

Submission Template

Issues Paper on a Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia

Insert your comments in the text box that follows each question. You may answer as many or as few questions as you like.

A Sustainable Population Strategy

Q1: *What issues do you think a Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia should address?*

AAA believes a population strategy for Australia should place a strong emphasis on motoring and mobility options for all Australians.

This emphasis should focus on several key areas including:

Congestion- Traffic congestion contributes to the increase of air pollution and decrease in air quality. Economically, the avoidable costs of congestion are currently estimated at around 9 billion dollars per year. With continual growth expected in Australia's population, the congestion costs are expected to reach \$20 billion per annum, according to the Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics. Australia's population strategy should investigate ways to reduce congestion in capital cities (where much of the population growth is likely to occur) and encourage investment in intelligent transport systems (ITS) such as variable speed limits and navigation systems to help improve traffic flow.

Oil supply challenges- Currently, the majority of cars in operation in Australia require fuel sourced from crude oil. Current oil reserves are decreasing at record levels and new oil reserves are becoming increasingly difficult to find. Local oil supplies peaked in 2000 and Australia is increasingly reliant on imported oil, in order to meet demand. This reliance on imported oil is expected to result in a \$25 billion trade deficit by 2015. Combined with a growing population, the Australian Government should introduce a series of measures to address this issue.

These include:

Implementing demand reduction strategies that encourage people to use their vehicles more efficiently;

Adopting stringent fuel consumption standards for new vehicles entering the market;

Providing investment for alternative technologies such as electric vehicles;

Promoting locally produced alternative fuels such as bio fuels and gas; and

Reviewing motoring taxation arrangements as recommended by the Henry Review of Taxation. This will send appropriate price signals to motorists to encourage more efficient use of the road transport network.

Climate Change-a major challenge for the Australian Government is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while the population increases. AAA notes that according to the Australian Greenhouse Office, passenger vehicles account for 8 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions and that all greenhouse gas emitting industries should share equally the responsibility for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

AAA does acknowledge that emissions from passenger vehicles and the transport sector will increase over the next ten years largely as a result of a growing population. AAA supports in principle, measures to reduce emissions in these areas, but stresses that measures must not be disproportionate to the passenger vehicle's actual impact upon the environment.

Population and the Environment

Q2: What do you think are the key indicators of an environmentally sustainable community?

AAA believes the Australian Government in consultation with motoring organisations and other key stakeholders, should work towards mitigating the environmental and social impacts of the transport needs of a growing population. Initiatives must take into account people's need for safe and affordable mobility.

Q3: How have changes in the population impacted on your local environment?

Q4: How might technological or governance improvements mitigate the environmental impacts of population growth?

AAA considers measures to reduce the environmental impact of population growth in the motoring and transport sector need to be pursued in three key areas.

Promoting new vehicle, fuel and component technologies;

Improving road network design and management; and

Encouraging incentives and information that promote greener choices of travel, automotive technologies and driving behaviours by consumers.

More specifically, AAA recognises electric vehicles have the potential to play a vital role in Australia's future transport system. AAA would like to see incentives to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles and investment in relevant infrastructure to support an electric vehicle network. Electric vehicles have the potential to reduce Australia's dependence on imported oil and improve urban air quality, even with an increasing number of vehicles using the transport network. AAA believes that ideally, electric vehicles should be charged using renewable energy sources.

As mentioned, Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) can significantly contribute to improvements in the efficiency and compatibility of different forms of transport to enhance consumer choice and mobility. According to ITS Australia, the introduction of new ITS has the potential to reduce vehicle kilometres travelled by 14,171 million kilometres per year and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by around 6 million tonnes per year.

ITS will be important in encouraging people to use public transport by making it more reliable and cost-effective. It will help to make trips that use more than one form of transport-by car and train, for example-hassle free. Governments should make further investments in ITS to make travel more efficient. Governments must ensure that this technology is affordable for everyone in Australia.

Q5: How do population driven changes in your local economy affect your environment?

Q6: What lessons have we learnt that will help us to better manage the impacts of population change on the environment?

Population and the Economy

Q7: What do you see as the defining characteristics of a flourishing and sustainable economy?

Q8: Is your community, business or industry facing skills shortages or other immediate economic pressures, and how are these best managed?

Q9: In the decades to come, what challenges and opportunities will our economy face, and how will they interact with changes in our population?

Please see additional comments

Q10: How should we measure the sustainability of our local, regional and national economies?

Population and Communities

Q11: What are the things that make your community a good place to live?

Q12: *How have changes in the population changed the way you live your life?*

Q13: *What sustainability issues need to be addressed in order for your community to accommodate a changing Australian population?*

Please see response to question 1.

Q14: *What are some useful indicators to help measure the liveability and sustainability of our communities?*

Additional comments

Despite continual population growth, AAA believes cars will remain a vital component of everyday living in the twenty-first century. AAA considers that initiatives designed to restrict the use of cars that are implemented too hastily and without proper planning are likely to cause more problems than they will solve. AAA believes sustainable motoring can be achieved through a variety of methods (as mentioned) that take into account the significant contribution the car makes to the Australian economy and society in general.

It is a firm belief of AAA and its constituent members that initiatives designed to change motoring use and behaviour must be inherently positive in nature. There must be genuine incentives and viable alternatives in order for Australia's growing population to reduce their dependence on cars. Governments must acknowledge this in order for new initiatives to be effective.

Note: The Australian Automobile Association is the peak motoring group representing the interests of its constituent clubs consisting of 6.5 million members and indirectly, all motorists.