

GOVERNING OLDER AUSTRALIANS' MOBILITY AND THE HUMANITY OF 'GETTING ABOUT' SAFELY.

Abstract

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What ideas facilitate or contain policy? This paper establishes a context for the development of policy in relation to older person's mobility in Australia. The paper outlines ideas which represent the collective thinking of Australians and others about the government of people. In general such thinking is described as, neo-liberal or post-welfare state thinking and some detail is presented in relation to it. It is within this established context that policy is most likely to develop which will govern older persons' safe mobility. A number of South Australian and Australian Commonwealth government policy documents which relate to older Australians are analysed in order to determine the extent to which the ideas contained in them are congruent with Australian neo-liberal or post-welfare state ideas. It is then argued that mobility is a preferred broad focus for policy in relation to older Australians rather than motor vehicle travel and road safety. Finally, a proposal is made for a policy which would enhance safe mobility for older Australians, while having values which correspond with the collective thinking or political rationalities of our time.

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Introduction

By the end of this paper I tentatively outline ideas for a policy which broadly addresses issues of older persons and mobility. One significant aspect of this policy among a number would be facilitating safe travel. In this paper I take seriously the task of mapping ideas which could form the basis for policy consultation. The ideas are those which I expect an Australian state government or the Commonwealth Government could refine and eventually adapt in order to enhance safe mobility for older Australians.

There is a journey to undertake in order to reach that point. I first ask the question: What kind of policy? What are the values and goals of policy in Australia today? To consider these questions requires me to make brief reference to the idea of government and the governing of behaviour. In addition I will argue that what is being constructed is mobility policy, and that mobility policy is social policy rather than road or transport policy, although the implications for road and transport policy are many. One expectation of the policy is that older person's safety while mobile would be enhanced. In this section of the paper the broad social policy parameters are set. My belief is that generally if policy is to succeed it needs to fit the political thinking or the political rationalities of the times.

In the second part of the paper I examine some key South Australian and Australian Commonwealth policy documents which relate to older Australians, in order to determine the degree of fit with the broader directions for social policy. To what extent does South Australian and Commonwealth policy appear to conform to the broad trends in political thinking, at least in policy documents?

In the third part of the paper I defend the idea of mobility as the focus for policy rather than having policy foci like transport, access, driving or road safety.

In the final part of the paper I briefly sketch a 'headline' policy aimed at establishing mobility as a human right for older Australians. I use the word headline, because as I will argue, older persons' mobility is now and will be, facilitated by a range of policies. Should issues of mobility or safe travel become significant policy and political issues, government may be seen to be acting on the issue by establishing a 'headline' policy, while continuing to 'tweak' other policies in the desired directions.

Being Safe, Older and Mobile (BSOM) Project: University of South Australia

This paper is one of a number being prepared through a collaboration within the University of South Australia between academics in the School of Social Work and Social Policy, the School of Occupational Therapy, the School of Planning and the Transport Systems Centre. The project title is 'Being Safe, Older and Mobile (BSOM)'. Funding for the project has been provided by the University of South Australia.

The research processes for this paper consist of the following. Some contemporary Australian literature which discuss as rationalities for government (and for that particular strategy of government – policy work) is briefly reviewed, so that any discussion of policy around the notions of being older, mobile, safe and Australian, has a meaningful context. Subsequently textual analysis is applied to some key South Australian and Commonwealth policy documents which contain parameters for policy for older Australians. This provides a brief test of the ideas contained in the academic literature, in order to give some perspective on the extent of the 'fit' of the ideas to the aspect of governing policy which is of interest in this research context. The final aspect of this research might be simply called a 'thought experiment' where some policy ideas which have as their objective enhancing older people's mobility and safety are developed in relation to the context established.

The intention in this paper is to establish some ideas and parameters for policy discussion. Concurrently to the preparation of this paper the BSOM Project has funded eight focus group and twelve in-depth interviews with older people as well as key stakeholders. One other paper will be prepared reporting findings from these field research activities. Another paper will discuss those findings in relation to this policy paper. Meeting Project time with budget constraints has meant that this paper is written while data gathering is being completed and data reduction commenced. It may have been preferable to complete the data analysis from the field research prior to writing this paper. However, this ideal was not obtainable, and so a possible shortcoming of this paper is that it is being written without the benefit of data analysis from the BSOM research project. Whatever the findings of the focus groups and the interviews, they will provide stimulus for further discussion of the ideas set out in this paper.

The policy context

In this section of the paper I briefly sketch the broad thinking tendencies within which policy would be likely to develop in response to the problematisation in society of safe mobility for older persons (Dean 1999: 28). Policy allows us to think about ways of governing behaviour.

Thinking here is a collective activity. It is a matter not of the representations of individual mind or consciousness, but of the bodies of knowledge, belief and opinions in which we are immersed (Dean 1999: 16).

These collective activities can be named as a 'mentality of government'.

A mentality is a collective, relatively bounded unity, and is not readily examined by those who inhabit it. A mentality might be described as a condition of forms of thought and is thus not readily amenable to be comprehended from within its own perspective (Dean 1999: 16).

Values or principles from this perspective are not strongly determined nor generally obvious. To delimit policy, to map the mentalities of government, is not to be engaged in clear or pure science. However there are broad thinking settings which create parameters for policy, for political debate and for governing. As Dean (1999) and Beeson and Firth (1998) describes them, these are the mentalities or rationalities of government.

A significant aspect of the task which Dean (1999) as well as Beeson and Firth (1998) set out, is to discuss ways in which Australia has moved from a mentality of government characterised by welfarism towards a mentality of neo-liberalism. Dean acknowledges that there are variations of neo-liberalism and advanced liberalism as a rationality and notes that

They (the neo-liberal variants) are modes of problematisation of the welfare state and its features such as bureaucracy, rigidity and dependency formation. They recommend the reform of individual and institutional conduct so that it becomes more competitive and efficient. They seek to effect this reform by the extension of market rationality to all spheres, by the focus on choices of individuals and collectives and the establishment of a culture of enterprise and responsible autonomy (Dean 1999:210).

Dean's argument is an elaborated extrapolation about governmentality based on writing by the social theorist Michel Foucault. Foucault undertook limited work in relation to government and governmentality (Dean 1999: 2 & 55-58).

Jamrozik (2001) understands the processes of government more conventionally as a critical sociologist who uses techniques of data analysis and policy comparisons, rather than as a Foucauldian, like Dean. While uncovering and accepting complexity, Jamrozik argues more clearly a position of power and solidity of social structures for governments which make policy decisions and take actions (for example, implement programs). Dean has a more diffuse and networked series of power interactions, which lead to the governing of the behaviour of populations.

Jamrozik argues that Australia has moved from the welfare state to the post-welfare state. In the post-welfare state there is

...the use of social policy as an instrument of support for free market economic policy, rather than...for alleviating the excesses of inequality generated by the market (Jamrozik 2001: 8).

Jamrozik details changes which he argues signal movement from a welfare to a post-welfare state and he applies his argument over a range of Australian policy areas, for example, income, employment, health, education, families and children, the law and social order and culture, leisure and recreation. Jamrozik summarises his general argument in the following table (Jamrozik 2001: 9).

The welfare state	The post-welfare state
Acceptance of responsibility for the welfare of all citizens as a matter of deliberate policy	Acceptance of responsibility for welfare as a matter of rather unfortunate necessity
Universal entitlements to social provisions	Selective entitlements
Aim to control the excesses of the 'free' market economy	Promotion of market economy principles as a model to follow
Commitment to the pursuit of equality at least in access to opportunities and resources	Acceptance of inequality as 'natural' and indeed desirable to achieve efficiency
Commitment to principles of collectivity	Commitment to individualism
Maintaining social expenditure at a level ensuring reasonable standards of provision	Curtailment of social expenditure to an absolute minimum
Infrastructure of resources (power, water) provided by the public sector	Reduction of the public sector, privatisation of infrastructure
Acceptance of collective bargaining in industry through trade unions	Promotion of individual contracts between employer and employee
Distributing money, services and power through citizens' participation	Distributing money, some services but no power
Social provisions as entitlements	Social provisions as commodities
Social control by the state	Social control increasingly by the market

Table 1

This table provides a convenient checklist of ideas, against which policy can be discussed, and it is included here so that such a discussion can be generated at the end of the paper.

Both Dean (1999) and Jamrozik (2001) seek to describe the broad tendencies of government from somewhat different theoretical perspectives. Dean (1999) emphasises the relationships between mentalities of government and processes for governing while mapping changes over centuries. Jamrozik (2001) emphasises the social outcomes of changing political rationalities over the last hundred years. However there is a clear overlap between Dean's notions of neo-liberalism and advanced liberalism with Jamrozik's post-welfare state. Keating and Weller (2001) describe in some detail the 'roles and operations' of Australian government in recent years, from their perspectives as public administrator and political scientist and in so doing provide further weight for acceptance of Dean's (1999) and Jamrozik's (2001) ideas, while contributing an additional perspective.

In a paper entitled *Rethinking government's roles and operations*, Keating and Weller (2001) note the trend in government's activities towards competition, choice and managed markets, as well as the well-established trend towards contractualism. According to the authors these changes have been 'part forced, part driven' (2001: 72) by a number of social changes. These are

- People are 'more sceptical, better informed, less trusting and still more demanding' (2001:73).
- Social security which was demanded and significantly achieved after World War Two has allowed greater material desires in the population.
- Governments spending their way out of trouble has given way to 'user-pay schemes, competition and greater transparency' (2001: 74).

- ‘Greater diversity of lifestyles, as well as new social and political divides, have created new pressures on governments’ (2001:74).
- There has also been a shift to a more individualistic society (2001:75).
- Social science has provided a significant critique of some government policies and undermined public confidence (2001: 76).
- ‘Globalisation has also helped undermine public confidence in national governments’ (2001: 76).

On the basis of these observations Keating and Weller (2001) set out choices that government can take and conclude their paper with the following pragmatic observation which adds a further parameter to thinking when considering mobility policies for older Australians.

The traditional Australian pragmatism is uncomfortable with change at the best of times. A healthy scepticism, conveyed in the adage ‘if it ain’t broke don’t fix it’, puts the onus on the advocates of change to demonstrate that it really is necessary... the big issues are systemic and political: how to bring together the macro issues of economic management, the local problems of disaffected communities, and the social requirements to enhance security while reducing dependency. Governments need systems that can resolve conflict, build communities and enhance consent. Easy to write, so hard to devise (Keating and Weller 2001).

This paper is written as an exercise which assumes that there is a need for mobility policy in relation to older Australians. Policy with a mobility focus may be stimulated by an increasing concern in Australia and other OECD countries for an increasing number of older persons, who have an increasing tendency to be licensed and to be active motor vehicle drivers (Cobb 1998; UK 2001). Such policy can be discussed in relation to theories of government which establish these times as subject to the political rationalities of neo-liberalism (Dean 1999) or subject to movement towards a post-welfare state (Jamrozik 2001). Beyond these frameworks the following pragmatic questions need to be asked. Is anything broken which requires fixing? Is there a social problem in relation to mobility, safety and older Australians? Would the adoption of policy in relation to older Australians, safety and mobility, resolve more conflicts in society than it would create? Would such policy build community or enhance inter-generational tensions? Would such policy foster the legitimisation of government, or reduce it at a time when there is increasing scepticism about government (McAllister 2001)? Having primarily used Dean (1999) and Jamrozik (2001) to theorize a context for thinking about being older and safely mobile, Keating and Weller (2001) counsel caution about furthering any existing policy work in these directions. The question remains: are there processes of problematisation (Dean 1999: 27-28) with significant energy to move issues in relation to being mobile and safe in older age towards a more prominent place in Australian social policy undertaken by State and Commonwealth Governments?

Policy documents

Not all Australian policy is determinedly neo-liberal in character or bears the characteristics of post-welfare state policy. Rather I accept that there are *tendencies* for policy parameters to be established through collective mentalities in ways that can be characterised as neo-liberal or post-welfare. These are the general rationalities of our time and place (Beeson and Firth 1998). Other authors refer to policy tendencies which allow the state to be characterised as generally ‘facilitative’ or ‘enabling’ (Davis 2001) of the lives of citizens.

In this section of the paper South Australian and Commonwealth broad policies which provide a context for safe mobility policies for older Australians are reviewed, in order to establish to some extent how well they connect with the neo-liberal or post-welfare political rationalities.

To what extent do South Australian and Australian Commonwealth policy documents developed in relation to older persons reflect a neo-liberal political rationality (Dean 1999) and a movement towards the post-welfare state and away from the welfare state (Jamrozik 2001)? To what extent do government policies developed in relation to older persons embrace contractualism played out in competition, choice and managed markets (Keating and Weller 2001)?

Policy documents: South Australia

The Commissioner for the Office for the Ageing in South Australia released *Ageing: a ten year plan* in 1995 (Office for the Ageing 1995). This policy document was developed in order to provide a whole of government policy overview for policy developed in relation to older South Australians. Some ideas used in this document reflect the welfare state ideas noted in Jamrozik's Table 1 (2001: 9). However, other ideas also relate to the post-welfare state column of that table. For example, the *Ten year plan* includes 'every South Australian is to enjoy full citizenship from birth until death, irrespective of age or frailty' (Office for the Ageing 1995: 3). 'Principles of access and equity will guide policy and planning' (Office for the Ageing 1995: 11). On the other hand, 'growing old allows for growth and contribution' (Office for the Ageing 1995: 3) and entitlements will be selective as they will be 'responsive, individually focussed services which support older people remaining in their own homes and neighbourhoods' (Office for the Ageing 1995: 7). In addition citizens will 'take greater responsibility for their own health' (Office for the Ageing 1995: 17).

The first two quotations above suggest an active and interventionist government which creates social security through intervening in society and in individual lives in order to provide the conditions for 'full citizenship', and which intervenes to create the possibilities for access to scarce social resources on an equitable basis. The subsequent quotations indicate that individuals will be governed or self-governed to be active and responsible, that is, that they will be facilitated or enabled to govern their own behaviour.

Subsequently *Moving Ahead: a strategic plan for human services for older people 1999-2004* was published by the South Australian Department of Human Services (DHS) (DHS 1999ab). This document shifts the emphasis more clearly towards neo-liberal or post-welfare state policy settings (Dean 1999; Jamrozik 2001). Economy for example, is foregrounded, in the quest for a 'good' society for older Australians.

Quality of life for the whole community is one outcome of a robust economy and a strong social fabric – where individuals, families and communities feel secure, have a sense of future and are supported in their daily lives (DHS 1999a: 2).

The 1999 paper asserts the value of customer focused, integrated choices and elaborates on the following list of underpinning policy 'principles': independence, choice, wellness, participation, accessibility (in the sense that the service system will be easy to access), customer focused, effective and responsive (DHS 1999a: 3). These principles apply to the individual citizen rather than to any collectivity. It is individual citizens who will be independent, exercise choice, be well and participate and so on. The task of the state is to provide strategic directions which facilitate individuals to have lives characterised by the principles listed. The individual governs their own behaviour.

Programmes of empowerment are particularly clear examples of those contemporary liberal rationalities of government that endeavour to operationalise the self-governing capacities of the governed in the pursuit of government objectives (Dean 1999:67).

Clearly the state does not seek to be the provider of welfare or security in society.

There are twelve 'Strategic Directions' in *Moving Ahead* (DHS 1999b: 5-31). Of these, three facilitate independence of active individuals. These are

- Increase the investment in prevention and promotion of well being for older people.
- Improve access to information and support.
- Sharpen the focus on the benefits of rehabilitation (DHS 1999b: 5).

Examples of strategies attached to these directions include

- Increase opportunities for access to participation of older people in the workforce, education, leisure, and cultural activities.
- Support older persons' wish to live independently with dignity.
- Improve access to transport services...particularly in community activities.

- Supportive environments and neighbourhoods to assist older people to live independently ‘ageing in place’.
- Healthy and livable communities (DHS 1999b: 7, 14).

The remaining nine Strategic Directions emphasise the creation of efficiencies. Key phrases include for example ‘address specific service gaps’, ‘common entry processes’, ‘integrate care’, ‘coordinate care’, ‘integrated planning’, ‘effective resource allocation’ and ‘management for quality performance’ (DHS 1999b:5). Taken together, these strategies resonate with Dean’s (1999: 210) description of neo-liberal thinking which includes ‘establishment of a culture of enterprise and responsible autonomy’.

There is a changed emphasis between 1995 and 1999. In *Ageing: a ten year plan* (Office for the Ageing 1995) there are many references to citizenship. In *Moving Ahead* (DHS 1999ab) there are none. Citizenship has come to be associated with the ideas of welfare provision and general or categorical entitlement, whereas in *Moving Ahead* (DHS 1999ab) citizens have become individuals who make choices, and who are customers in relation to the efficiently provided services which they use.

In *Ageing a ten year plan* (Commissioner 1995) there is mention of a ‘safety net’, of ‘income security’ and ‘access and equity’. In *Moving Ahead* (DHS 1999a) there is faith in a ‘robust economy’ and a ‘reasonable expectation for communities, families and older people themselves to share responsibility’ (DHS 1999a: 2). In this sense there is a significant retreat from state welfare provision and back-up, to faith in non-government activities like markets, private responsibilities and communities.

The Commonwealth’s ‘National Strategy’

The Commonwealth Government has recently released the ‘*National strategy for an ageing Australia*’ (Andrews 2002) This National Strategy is written around the following principles

- The ageing of the Australian population is a significant common element to be addressed by governments, business and the community.
- All Australians, regardless of age, should have access to appropriate employment, training, learning, housing, transport, cultural and recreational opportunities and care services that are appropriate to their diverse needs, to enable them to optimise their quality of life over their entire lifespan.
- Opportunities should exist for Australians to make a life-long contribution to society and the economy.
- Both public and private contributors are required to meet the needs and aspirations of an older Australia.
- Public programs should supplement rather than supplant the role of individuals, their families and communities.
- A strong evidence base should inform policy responses to population ageing.
- The delivery of services and pensions for our ageing population is affordable so long as we have a well managed economy and growth.

(Andrews 2002)

In both principles and strategic directions in the *National Strategy* (2002) and South Australia’s *Moving Ahead* (DHS 1999ab) the task of governing is the task of *facilitating* (employment, training, opportunities etc.) or enabling individuals to be ‘free’ of dependence upon the (welfare) state, and thus to be self-governing. Social security is constructed as feasible only when individuals are able to be active participants in society and economy, and when they are meeting individual aspirations. Older Australians appear to be increasingly ‘constructed’ as having the capacity to be getting about independently.

The political rationalities of the times are found in these examples of policies which relate to older Australians. Neo-liberalism and tendencies to move towards a post-welfare state are at work shaping the policy parameters.

Thinking about mobility as a human activity

In this part of the paper I focus on the idea of mobility before drawing together ideas about mobility and policy, in the final section. My argument goes beyond seeing transport as access to other human services. Rather I accept that mobility is a fundamental human activity, (Mohktarian, Salamon and Lothlorient 2001) which is enshrined in various articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state (Article 13.1). Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association (Article 20). Everyone has the right of equal access to public services in his country (Article 21.2). Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy arts and to share in scientific advancements and its benefits (Article 27) (Pettman 1984: 43-45).

People's desire to move, to access, to assemble (or be mobile), may even be enhanced once the strength of commitment to the work-force diminishes, and just as the Australian Commonwealth sets minimum standards of income support (for example through the Aged Pension), so too we may set minimum standards for mobility support, in addition to access support. Just as Australians accept the human necessity of shelter to create human welfare, or accept the right to family or religious expression through being signatories to a variety of international human rights conventions, so too we express our humanity through being mobile.

A kind of mobility minimum standard may already exist in Sweden and other countries. In Sweden for example, people with disabilities and who are dependent on others to meet their activities of daily living, are entitled to an overseas holiday (valued to a particular threshold) which enables them to take a full-time fully paid carer. Sydney's pensioner concessions for public transport could be seen to be an example of a mobility minimum standard, as older persons can use the public transport network for a modest minimum daily rate. The broad aim of mobility policy should be to support older persons to move to other places simply because they desire or choose to do so. By so doing they are exercising their freedom as citizens and are actively choosing a travel form and a travel destination. If there is a need simply for mobility for the pleasure of being mobile, because to be human is to be mobile, then it probably intersects with well recognised contemporary Australian social values like getting about, having a holiday, having a change of scene, being stimulated, having future plans, exercising choice, and so on.

Asylum seeking people, who arrived in Australia by boat, are kept in detention, often in remote locations. Government spokes-people argue that they are not imprisoned, and they have certain freedoms not experienced by prisoners, but clearly their situation is unenviable relative to Australian citizens. It is possible that they have access to food, to shelter, to physical and intellectual activity, to the comforts of family life, to education, to telephones and to some media consumption. They have access to many necessary services, but not to freedom of movement and freedom of assembly. The mobility choices for asylum seekers in detention are very contained and apparently unstimulating. How wonderful it would be if interested others could bus or drive asylum seekers on weekend outings and thus provide some of the pleasures of mobility! The desire for mobility may be an aspect in the lives of those who have escaped from detention in Woomera and other Centres, despite the very strong possibility of capture and punishment.

Were they able to make plans for travel, execute these, visit different places, meet new people and break their routine, in fact to be independent, significantly self-governing and to take risks, one assumes asylum seekers' mental health would be vastly enhanced, and concern for their plight would be significantly diminished. So too with older people. Without mobility, older people may experience later age as a form of detention, denial of their fundamental humanity and a threat to their mental health.

It is my view that the dominant Australian discourses simply take mobility for granted. The collective mentality appears to be that we are free to move about the nation, and if we do not, we are exercising the choice not to be mobile. Asylum seekers, children, people with a range of disabilities, those who eschew car ownership, and those who desire cars, but who cannot afford them, as well as many older people, lack mobility options. Cars on public roads are not a panacea for Australians' mobility just as road safety is only one concern in relation to older person's mobility. Collective thinking about national and technological

progress has led to largely untested assumptions about the possibilities of citizens' mobility, as well as what mobility does to contribute to human welfare.

Policy objectives (achieving mobility for older persons, safely)

This is a short, unelaborated list of policy objectives for older persons which seem plausible given the discussion so far.

- to diminish all travel risks involving older persons
- to ensure access to services
- to facilitate acceptable levels of mobility, relative to other Australians
- to optimise social interaction
- to encourage physical activity
- to maintain citizenship rights and obligations throughout life.

Policy options to meet the objectives

There is a range of policy options which will achieve these objectives. Income support policies, housing policies public transport policy, policies which have impact on public spaces (roads as public spaces, parks, shopping centres) and urban planning policies all have an impact on facilitating safe mobility for older persons. Issues of older age, mobility and safety go beyond considerations of road based mobility. There are many government policies that are developed and ongoing. However, it may eventually be the case that there will be political demands to do 'something', that is to do something beyond continuing to 'tweak' existing policies. It would be at this point that there would be consideration of how we are to conduct government as well as governing conduct of older people and others in order to enhance safe mobility (Dean 1999: 27).

Policy innovation

An outline of a headline policy could be the introduction of a 'Mobility Licence'. I call it a 'Mobility Licence' in order to destabilise the idea of a (motor vehicle) driver's licence being at the centre of our society's thinking about mobility. The central feature of a 'Mobility Licence' would be to validate the very idea of mobility as a human activity and to de-emphasise private motor vehicle travel and road safety as the focus for policy.

Obtaining a 'Mobility Licence' would involve the voluntary relinquishment of a persons motor vehicle licence at 70 or beyond. I suggest that such a 'Mobility Licence' is congruent with the objectives stated, but also congruent with social values which are incorporated into the collective mentalities or political rationalities of contemporary Australian neo-liberalism (Beeson and Firth 1998; Dean 1999). A 'Mobility Licence' involves values which are congruent with the values of facilitation (or enabling), choice and active citizenship. A 'Mobility Licence' avoids bureaucratic judgement, categorisation and rigidity, and avoids a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to older persons' mobility. Ultimately the suggested policy need not be age related, and depending on the political climate, this could be a strength.

With income support, the policy principle is that if citizens meet certain obligations, they will be guaranteed income support to a minimum threshold. As income is a basic need in our society, so too is mobility. In this case, if citizens meet certain obligations, they will be guaranteed mobility support to a minimum threshold. However, unlike income which is based on one currency (A\$), in this case there are a range of mobility options.

Discussion of relevant findings from the research

Voluntary, no incident relinquishment at 70 could

- provide a focus for discussion about older persons, social access and mobility
- enhance public transport patronage
- reduce road travel and parking congestion
- improve air quality
- potentially enhance physical activity of older persons
- diminish social isolation

- potentially impact on housing choice (move to age appropriate accommodation built conveniently and closely to services)
- reduce crashes involving older drivers
- reduce vehicle driver and passenger trauma
- increase pedestrian and scooter driver risk
- enhance some aspects of active ageing
- facilitate choice and freedom

Method

I do not have the capacity to work numbers on this – so this must be seen as a beginning. Here the emphasis is on mobility not the mode of mobility (for example the driver's or rider's licence).

The 'Mobility Licence' could be targeted at those 70 and over, but need not necessarily be restricted to that age category. A motor vehicle licence holder voluntarily hands in the driver's licence and receives at the same cost a non-transferable 'Mobility Licence'. Those formerly without a driver's license would also need to purchase a 'Mobility Licence'. The Licence entitles the bearer to mobility entitlements. Mobility entitlements could include (and would cover access to)

- An annual subsidised interstate return air fare or train fare (\$100 each) subject to some conditions, for example availability. (governments to bulk purchase)
- Regional bus fares (\$10 a day)
- Metropolitan bus, tram and train fares (\$1 a day)
- An annual taxi distance allowance.
- Discounted prices on small electrically powered 'scooters'.

There could be special deals for carers and special deals for congregate travel for those over 70s with a 'Mobility Licence'. Congregate travel presumably would reduce unit costs of mobility while enhancing sociability.

Those who did not hold a 'Mobility Licence' would continue to maintain a driver's licence in the usual way. At cost testing, based on driver incidents, as well as a non-incident regime of assessment could be mandated (say 1 year and 3 years). Non-holders would also pay full fare on public transport of all kinds.

Conclusion

In this paper I discuss the collective thinking of our society which at this time provides the rationalities for government. Such rationalities will thus have an impact on voters, experts, bureaucrats and politicians as all endeavour to respond to economic, social and environmental issues which arise and are seen as suitable for policy work.

Thinking about the welfare state has given way to new forms of liberalism and to rationalities of government which can be labelled as 'post-welfare'. Such thinking, on the evidence provided, appears established in some policy documents which relate to older Australians. Policy for older Australians has not been quarantined from the rationalities of neo-liberalism or post-welfare state thinking.

It may be that public disquiet about increasing numbers of older people, their increased propensity to hold a licence as well as to drive motor vehicles, and perhaps to be involved in road crashes, could lead to a policy 'crisis'. Should there arise a demand for Australia's institutions of government to develop policy and implement programs which are seen to address issues of older persons, road travel and safety, new policy may be needed. Such policy will probably need to accord with contemporary rationalities of government.

An idea for a 'Mobility Licence' has been put forward as one possible way that the issues of safe mobility for older Australians might be enhanced.

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