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What are we doing about 'zero'?

The past several months has seen escalated 'disruption' in our industry by the various announcements coming out of state/territory governments in their mission to reach for 'zero' - some as early as 2030. From a politician's perspective, it is obviously a no-brainer that public transport will be the first (and easiest?) transport mode on which governments can hang their caps. The bus industry has an outstanding record as early adopters of 'green' technology; and yet we are the smallest fleet on the road compared with cars and trucks, we have the lowest per passenger on-road emission records and we continue to have the best safety record in public transport provision. It is 'our lot in life' that the task will fall to the bus and coach industry to navigate this major change in road transportation.

So how do we deal with governments in their race for 'zero'?

Not an easy question to answer - but in truth, governments *will do* what governments *must do*! In response, The BIC is rapidly formulating a national plan to keep our emission and safety records on top of the pack. This will aid in our mission to increase the 'bums on seats' and get the federal government buy-in to provide public transport incentives to the states/territories to ensure that they deliver accessible, safe, affordable and green transport for all Australians.

For the past 12 months, the BIC has been taking part in a number of government and private enterprise roundtables, summits and white paper discussions. It is hard not to come away with a smashed pie that takes in all of the various elements that need to work together to design a uniform approach; an approach that needs to support the 'self-interest' of the states/territories government of the day and Australia's COP26 sign up to Zero 2050. This is a bubbling hotpot for the bus industry and frankly, too much is at risk to muck around at the bottom of the quarry. We need to step up as an industry, lead the way and show how it's done.

After significant engagement (and endless meetings) with state/territory/federal governments and the private sector, we have listened carefully to what is being put on the table and we have come away with a very mature understanding of the baseline challenges and the inherent complexity of the issues facing operators, suppliers and governments.

Sometimes the best way to approach complex issues is with simplicity. To that end, the BIC has decided that what Industry and governments really need RIGHT NOW is national guidance on a suite of minimum



standards; a suite of technical advisories and operator guidelines. Standards that would see a national platform for state/territory adoption in the specifications of a ZEB vehicle, the maintenance, safe operation, supply of infrastructure and its integration.

To ensure that the highest priority concerns are addressed, we recently asked our member organisations to "Have your Say on Zero". All respondents (about 45% of our members) were enthusiastic for the BIC to develop national guidelines in those 4 key areas. The highest and immediate concerns, from both operators and suppliers, was the need for a vehicle specification standard. This was followed by vehicle maintenance guidelines and safety management systems.

There were a number of common concerns shared by the majority of respondents and can be summarised as follows:

- Vehicle standards (in the absence of ADRs or recognised EU standards)
- Minimum qualifications and certified training needed for driving the bus, service and maintenance
- Safety instructions and care when other bus componentry maintenance is undertaken (such as doors, tyres and air-con).
- Standardisation of charging infrastructure and minimum qualifications for maintaining charging infrastructure
- Depot conversion and ensuring safe housing of a mixed fleet of diesel, CNG, battery/electric and hydrogen fuel cell
- Fire mitigation and what to do if battery or electrical componentry catches fire
- Vehicle range and charging requirements
- Total operational costs throughout expected life
- Mass increase to the vehicle.

The BIC has already commenced an analysis of available heavy vehicle international standards relating to electric and hydrogen. Our first step will be to pluck the best and most suitable elements that can be translated into an Australian context. The task is huge but will be a critical first step upon which to build all other stakeholder elements.

Stay up to date with BIC's 'zero' action plan at movingpeople.com.au.

The BIC secretariat is committed to the *moving people* vision that enhances the sustainability and liveability of Australia's cities and regions by using bus and coach transportation. Readers can connect with us on 02 6247 5990 or by email to enquiries@bic.asn.au.

