EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

DOES TECHNOLOGY IMPROVE SERVICE PROVISION?

Community Transport has a huge role to play in our society now and in the future. It is integral in assisting older Australians age at home whilst still engaging with their community and the demand for it will continue to grow. Australia, like many developed nations, has an ageing population (in June 2020 16% of the population was over 65 and it is projected to be 21-23% by 2066 (*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website).

To continue to provide this service, Community Transport Providers have 2 main challenges: 1) to **move more people** and 2) to be more **cost effective**. To achieve this, technology must be part of the evolution of Community Transport.

The demand for Community Transport will continue to grow as our population ages and more people age in their own home. The demand for this service in many areas also overlaps with NDIS, non-urgent medical transport and other assisted transport types often with people unable to access transport due to capacity issues. The most important factor in easing the supply and demand pressure is **aggregation**! Vehicles that can aggregate single trips into multiple trips in a similar direction is the key to more productivity and is only achieved with the use of technology to schedule and coordinate participants, vehicles and drivers. The results of adopting technology to improve aggregation can be seen in examples provided by Orcoda's technology platform.

Townsville Provider - TransitCare

2015: 15,532 trips per annum with 13 vehicles

2021 (with 2 years of Orcoda technology): 62,280 trips per annum with 15 vehicles

Inner Brisbane Provider – Burnie Brae

June 2022: 104 trips per day with 11 vehicles

June 2023: 145 trips per day with 10 vehicles

Why is aggregation so important? Because it enables more people to access Community Transport with the use of fewer resources, addressing both challenges by moving more people and being more cost effective. As in these examples, the cost of technology in a Community Transport environment is more than offset by the saving of driver hours, number of vehicles/kms and the reduction of manual process. But what else can technology bring to Community Transport?

Technology has a role to play in many other operational and service areas. The use of technology is important in the compliance and safety of service delivery through visibility. The use of a connected system to plan and monitor trip provision not only allows for accurate real time completion statistics (distance, time, cost of trip) but also enables providers, drivers and the participant's stakeholders to have absolute confirmation of safe carriage with GPS location, signatures and photos all available in real time. For the future of funding and payment, the ability to complete trips accurately and make payment or contribution in real time is also essential.

Finally, technology in this environment can make service **safer and easier** – for the providers and the participants. In-vehicle technology is rapidly improving and becoming more accessible. The introduction of AI cameras to monitor driver behaviour and alert to potential incidents making all

forms of transport safer. For Community Transport providers who use an integrated technology like Orcoda, information about participants, navigation to locations and contactless payment are all part of the driver's toolkit. In addition, the participants themselves can use their smart devices to request or book trips, receive updates on arrival times and make payments. Further more, a digital visibility of trip costs and completion should be an essential part of funding this essential activity.

For Community Transport, the ability to provide more trips, more effectively, is the challenge to ensure their sustainability. Technology is required to enable this. Whilst some challenges to adopting technology may be the initial price (although that is offset by efficiency) **the bigger challenge is change**. Changes in process are daunting and will take some time in an organisation – time that is immediately offset by the automation tasks like reporting. Equally changes to digital driver tools can also be a process and training challenge but the outcomes have benefits to the overall efficiency of service delivery.

Technology to assist and monitor Community Transport provision is essential and will continue to become more accessible for both the providers and recipients of the service. Realistically, the time to embrace technology and overcome these challenges is **now**.