

## Developments in surface passenger transport.

### Implications for tourism

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#### Abstract:

This paper was presented at the 1991 Tourism Outlook Forum (Australian Tourism Research Institute). It examines the state of play in the surface passenger transport system and comments on the implications of developments for tourism. Transport is increasingly being regarded as a weak link in Australian tourism, largely due to the declining standard of infrastructure. Nowhere is this more evident than in the road system. As governments at all levels attempt to cope with less resources, road funding is not keeping pace with traffic growth. As a consequence, some of the nation's busiest highways are in need of major upgrading. The automobile, the most commonly used form of tourist transport, is becoming more fuel efficient as a result of technological developments and environmental pressures.

The bus and coach industry is undergoing major changes as a result of competitive pressures both from within the industry and from other modes. Whilst the prospects for charter operations are sound, long-distance express services are under threat, especially as airline competition erodes their market. Conventional rail is also suffering in this environment, but the five government rail systems are under increasing pressure to curb the deficits on long-distance passenger services. The likely outcome is a more efficient rail operation with higher fares and better services on lines with the heaviest traffic. This should provide better opportunities to incorporate rail into tourism products, but rail's roll will be limited. The proposal to introduce a network of high speed rail services connecting Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide with service levels similar to airline standards offers hope of a significant expansion of the travel market. The Very Fast Train proposal could have a major impact on air and other public transport modes, but would also aim to take a sizable proportion of people out of their cars. This would make it easier to develop attractive packages for a broader tourist market. Finally, Bass Strait has seen the introduction of a high speed ferry and the TT Line will replace the *Abel Tasman* in 1993 with a luxurious and larger vessel. The outlook for the future is a transport sector with a growing recognition that it is a vital part of tourism.