policy in democracies, even if contrary to the wishes or concerns of elected representatives and bureaucratic, professional and special interest elites, by working together outside the "normal processes" as reviews or other hearings usually provide only a platform for recording concerns. A similar example occurred several years ago southeast of Brisbane

As concerns about the impacts of increasing traffic in urban areas increase whether opposition to road widening or new roads, increased air pollution or noise, it appears increasingly certain that the positions of the various interest groups exaggerate the positions of the *other* groups. Once this adversarial position has been sufficiently overcome, seemingly unlikely alliances of formerly adversarial groups can and have developed, and may well be inevitable. Two examples in Australia are the alliance of the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation to promote *Landcare* and the more recent and as yet untested, *Clear Air 2000* alliance in regional Sydney "led" by the NRMA, the private motorists association.

If adapted to particular concerns related to transport planning choice and behaviour, techniques for obtaining and comparing the responses of different groups and their members to the same questions appear to have potential for clarifying the extent of differences or commonality between supposedly differing groups. One question rarely if ever asked but seemingly appropriate for urban transport planning is "How much worse would you like air pollution and noise intrusion to become?" While questions do not address the real concerns, many surveys by authorities appear framed to avoid asking the difficult but essential questions. Yet to know better whether we are getting it right, such questions must be asked of *all* groups and communities including politicians, bureaucrats and professional interest groups, special interest and industry groups, community members and community interest groups and their members.

**Conclusion: A new approach .... or simply doing planning better?**

Addressing the conference title first as a question, "getting it right?" requires agreed goals with monitoring processes to ensure that those goals are met and to measure the

extent that this is achieved in order to guide further decisions. At present in Australia, community group resistance to many current transport planning projects on the one hand and government and authority rejection or dilution of community group concerns and needs on the other, confirms that there is no doubt that transport is not getting it right at least for some major interest groups. While this is often pictured as either a "nimby" response or a local interest not in the broader community or public interest, failing to meet local community and interest group needs including those of children, the elderly, cyclists and those with access or health disabilities, may mean inevitable and unstoppable impacts at regional level, air pollution being an example.

Ensuring that planning processes include local community interests may, and on experience elsewhere will, jeopardise proposals but it also offers the opportunity and perhaps requires governments and authorities to plan ahead rather than to extend or expand simply to meet current dominant demand. Hence planning for the short term and the long term is essential to getting it right. The question then is "getting what right?"

To address the conference title as a statement of commitment, "getting it right!" requires the establishment of long term goals for transport, and acceptance and monitoring of those goals by enhanced participatory decision making processes supported by awareness raising education and information availability including best practice alternatives. In particular, local community impacts and potentially cumulative regional impacts must be avoided including those of mode dominance generated by excessive provision for some modes to the detriment of others higher in priority for local use. Evidence of impacts must be actively sought and alternative strategies implemented and enforced.

While this requires risks to be taken by decision making authorities, governments and industry groups, these risks can be overcome and/or reduced if long term planning predictions are accepted by local and regional groups working through the issues together. To not engage with these strategies which have been developed and are continuing to develop and inform decision making in other places is to ignore the potential for getting it right.

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