



Vehicle Fleet Emission  
Testing: Social and Economic  
Impact Assessment

Report on focus group discussions  
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*Te Runanga, Wananga, Hauora me te Paekaka*  
**Te Ropu Whariki**  
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## Executive Summary

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) is researching options for the introduction of a vehicle emission testing programme in New Zealand. One component of this investigation involves identifying the social and economic impacts of implementing such a programme. This report is based on the findings from data gathered through seven focus groups conducted in various centres around New Zealand, in which the potential impacts of vehicle emission testing for identified population groups were investigated. An earlier analysis of income and vehicle dependency data (COVEC, 2005<sup>1</sup>) identified older people, families with children, low income households, Maori households, Pasifika households, people with disabilities and young people as population groups that were potentially vulnerable to the temporary or permanent loss of a vehicle as a consequence of the introduction of a vehicle emission screening programme.

Focus group participants were representatives of community and government agencies working with the identified population groups in urban, provincial and small town settings. The importance of place was paramount when the household impacts of the possible loss of private vehicle access were considered. Access to services and amenities, the feasibility of walking or cycling and the availability of public transport were important determining factors that differed between localities. In the two small towns included in the study public transport was non-existent and access to local services severely limited. In the fringe urban zone the public transport service was seen as so poor in terms of frequency, routes and destinations, costs and reliability that it was not a feasible transport option for the identified population groups. A private car was an essential form of transport for households in these areas.

In various ways the focus groups talked about the meaning of a car to households and its centrality to the New Zealand culture and way of life. The importance of a vehicle goes beyond the practical uses of a car. It can be a form of entertainment and recreation, it can provide a sense of connection or inclusion in a community, and it can signify freedom, prestige, choice and independence. At times for some households a car can be 'a roof over their head'. Without a car, people's opportunities to participate in all forms of activity - occupational, educational and social - can be diminished. Variations on this theme were apparent for the different population groups. For example for New Settlers a car can be a means of integrating into New Zealand society; for people with disabilities it was portrayed as providing access to a life; for youth vehicle ownership can be bound up with identity and autonomy; and for families with children it can be a safety net in times of emergency.

An increased use of unwarranted and unregistered vehicles as a consequence of vehicle emission testing was anticipated in all focus group discussions. Three main scenarios were identified. There was a common understanding that there is a group of

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<sup>1</sup> Vehicle Fleet Emission Screening Programme, Social and Economic Impact Assessment, Phase 1, prepared by COVEC for the Ministry of Transport, January, 2005.

people, who, mainly for reasons of affordability, drive unwarranted vehicles now. The increasing cost of emission testing is unlikely to change the behaviour of this group. A second group struggle to maintain a legal vehicle, prioritising transport independence over many other household costs. There was concern that the additional cost of maintaining a warrantable vehicle, with the introduction of emission standards, will tip this group of households into illegality. A third group, into which many older people and possibly people with disabilities would fall, will endeavour to maintain their vehicles to the required standard until it becomes impossible financially, at which point they are likely to forgo mobility.

Many low income households currently use illegal vehicles and vehicle-related fines were noted as a key contributing factor, when households spiral into a cycle of poverty. Vehicle-related fines were noted to rank highly as a reason for anti-police feeling. Participants expressed concern that this could be a particular issue for youth with low incomes and cheap older cars that are more likely to fail an emission test. A range of other illegal activities were mentioned as possible outcomes of introducing emission testing. Examples included more abandoned vehicles and more car thefts and fraudulent activities at testing time.

For all the population groups, on which discussions focused, there was a consensus of viewpoints that households placed priority on maintaining private transport options. When asked what things households would cut back on to meet increased warrant of fitness and car maintenance costs, a consistent response was food. Food is treated as a discretionary expense. Hunger is seen as preferable to incurring penalties by defaulting on hire purchase agreements and other financial contracts, particularly those that relate to car ownership. Currently, people can take the cost of a warrant from their food bill, but if the cost of a warrant was to rise to \$50 - \$60 then that would be the whole week's food. Households cannot go without food completely. Meeting the repair costs associated with compliance further compounds the issues.

The report details the particular consequences of increased car running and maintenance costs, and the potential loss of vehicle access for older people, families with children, low income households, Maori households, Pasifika households, people with disabilities and young people. There is also a brief discussion of the impacts of increased vehicle related expenses on the activities of volunteers and on the viability of local garages. Table 1 summarises key impacts for specific population groups.

Table 1. Social and economic impacts for specific population groups

Population group	Key impacts identified
Older people	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Older people struggling to maintain older vehicles</li> <li>■ Compromising food quality to maintain a car</li> </ul> <p>Loss of car access will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase dependence on family and voluntary services</li> <li>■ Increase social isolation and diminish wellbeing (exacerbated by older people's reluctance to ask for help for 'social' purposes, and a lack the confidence and agility to use public transport)</li> <li>■ Contribute to a perceived loss of social status</li> </ul>
Youth	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased use of unwarranted (potentially unsafe) cars</li> <li>■ Increased numbers of vehicle related fines and debts</li> <li>■ Increased tensions with police and other authorities</li> </ul> <p>Loss of access to a vehicle will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce an avenue for expressing identity and engaging in youth culture</li> <li>■ Increase dependence on families</li> <li>■ Limit opportunities for work and training</li> <li>■ Restrict recreational activities e.g. competitive sports</li> </ul>
Households with children	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased use of a unwarranted (potentially unsafe) cars</li> <li>■ Increased numbers of vehicle related fines and debts</li> </ul> <p>Loss of car access for HH with children will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ narrow opportunities (education, sporting, social etc) for children and parents</li> <li>■ impact on time efficiency due to loss of multi task car journeys</li> <li>■ reduce capacity to respond in emergency situations with children (eg injury, asthma)</li> <li>■ reduce psychological wellbeing associated with being able to take responsibility for family</li> </ul> <p>The impacts would be accentuated for larger households, including Maori and Pacific households, and for rural households with limited access to local services and amenities.</p>
Low income households	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Compromising food quality to maintain a car</li> <li>■ Rent arrears, eviction and transience to maintain a car</li> <li>■ Increased use of a unwarranted (potentially unsafe) cars</li> <li>■ Increased numbers of vehicle related fines and debts – triggering poverty spiral</li> </ul> <p>Loss of car access for low income families will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ effect several HHs/family/whanau where transport is shared</li> <li>■ reduce self esteem, self sufficiency and independence</li> <li>■ reduce choice and sense of control over life</li> <li>■ contribute to social exclusion</li> <li>■ reduce educational, training, employment, recreational and social opportunities</li> </ul>
People with disability	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Compromising food quality to maintain a car</li> <li>■ Reduced mobility</li> <li>■ Increased financial stress relating to options for independence</li> </ul> <p>Loss of car access for people with disability will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increase dependence on family, social services and mobility schemes</li> <li>■ Limit opportunities for employment, recreation, training, social contact – “life itself”</li> </ul>
Volunteers	<p>Increased cost of vehicle ownership will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reduce numbers of community volunteers and extent of voluntary activities.</li> <li>■ Contraction in NGO sector activities</li> </ul>
Rural communities	<p>Centralised emission testing facilities could threaten the viability of local garages and other small local businesses</p>

Focus group participants were asked to consider potential mitigation strategies to reduce the negative social and economic impacts of the introduction of emission screening for the specific population groups. A number of strategies were suggested that could be initiated by central government, local government and communities. They included implementing awareness and education campaigns, providing assistance in the lead up to the introduction of emission testing, assistance with meeting emission requirements via waivers and benefit supplements for particular groups, and promoting alternative modes of transport to private car use.

Particular mitigation strategies relevant to the needs of people with disabilities were put forward. Increased downstream vehicle expenses could have severe social and economic impacts for people with a disability. Private vehicles are often purchased, and subsequently modified to meet the specific needs of a disabled person, through grant funding. Modified vehicles are maintained for many years. Grants are difficult to get and there is no certainty that further grants will be available to maintain or upgrade a vehicle. Given the financial vulnerability of many people with a disability the prospect of failing an emission test will be stressful and an event that could threaten their independence and wellbeing.

Overall the data strongly suggests that a universal vehicle emission testing programme will have substantial social and economic consequences for households, communities and regions that are already in a position of relative disadvantage.



## **Introduction**

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) is examining options for the introduction of a vehicle emission testing programme in New Zealand. The programme would introduce a requirement for the emissions of vehicles to be tested, most likely as part of the Warrant of Fitness or Certificate of Fitness requirements. Part of MOT's investigation involves identifying the social and economic impacts of implementing such a programme.

The MoT contracted COVEC to undertake a research project that would identify the population groups that are most likely to be affected socially and economically by the introduction of an emission screening programme, the nature of the impacts, and policy measures that could be utilised to limit the impact of the programme for specific groups of people. The Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation (SHORE) at Massey University has been a collaborator in the research. SHORE researchers have collected qualitative data to complement the analyses of routinely collected quantitative data undertaken by COVEC and a review of research based knowledge on the impacts of social exclusion and poverty on wellbeing, completed by Mike O'Brien, Massey University. COVEC's analyses of emission data on the New Zealand vehicle fleet and of patterns of car dependency indicated that a more in-depth investigation of the likely social and economic impacts of the introduction of a screening programme was warranted for specific population groups. The groups identified were: older people, families with children, low income households, Maori households, Pasifika households, people with disabilities and young people.

This report is based on the findings from data gathered through seven focus groups conducted in various centres around New Zealand, in which the potential impacts of vehicle emission testing for the identified population groups were investigated.

## Methodology

Five of the seven focus group interviews were locality based. Sites were selected to provide an understanding of the potential diversity of impacts of emission testing on individuals living in a large central city (Christchurch), a smaller provincial city (Palmerston North), an area of suburban sprawl adjacent to a large city (West Auckland) and two small towns located in Northland and the central North Island. The small towns have not been named in this report to protect the privacy of participants and the communities they represent.

The additional focus groups were concerned with the likely impacts of an emission screening programme for people with disabilities and for young people. The latter groups were both held in Auckland, with the youth focus group having strong representation from individuals who work with Pacific and Maori youth living in South Auckland.

Focus group participants were selected for their knowledge of the social and economic circumstances of households in their areas or target groups. Participants were representatives of local community and government agencies, whose mandate included working with households and individuals from the identified population groups. Recruitment of participants began from researcher networks in the localities and was expanded via secondary contacts.

The focus groups were undertaken in community venues, with the exception of the group discussing the implications for young people and people with disabilities. This took place at the SHORE offices in central Auckland. Two researchers attended each focus group, one to act as primary facilitator and the second to support the group facilitation process and to take notes. A semi structured interview guide was developed and used to stimulate the conversation between participants. The discussions were audio taped and the tapes were fully transcribed.

A thematic analysis of the data was undertaken based on a data coding frame developed by the research team after repeated readings of the focus group transcripts. The software package NVIVO<sup>2</sup> was used to manage the data.

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<sup>2</sup> NVIVO is a software package for qualitative data analysis developed by QSR International Pty Ltd.

## **Findings**

The findings are structured thematically within three sections. The first section covers the common themes that were reported in all localities as being significant to one or more of the identified population groups. In the second section particular issues identified for older people, households with families, low income households, Maori, Pasifika, New Settlers, young people, people with disabilities and volunteers are discussed. Participants' viewpoints on the implications of centralised or decentralised emission testing and their ideas for mitigating the negative impacts of the introduction of an emission screening programme are discussed in the third section.

### **Common Themes**

#### **The Importance of Place**

A possible outcome of vehicle emission testing for a household is a temporary loss of vehicle access while repairs are undertaken to meet new emission standards. Where the expense of maintaining a car to meet the new compliance standard is beyond the financial resources of a household, the permanent loss of access to a vehicle may result. The social and economic impacts of a temporary or permanent loss of private vehicle access are influenced by where the household is situated. Determining factors include the extent of local access to a range of services and amenities, the topography of the locality and the availability of public transport or alternative means of travel. For example, participants in the Christchurch group noted that most of the places people need to get to are “generally reachable”. The city has a bus service and walking and cycling are feasible transport modes due to the flat terrain. Although not a common perception, one focus group attendee noted that “It is only through convenience and laziness that one owns a car in the first place in Christchurch”.

Similar observations were made in Palmerston North. As a reasonably small, compact, and flat city it was seen to be ideal for cycling and walking: a place in which people can “make do if they have to” as one participant put it.

This was not the case in the sprawling suburbs of West Auckland or for those people living in the two small rural towns in which group discussions were held. There were a number of specific issues which made people in West Auckland dependent on private vehicle transport. These included a poor public transport service and the need to travel to other parts of Auckland for employment and to access medical and other services. As discussed in later sections, this lack of easy access to the key destinations of daily life and poor public transport impacted in varying ways on the lives of older people, young people, families with young children, low income households, people with disabilities, volunteers, and New Settlers.

The West Auckland focus group illustrated the economic relationship between housing and transport for low income households. Traditionally West Auckland had offered relatively low cost housing options to people in the Auckland region. As a

consequence of the increasing cost of accommodation in Auckland generally there has been an increase in low income households in the West over recent years. While housing costs may be lower, transport costs are likely to increase when moving to West Auckland from more central locations.

In the two small towns public transport did not exist and in these relatively isolated communities only a limited range of goods and services are available locally. For example, in the smaller of the two towns there is no bank or cash machine, limited medical services, limited food outlets and no clothing outlets. Primary and secondary schooling is available in the town but to access post secondary training courses, residents need to travel to a larger centre forty minutes drive away. There are a number of sporting and other clubs in the town but participating in competitive events again requires transport outside the area. Entertainment opportunities are also limited without travelling to a larger centre. Participants noted that a great deal of importance is placed on the ability to travel out of town for social events as well as to meet medical, educational, domestic and employment needs and to visit family/whanau.

The larger of the small towns acts as service centre for a rural area that spans an approximate radius of 65 kms. There are a number of small communities within this wider region that lack local access to goods and services so residents need to visit the town to access banks, WINZ and other services. Private vehicles are the only form of transport available.

## **Public Transport**

The potential for public transport, and other modes such as walking and cycling, to fill the transport needs of varying groups in the different localities was discussed. However, even in Christchurch and Palmerston North, noted above to have reasonable bus services, the limitations of the bus services were subject to lengthy discussion. Noted limitations included the low frequency of buses; a limited array of routes and destinations; the cost of a trip; patchiness of the service in terms of reliability; and difficulty getting on and off buses for people in wheelchairs, older people and parents with several young children. Although some buses can be lowered against the curb to ease access, focus group participants noted that there are only limited numbers of these buses available.

The conveniences of a car; that it can take longer to use public transport or walk; and a lack of money in the hand were noted deterrents to bus use.

“That up-front cash, that last \$2 has gone on milk or the last loaf of bread to get them through to next pay day, there’s no money to catch the bus”.  
*Christchurch*

“Even though, in fact, like you talk it through to them and say that it’s actually more cost-effective to get a taxi once a week to go to the shops, than to keep your car on the road. But that’s not the sort of thinking that people get into. It’s their up front costs”. *Christchurch*

Bus times are not always convenient. One participant pointed out that she knew of a number of Christchurch men with jobs that started at 6.00 am, who could not get to

work because the bus service did not start until 6.30 am. WINZ came up with a workable solution by purchasing bikes for these people.

A lack of convenience with bus travel was also discussed in Palmerston North.

“I mean it’s not a well organised public bus service. There are large areas where you’d have to walk because the nearest bus stop is several blocks away”.  
*Palmerston North*

International students were identified as a group who used and relied on the public transport system a lot more than New Zealand residents.

West Auckland has a bus and train service but neither was considered to be adequate in terms of coverage and frequency, to the extent that it did not really provide a feasible option to people’s transport needs:

“So that you’ll find our community [Ranui], even for a very poor community, most people rely on a vehicle, just because of the adverse public transport situation they have to deal with”. *West Auckland*

Other issues with public transport include its reliability:

“I’d have to agree that folk in, like Massey, New Lynn, Glen Eden, Glendene, Avondale, their preference is to have a vehicle. The public transport is very unreliable, often it’s late, often it’s early. So folks’ preference is to have a vehicle here in Auckland, here in the West, and I can, I mean three young men last year lost their jobs due to the buses being late, getting them to work late”.  
*West Auckland*

Sometimes it is simply an issue of the distances that people have to travel in a day or that their travel routes necessitate criss-crossing the city in a way that makes public transport a less attractive option. One focus group attendee commented:

“For myself being a Westie all my life, as a younger person even just to get from New Lynn to Avondale to work, I had to catch two buses. But now it is not even practical to even think about public transport for people living in the Waitakeres, because there just isn’t any. There’s no train, there’s no buses at all up where I live and you’ve got to have a car”. *West Auckland*

West Auckland has a shuttle bus to the hospital but once again the timing of shuttles is not always convenient to meet people’s needs. There are also a number of Council owned community vans that can be pre booked by community groups or organisations to transport members.

Although neither of the small rural towns currently has any public transport, a two year trial of a public bus service to a neighbouring town is to be introduced to one of the towns. It will be low cost and will run once a day, three days per week, between the town and a larger neighbouring town. It is anticipated that the introduction of the bus service will reduce some reliance on private cars. Older people who can be flexible with their time are expected to be key beneficiaries of the service. It will not

replace private vehicles for people who need to travel to work or school, or people with families who may need to travel for medical treatment. Neither will it replace private car use for people who need to travel to some other neighbouring town to meet their educational, recreational, health or social needs. It was suggested that public transport cannot ever be a satisfactory option in rural areas. People have to rely on their own private vehicles.

### **The Meaning of a Car**

In various ways the focus groups talked about the centrality of the car to the New Zealand culture and way of life. The importance of a vehicle goes beyond the practical uses of a car. It can be a form of entertainment and recreation; it can provide a sense of connection or inclusion in a community; and it can signify freedom, prestige, choice and independence. And, as noted by one participant:

“If they retain a car they actually retain a roof over their head. That, if the worst comes to the worst and sometimes it does for people, they have somewhere they can sleep and there’s a means of transporting all your worldly possessions to the next garage or floor that you’re dossing on”. *West Auckland*

For some potentially vulnerable groups in communities, particularly low income households, a car can provide a sense of control in what is often a pressured existence. A focus group participant stated:

“... if they have the car it’s one more thing for them to feel that they’re able to have some control over their lives. They have some control in terms of, as awful as it is, at least they can get in the car and go to the shop”. *Christchurch*

Having a car can provide a sense of independence and mobility in one aspect of life. The significance of retaining a car, at possibly high cost to other parts of life, was seen as particularly significant for some people who have to deal with WINZ about issues of income. This is illustrated in the following comment:

“Because you have everybody else breathing down your neck on every bit of your life.....They have to justify their very existence”. *Christchurch*

In many ways a car was perceived to operate as more than a safety net in terms of a transport option. It was seen to provide a small measure of self sufficiency to people’s lives, something that cannot be met by any public transport system. With regard to their interactions with WINZ, participants noted that for a number of their clients car ownership could pose a no-win situation for them. If they have a car they can feel criticised by WINZ for having a luxury item that they should not be able to afford, yet if they do not have a car they can feel criticised for not being ‘work ready’.

“...WINZ put pressure on people to have transport. People can’t afford to and WINZ say, but you’ve got to, you know. But they’re not going to give them any benefit or anything. But, oh well if you’re looking for a job and you’ve got to make yourself available for a full-time job, and they get really uppity”. *Palmerston North*

Participants also remarked that a car could add to the social status of individuals in the households they worked with.

“Another element in there for the older and sometimes disadvantaged groups is that there is a sort of subtle status in society by having a car. You’re somebody who is successful or OK, and not having a car you’re perceived in a lower pecking order or something ...” *Christchurch*

It was noted that this feeling is more prevalent among older people, those who suffer ill health, or who have lost their jobs. Many older people will retain a vehicle if they lose their license even if they never drive it again themselves. Even when people are informed of other options, including free or minimal cost transport provided by social service agencies, people are only likely to be open to these if they have already decided that there are some good reasons for no longer keeping a vehicle.

“But, if you said it when they’re still hanging on grimly to their car and they can still get to the bowls, or they can still do the odd thing and they can still drive independently, even though they’re not safe, they hang on to it, particularly the men-folk”. *Christchurch*

It was also noted that older men, in particular, are very reluctant to lose their independence. They do not consider it acceptable to have to ask others for help with personal things that they need. A car can also facilitate social inclusion. The story was told of an old man who provided transport to others in his neighbourhood and by contributing in this way he became very much included in his community. Using his car to assist others was a vital part of his well-being. This sense of inclusion in a community can be more general. Simply having the capacity to get from place to place, to visit friends and take part in other activities was seen to offer a feeling of being included. It was added that for low income households, having a car may mean that they are seen as a “respectable” part of the community conforming to “social norms”, when in reality they may feel that they do not meet these and are often excluded.

Without a car, people’s opportunities to participate in all forms of activity, occupational, educational and social can be diminished. For New Settlers a car can be a means of integrating into New Zealand society. It was particularly noted that for women from some migrant groups a car can provide a freedom of mobility, access and opportunity that they may not have been experienced before. With regard to the car as a cultural symbol of independence one participant remarked:

“I think the psyche of this nation... because it has come out of a pioneer culture where people travelled long distances between and that, we didn’t have a good public transport infrastructure”. *West Auckland*

Comparisons were made between New Zealand and British cultural traditions with regard to mobility, with New Zealanders seen to have a far greater propensity for regularly travelling great distances around the country. Experiences of public transport systems in Auckland, Sydney and London were also compared to highlight the system constraints that contributed to the car being the only feasible mode of travel for West Aucklanders.

The common viewpoint was that for most households in New Zealand, in city and rural areas, life is built around having a car. A car represents independence and flexibility as to how, where and when travel occurs. It offers choice and a sense of control. Participants commented that the loss of mobility and freedom associated with car access could have significant negative impacts on people's mental and spiritual well-being.

In a small town with limited entertainment a car can itself be a form of entertainment. This point was also noted with respect to young people, with a notable example being the phenomenon of boy and girls racers. Car ownership can also represent prestige and was noted to be a significant part of the identity of certain families.

The meaning of car ownership and access for people with disability had many features in common with the other groups identified, but ownership and access appeared to be experienced even more acutely. Private transport was described as having the potential to open up the world to people with disabilities. It was more than independence and a means to get to work, social activity and entertainment. It was framed by participants as offering access to life and living for people with disabilities. A focus group participant with a disability recalls a time in her life where she did not have access to a private vehicle:

“Well I didn't know there was a world out there. I never went anywhere”.  
*Disability*

For younger people car ownership and use are recognised as being bound up with identity and status, as well as being an asset for work and other travel necessities. Participants described car ownership as a form of initiation into adulthood for young New Zealanders. On a daily and weekly basis they are used for recreational purposes and as a form of entertainment. Vehicle ownership and car behaviour makes a statement about young people to their peers, and to adults, in terms of identity and independence.

## **Illegality**

An increased use of unwarranted and unregistered vehicles as a consequence of vehicle emission testing was anticipated in all focus group discussions. Three main scenarios were identified. There was a common understanding that there is a group of people, many for reasons of affordability, who drive unwarranted vehicles now. The increasing cost of emission testing is unlikely to change the behaviour of this group. A second group struggle to maintain a legal vehicle, prioritising transport independence over many other household expenses. There was concern that the additional cost of maintaining a warrantable vehicle with the introduction of emission standards will tip this group of households into illegality. A third group was anticipated, into which many older people and possibly people with disabilities would fall, who will endeavour to maintain their vehicles to the required standard until it becomes impossible financially, at which point they are likely to forgo mobility.

Many low income households currently use vehicles that are unwarranted and unregistered and considerable discussion focused on the way in which vehicle related



finer can contribute to households spiralling into a cycle of poverty and loss. If you drive an illegal vehicle you are likely to be fined. You may pay the fine, but the car may remain unwarranted and/or unregistered, so you may get further fines. The following case has many attributes in common to those described by a number of participants:

“One of our saddest cases that we’ve had was a case where a woman with three young children in a particularly substandard property was threatening to kill her children because the straw that broke the camel’s back was that the husband had been arrested for non-payment of fines. So the old car was dumped in the front with the, obviously hadn’t been registered and warranted for a very long time, so he had accumulated debt, and they were all debt-related car fines. The husband had been put in jail for it. So that’s the consequence of it. We all know it”. *Christchurch*

In the small rural towns participants indicated that driving a car is often considered more important to local people than getting a fine for an unwarranted and/or unregistered vehicle. A representative from Budget Advice noted that most of her clients who had fines had them because of unregistered, unwarranted vehicles and/or having no driver’s licence. It was mentioned that there are a number of impacts from driving without a warrant. Unwarranted cars are less likely to be as safe as warranted cars. The high numbers of unwarranted vehicles in one of the small towns was talked about as posing a dilemma for schools and sports clubs in the area. Do they allow children to travel in potentially unsafe vehicles when the alternative is to miss out on participating?

Transience in small rural towns was also partially attributed to the accumulation of fines households receive for driving in an unwarranted and/or unregistered vehicle. For beneficiaries, these fines can be directly taken from their benefits, so with a reduced income they fall into arrears with rent and build up tabs at local businesses. One outcome is that people ‘move on’ to avoid payment. As a consequence children move schools contributing to instability of support and lifestyle.

“The traffic officers are very diligent around here and they get fined and, of course, that can be taken out of their benefit by an attachment order, so they end up with less money in hand. I mean it’s happening now that they’re getting fined flat out for not having a warrant of fitness and it is going to be compounded hugely”. *Small Town*

Loss of a vehicle can potentially impact on the mobility options of an extended family. For example, if the vehicle is driven by a person without a licence and they lose the vehicle because of that, it may affect the extended family both on a practical level and also personally in terms of relationships within families. Vehicle related fines due to driving unwarranted, unregistered vehicles without a licence also rank highly as a reason for anti-police feeling. Participants expressed concern that this could be a particular issue for youth. Getting a fine can colour people’s attitude towards police and authority as well as trigger petty offending.

A range of other illegal activities were mentioned as possible outcomes of introducing emission testing. The failure of vehicles to meet required emission standards may

lead to more abandoned vehicles on the land and in rivers. Emission testing could also lead to more car thefts and fraudulent activities at testing time. Muffler conversion could be a new business in some areas, with a 'rent-a-muffler' service facetiously mentioned as another potential outcome, or business opportunity, of emission testing.

In one of the small towns a focus group participant estimated that 15% - 20% of the area's population continually drove vehicles that did not have warrants nor were registered. A cycle of behaviour was described with respect to a hard core group of people in the community that never got warrants or registration for their vehicles. It was considered that these people did not really think that they should have to pay for these vehicles related costs. Rather, they would prioritise other expenses relating to their families and other needs over these. One focus group participant explained:

“Just working with the men, especially the men, their behaviour is that they would rather build up \$6000 or \$7000 bills or speeding tickets and unregistered cars and do six months in jail and get it all wiped off and start a clean slate. You know it is a behavioural issue, not an issue around gas emission; they have no thought about that. It is about how do I get off accruing all this money and debt and getting on without having to pay \$200 to get a warrant of fitness. For them that's the issue. They think, well I don't have to pay it, because I'll just get a ticket and just continue and they just continue with this behaviour. I don't know in terms of just thinking of what you were saying, I don't think it would actually make any difference to their behaviour”. *Small Town*

It was considered by some of the focus group participants that introducing emission testing would entrench this behaviour among this group in the community. Particular concern was expressed for youth who are just beginning to enter the workforce. As indicated in the following excerpt there was concern that these patterns of behaviour could be adopted by the young people if the costs of maintaining vehicles became prohibitive for them.

“You want to effectively change behaviour and you want these kids not to be the ones that throw the ticket, open the glovebox and out falls all these tickets. You want to change it, and that's the age group you want to hit. Now that can tip that, I've got a feeling this can tip that over and unbalance it, where the kids start acting that behaviour and start getting into that sort of process of well what the hell sort of process”. *Small Town*

While it was agreed that some individuals do not care about driving vehicles around in this state, there are others who would prefer not to be doing so but may not be able to afford to restore their car to a road worthy state. One of the focus group participants explains:

“... you've got some macho guys who don't care, they just break the law and to hell with it, sort of thing. But you've got a lot of people who do care and every time they drive their car with no registration, and no warrant, they really worry and they feel bad and it is true we're going to increase that group because there's more that won't have a warrant of fitness and you're creating anxiety and all of those sorts of things”. *Small Town*

Other focus group participants noted that youth can be part of this later group. They are prepared to drive around without warrants or registration, but are concerned about getting caught. Although young people were of prime concern in this regard it was also noted that low income families could also be pushed into the group that drove around without warrants or registration. This would include those who try to be law abiding, but they may find that they are not in a financial position to be so.

Increasing tensions between youth and police was another possible undesirable outcome of the increased costs of car ownership for young people.

“if they’re worried about, oh shit my car hasn’t got a warrant, or rego ... They’re not going to stick around after that accident to say to the cops, yes I saw that and it was so and so, they’ll be off out of there. So I think it will add to a relationship that I think is already really strained out there [South Auckland]”. *Youth*

Large numbers of cars that are driven illegally were noted in all localities. The probable consequences of emission testing were compared to the impact made by the introduction of the new licensing system that increased the charges for obtaining a licence. An increasing number of people started driving without licences.

## **Social and economic impacts of emission testing for specific population groups**

### **Older People**

Older people were recognised as a group that is likely to be affected negatively by the introduction of emission testing. Meeting the increased costs of obtaining a warrant and maintaining vehicles to required emission standards could be difficult financially for many older people. As they age their cars also age and become more expensive to maintain. As noted in the follow excerpt, this can be a concern for elderly people on fixed, low incomes and those who are asset rich and income poor.

“...you know while we’re all working we can change over our car every so often, but once older people retire they can’t change over, they just don’t have the income. So they have the older cars”. *Palmerston North*

The observation was made that many people who will become elderly in the next 20 years may be poorly positioned to maintain a vehicle given the low levels of retirement savings in New Zealand. Car ownership will be difficult to maintain for those elderly who are reliant on superannuation alone.

Discussions on the transport needs and transport available to older people drew on notions of core or essential travel as distinct from discretionary travel. Trips for food shopping and medical appointments fell into the former categories whereas trips to meet friends or to attend social activities were more likely to be seen as non-essential or discretionary. Even when the latter types of social activities were seen as essential

to the wellbeing of older people there was an acknowledgement that for people without private transport it was likely to be more difficult to access lifts for the more 'discretionary' events. Older people were also seen as less likely to ask for a lift to places that may be considered discretionary by others.

Family members are frequently relied upon to meet the transport needs of older people particularly in localities where public transport is non-existent. If these family members struggled to pay for the costs associated with emission testing it would impact on the elderly, whom they assist, as well as their immediate families.

A number of informal networks whereby elderly people transport other elderly people around were known to participants. This could be offering an elderly person a lift to a senior citizens club event or a shared social activity or assisting them to go shopping. The elderly man mentioned earlier who assisted other elderly people in need of transport did so until he experienced an increase in his rent. As a consequence he had to curtail his transporting activities as he was unable to afford the additional petrol and maintenance of his car. The cost of vehicle emission testing and subsequent car maintenance costs could mean that this scenario is faced by other older people affecting both their own mobility and the mobility of others they assist to meet their daily needs. In the small towns the comment was made that many older people do not venture beyond the bounds of the town in their vehicles. In other words they are low fuel users.

Reluctance by elderly people to ask for transport assistance from others in the community was commonly noted. They were seen as reluctant to ask for what most people take for granted in terms of being part of the community. A participant explained this reticence in the following way:

“...because it's about pride, it's about shame, and it's about not knowing how to or never having to ask ... You see a lot of older people who have come through the depression. I mean they'd no more ask than fly to the moon because they've had to survive and they've learnt how to do that ... and then suddenly they become the person who is now dependent on somebody else, very unlikely that they're going to put up their hand”. *Christchurch*

It was mentioned that in Christchurch, and probably in most other centres, there are social services that can assist the elderly to attend doctor's appointments, get their groceries and other necessary things in life. Some social services, the Churches Hospital Trust being a noted example, also recognise the importance of transport for the elderly as a vital part of maintaining a social life and hence mental well-being and inclusion in society. Having access to a vehicle, or another form of transport, was accepted as playing a critical role in the social inclusion of older people. Without a vehicle:

“what they're missing out on is the enjoyment of the drive and social interaction which a car brings. You know, being able to get in the car and taking them to the beach and walking with them for 10 minutes and just sharing in that with that person is significant in terms of the well-being of that person”. *Christchurch*

The following stories were told by participants from the West Auckland area:

“I’ve got clients in Glendene who, that’s what they do to get out and about the four walls, is to actually go for a drive. The wife’s got two very bad hips so she can’t get out of the vehicle to walk anywhere. Whether it is to Western Springs or along a beach, it is just that out and about in a vehicle and that’s her bit of relief to add to her quality of life, otherwise she’s inside her four walls”.  
*West Auckland*

“...when my Dad passed away, for a year she [mother] stayed at home did nothing and then the next year, which is the year just gone, she started to involve herself in community activities. Now she’s able to do that because she has a car, she can get to this place or that place, so she has a regular event each day. If we took that car away I could see my Mum returning back to where she was when Dad passed away, which was staying at home. She was getting more depressed and more depressed and in that she started to lose the ability to organise her financial affairs, to interact with us as a family, she became very disinterested. I guess part of our concern is to provide her with the means to get involved in all of those activities and making sure she has a car that’s running”. *West Auckland*

In terms of using public transport, even where it is available, some elderly people do not feel that they are up to catching buses. It requires a level of agility and speed of movement that older people are not always confident that they can achieve.

“... you’re a bit more at risk as a pedestrian in some areas of being in an accident, and particularly if you’re a bit slow crossing the road sometimes they find they don’t get right across in the time that there is there”. *Christchurch*

Differences were noted between areas in the neighbourhood, family and community transport support available for older people. Good support was spoken about in the small towns. A strong senior citizens network was noted in one area along with a service run by St Johns to care for the elderly and other sick people, with the aim of limiting feelings of social isolation. Again networks of older people were mentioned in which those with mobility assisted those without to do errands. It was remarked that some older folk take advantage of vans or small buses that can transport them from smaller communities into larger towns for shopping. Others rely on family and whanau to transport them places they need to go. If emission’ testing puts pressure on any of these existing forms of transport, elderly people are likely to be disadvantaged.

Consistent with the views expressed in other localities, older people in small towns were considered less likely to ask for transport for ‘non-essential’ things, such as going to the movies or other forms of entertainment. Given the greater distances to forms of entertainment this issue was possibly heightened in the small towns. Indeed, the focus group members themselves indicated that they would be less likely to willingly assist the elderly in the community with transport for these ‘discretionary’ needs.

Having a vehicle was considered to be very important to older people in West Auckland. It enables them to access services which, particularly for specialist

services, can be located in the distant suburbs of greater Auckland. An example was given by one focus group attendee of an elderly woman who had to travel from West Auckland to Manukau for her hip replacements. Having a vehicle also provides access for elderly with limited mobility. A focus group participant recalls:

“[he] didn’t get both hips done, he only got one done, and as a result he’s hugely crippled and there’s no way he could get on and off public transport at all, but he can still get about because he has a car”. *West Auckland*

Families of older people also value the elderly having their own transport. They recognise that if older people did not have their own form of transport they would have to take responsibility for taking them where they needed to go. As noted earlier, public transport was seen as very inadequate in West Auckland and other organised forms of transport for the elderly, such as a Waitakere City bus that provides transport to Waitakere Hospital and rest home transport, are limited.

There was general agreement that many older people struggle to pay for the continued road costs and maintenance of their vehicles at present. Food quality is the area of expenditure that is most often compromised in order to keep a car on the road. Participants expressed concern that this was likely to have implications for the health of older people. Increased costs for warrant of fitness testing and repairs to ensure emission standards are met would place further financial burdens on the elderly.

## **Households with Children**

### *Access to Services*

Participants indicated that households with children generally place a high priority on maintaining a car. Cars are needed to access services in times of emergency. Accessing medical services for conditions such as asthma and in the case of injury were commonly discussed examples. However there are a number of other situations where a car is seen as necessary for households with children, such as taking children to and from preschool, kohanga reo, school, sports and other activities. Having a car is considered necessary to care for and take responsibility for your family.

The dependence on a car was seen as more extreme in the small towns where emergency services are up to forty minutes away. Private transport is needed to get children to hospitals, and to reach other medical and social services. Schools may not be within walking distance of homes and while a school buses may service rural areas families may still need to drop their children to the nearest rural bus stop. In some areas it was noted that kohanga reo has a van that can be used to pick up and drop off children but this is not the case for other forms of childcare and preschools. Reduced transport options could reduce the choice of schools and preschools children can attend. Further, without transport, children cannot take part in extra curricular activities such as weekend sports.

A private vehicle is also often essential for farmers and other rural dwellers to come into larger centres for supplies for rural businesses, as well as to meet their needs for domestic items. For the various reasons mentioned it was apparent that families

placed a high priority on having a vehicle and at times struggled to pay registration and repair costs to keep it on the road.

The experience relayed in the following quote illustrates how vital it can be for families with young children to have adequate access to services. Public transport cannot always provide an adequate solution.

“One of my personal experiences was that I had a premature baby and I had to get to National Women’s every day from Glen Eden. It took me three buses. At that time I didn’t have a car and made it a priority to get a car, because when I had the next child it was just a whole different experience. I was up getting ready to hop on a bus at 6 o’clock in the morning and then coming back at around 8 o’clock at night. It would take me that long to catch all these three buses and I had a little toddler with me. That really just about broke me, where I thought the only solution to this is to get a car and it was a dumpy old thing, but it meant that we had two hours at the beginning of the day and two hours at the end of the day to do some family life stuff, as opposed to just sitting on a bus travelling. At that time, too, it was winter so that my poor little one was in the terminals, we were frozen most of the time until we got back. It did, it impacted on my ability to get over the operation, to care for the child at National Women’s, to care for the other young child that I had. Whereas that whole scenario changed when I got a car”. *West Auckland*

Most families with children in West Auckland were noted to be heavily reliant on private vehicles. Despite their urban location there was seen to be no easy-fit alternatives for these people.

Many parents consider it necessary to drive their children to school. Reasons for this include time and safety issues and the perceived threat of ‘stranger danger’. In many families both parents work. Their routine may involve quickly dropping off children to school so that can get on the motorway early enough to allow for congestion so that they can still get themselves to work on time.

#### *Access to Employment*

Transport options and travel distances were seen as a crucial determinant of parents’ employment related decision making. It was also noted that many employers prefer their staff to have their own personal transport and may take this into consideration when employing staff. With regard to travel time, public transport means greater travel times and, accordingly, greater time away from children. Some families cannot afford to send their children to before- and after-school programmes hence transport related difficulties were cited as reasons given by some parents for remaining on a benefit, or pursuing jobs that are lower skilled than those they are trained for so as to minimise travel time.

#### *Social Aspects*

In addition to issues of access to services and employment, having a vehicle does provide families with mobility solutions and options for social inclusion. One focus group attendee stated:

“I know a young woman who went for her licence. Just the fact of having a licence she said enabled her to do a number of things. She had a husband that was disabled, so there were frequent hospital visits that she often relied on her neighbour because there was no way that the public transport system allowed them to get there. But that the main thing for her personally was it just enabled her to move out of her four walls. She was beginning to feel quite depressed, you know. There was so much pressure on her looking after her husband, looking after her children but the fact that she didn't feel she could move out of her four walls because she hadn't the choice, was impacting on her own mental health”. *West Auckland*

The social aspects of reduced mobility will be developed further in subsequent sections.

### **Low Income Households**

Low income households were identified as a group that were particularly vulnerable to negative impacts of emission testing. The cost and possible consequences of emission testing were portrayed as yet another assault on the viability of economically marginal households. The rationale for low income households placing priority on car ownership was seen as no different to any other New Zealand household. A car provided independence and flexibility. It provided opportunities for social contact, employment, training and access to goods and services.

The importance of private transport to enable low income households to shop at lower cost supermarkets was mentioned at several of the focus groups. As indicated by the following comments, this is not possible currently for many low income households.

“as a relatively well off person [I] can come and get cheap food at the supermarkets, and the people that I help with finance, who can't afford it, pay twice as much at the local dairy...transport would help them. Like coming to The Warehouse for cheap stuff, so even shopping it is important”.

Participants from budget advisory services commented on the rolling accounts many of their clients ran at local dairies.

“Well I've got clients who don't have vehicles but they have a nice, what do they call it, tag at the dairy, tab is it, and it's huge. When we cost out what they pay at the dairy, you know I've told them they'd be better off to order a taxi and go down to Pak 'n Save. But they've got into the rut where they actually haven't got the money for the food, but they can still tab it at the local dairy”. People may owe up to \$200 and pay part of the bill off each week.  
*West Auckland*

The isolation of living in a small town that was a forty minutes drive from a supermarket made car access for purchasing basic commodities even more significant. The same issues were noted for access to medical and emergency services. Households without a car, living in isolated localities, rely on extended families to assist with meeting their transport needs. It was mentioned that even where voluntary groups such as Red Cross are available to help people with access to medical care



many very poor people don't use these services as volunteers like to receive donations for their services.

Low income families with children experience the same needs, with regard to having a car, as described above for families with children.

“Low income households are already struggling to pay for the current cost of a warrant and its related repairs. Extra costs in this regard would put definite stresses on low income households. These are households that are living week to week with barely any money, if any, left over at the end of a given week.”  
*Small Town*

### *Economic Issues*

The level of poverty experienced by some low income families was considered such that attempting to deal with an increased cost for a warrant of fitness or a repair bill to comply with emission standards would be well down their list of priorities. However, there was general agreement across the groups that low income households will do anything they can to purchase the petrol for their vehicles and to keep them running. The only 'disposable' income low income households had came from their food budget. Generally there is no budget for transport.

“I mean generally I'm talking rock bottom on a benefit having fines coming out, they've got enough to pay their rent, if they're lucky they've got a phone, if they're lucky they're not in arrears with their power and then they've got a little bit left for food. If another bill comes along, if your kid gets sick, food money goes on that bill”. *Christchurch*

In light of the struggle to survive economically focus group participants felt that it may be hard for low income households to see the broader environmental issues relating to reducing emission:

“They'll see it as the warrant gone up, and in terms of emission they won't see the benefits”. *Small Town*

Debt in low income families often accumulates because of vehicle related expenses and/or fines. This was pointed out by a focus group attendee who had investigated the reason for evictions through the Tenancy Tribunal. She explained that eighty-five percent of applications to the Tenancy Tribunal that result in evictions were due to rent arrears. The reason many of these people had fallen into arrears with their rent related to payments towards a car, for work done on a car, or for warrant of fitness or registration related costs.

“Yes, what I've found too though, is they can't afford the petrol or warrant of fitness or registration, but they're still paying \$75 a week to the finance company three years after that, and that's the worst part I think that I see, they can't even afford to put petrol in it and then they get a fine for it”. More debt can ensue. *Christchurch*

When focus groups were asked what things households would cut back on to try and meet increased warrant of fitness and car maintenance costs, a consistent response was food. A car is seen to be a priority in the budgets of low income families. The common viewpoint was that low income households will cut back on food first, on rent second, and then any hire purchase agreements they may have entered into in order to keep a car on the road.

Food is treated as a discretionary expense. The only negative implication of not buying food is hunger. This is seen as better than incurring penalties for not paying for hire purchase agreements and other financial contracts, particularly those that relate to car ownership. Currently, people can take the cost of a warrant from their food bill, but if the cost of a warrant was to rise to \$50 - \$60 then that would be the whole week's food. Households cannot go without food completely.

The situation is illustrated by the following comments:

“... they're continually robbing Peter to pay Paul when those kind of costs come up. Even a simple warrant that's \$35 to \$40, they take the money out of the food or they don't pay all the power that week or just to get the warrant for the vehicle. Most of the time that comes quite late. So I'm quite concerned that this is going to be another added cost that they can't afford, because they can't afford to service their vehicles. When there's a tyre to be bought, they source that, the cheapest might be \$90. You know they've got to find that money and it constantly comes out of their food and they're already not eating very well”. *West Auckland*

“Ultimately ... it takes food from the mouths of their children, because you know, I mean ultimately that's the end result because they're going to have to give to that and sacrifice something else. So that's going to be a huge effect on the family”. *Small Town*

“... electricity you have to pay it, or else they disconnect you, you have to pay your rent or else you get thrown out, but you don't have to buy your food. This is unfortunately what happens, people cut back on their food as has been said and they get more sickness and it's a vicious spiral. So those who do take the trouble to repair their car, yes that's going to go down the line and it will be the food that gets cut short”. Visits to health care and hospital could also be cut back on to cover costs.” *Small Town*

One focus group participant pointed out that tragically many of these low income households are still paying finance companies for the cost of the vehicles themselves, which is causing them to get into greater debt. At times this can lead to the vehicles being repossessed.

### *Wellbeing*

Participants indicated that for many individuals it is hard to be reliant on other people to help with transport to satisfy basic household needs. It can bring about a feeling of shame, a loss of independence and this can lead to isolation with implications for wellbeing.

“... if you’re the person who has got to ask [for help with transport], there’s nothing worse than being the one that has to ask all the time and you can’t reciprocate”. *Palmerston North*

Other focus group participants added to this:

“Often what happens is that you don’t ask and then you feel isolated and that gets more and more and more, because if you feel isolated then you can ask less and then you’re feeling more isolated, it’s a vicious circle”. *Palmerston North*

“...people who are unemployed and other members of our community as well, like for them the rug has been taken from under their feet anyway and it’s like the vehicle ..., it then becomes a really important thing for them, it’s an independence which they’ve lost”. *Palmerston North*

Asking for help with child-related trips could also be seen as more acceptable than caregivers asking for help to meet their own needs, compounding their sense of isolation.

Lack of a vehicle for low income households can also reduce their opportunities and options more generally. For these households a vehicle can mean:

“the opportunity to be mobile and get around and be self-determining about where they might go and what they might do and the times they might do it in and that’s relative to anyone who takes public transport. You don’t think I’ll just pop off to do something. You go and look at the timetable, you have to think about this, you’ve got to plan that and so that is reduced. Like earlier we spoke about people on the low incomes where they can go and access opportunities to have social activities, that becomes impounded”. *West Auckland*

One participant attempted to explain the circumstances that can contribute to low income households placing a high priority on a vehicle:

“You see a lot of the people who have a very limited income there are a host of other determinants that sit around that. So the one issue for them is not just low income it is likely that they will have poor health quality as well because of their low income, or the housing might be substandard because of low income. They might be transient because of low income and shifting, so there is all sorts. If you have a child, for instance, who has high health needs because of it getting them to and from. If there’s a couple of children to get on a bus with a toddler and a pram to take somebody to a hospital appointment. The opportunity to actually go out when you’re poor to actually pay for the fares ... but if you’re running a car to cover the trips to the doctor and get to the school and to do the shopping and to do all those things, it is more, in some ways cost effective, and you can take a drive out to a beach or a park and have an outing, which is cheap, as opposed to perhaps if you haven’t got a car you can’t actually afford to go anywhere and you’re sort of stuck at home. So that’s I think why having a car often becomes a high priority for people with low incomes.” *West Auckland*

In terms of the costs associated with maintaining and using a private vehicle as a means of transport, it was noted in several focus group discussions that for larger families it may still be a less expensive option than public transport.

A number of exceptional circumstances were discussed in which car access was a necessity. For example, following a difficult marital break-up, women may have their ex-partner harassing them and need a car as a safety net to travel to a Women's Refuge. It was recognised that there were some needs that public transport could not meet.

### *Social Aspects*

On a social level, having a vehicle, or access to a vehicle, provides low income households with mobility and independence. Losing car access could mean a loss of social contact and reduced access to a supportive community network. This is illustrated in the following example:

“I know that some of my clients, if they didn't have a vehicle they would be isolated from not only the family that may live in Feilding, their support group that they've developed around them as solo parents or something like that, but also just about anything else. Like if they go to church or something, without a car they can't get there, there's no public transport on a Sunday that actually copes with that sort of thing. Yes, I mean they would be then very ingrown, isolated and that would be very hard for them to come and see me as the budget service, because they would have their toddlers with them as they do now. But if they don't have a vehicle they can't get”. *Palmerston North*

Amongst some low income households one vehicle may be used by a number of families to get groceries, take children to school and to other activities, to take people to work, and to do other errands. Therefore reduced access to an extended family/whanau vehicle could limit access to a range of destinations for a large number of individuals.

“It's the whole iwi” *Small town*

The social isolation arising from a lack of mobility is exacerbated in a small town where a car can be a form of entertainment where few other avenues for entertainment exist. In the small town discussion groups it was noted that for some families their identity is strongly associated with a culture of car ownership: a phenomenon that contributes to the high priority placed on having a car.

While family/whanau were identified as the most likely source of transport assistance for low income households it was notable that in the small towns there was also some discussion of a car being used between households in a street. As discussed in the quote below this was not considered common in other localities:

“But I don't see a lot of that [people helping others out with transport needs] really outside of maybe communities where folk have spent a lot of time within that community and have got very comfortable with the neighbours and otherwise I've seen folk who they have their roof over their head, they don't

say much to their neighbours at all when things get tough, they just get depressed and close the doors and the children answer the door and Mum and Dad are in bed and they can't get out and about, they can't afford to get out and about, so I see a lot of that". *West Auckland*

Despite placing a high priority on having a vehicle, participants talked about low income households that have not been able to maintain this. Their vehicles may have been repossessed or they have not been able to afford to get a warrant or registration or even pay for petrol.

### **Specific Ethnic Groups**

Participants were asked to consider whether there were potential impacts of the introduction of an emission testing programme that would affect Maori and/or Pacific households, either uniquely or to a different extent than other households. Generally participants felt that the impacts would be similar to those discussed above for families with children and for low income households. It is worth noting the populations in the small towns in which focus groups were held are predominantly Maori and the youth group discussion centred on the concerns of Maori and Pacific youth in South Auckland.

Household size was the one difference between Maori, Pacific and Pakeha households identified as potentially relevant to the impact of an emission testing regime. Many Maori and Pacific households can be intergenerational and can have more members whose transport needs are met by a household vehicle or vehicles. In this situation more people would be affected by a temporary or permanent loss of a vehicle. For urban Maori with strong attachments to rural marae the loss of access to a car could have significant impact on wellbeing, if it resulted in diminished contact with whanau or an ability to participate in whanau occasions such a tangi.

The West Auckland focus group identified New Settlers as a population group that could be adversely affected, if private car ownership became less accessible to low income households. The reasons were two fold. Firstly, given the place of a car as a cultural icon in New Zealand society, having a vehicle can provide new immigrants with the means of participating in a new culture.

"So when you think that you arrive in a country and everyone has cars and it is a way of being seen as assimilating into the culture that you have a car and somebody says, yes if you want money you come and see me ...". *West Auckland*

For woman New Settlers having a car was seen as potentially empowering:

"In fact, for migrant women coming into a culture where women are allowed to drive and, in fact, it's just what we do, it is incredibly liberating for some of them in terms of stepping outside what we perceive, and I accept that for some of them that's what they know and are comfortable with it, but stepping outside and being able to drive and have that independence, which they haven't previously been able to enjoy". *West Auckland*

The second reason centred on the difficulties associated with public transport use in West Auckland; not only infrequent buses and limited routes and destinations but also difficulty understanding the timetables and route information available. It was considered confusing to a person for whom English is a first language and extremely difficult to interpret to someone new to the country with less than perfect English.

Moving about the city is far easier with a private vehicle and easy access to vehicle finance was noted as a factor that enables New Settlers to purchase a car. This was not without problems and several participants mentioned new migrant clients who had got into financial difficulty as a consequence of borrowing to buy a car.

### **Young People**

Being relatively low earners with cheaper, older cars and less to spend on maintenance, young people are conceptualised as a group likely to experience negative impacts from a new emission testing regime. Some sectors of the youth population are also particularly interested in cars of a size and type that would be likely to attract scrutiny and costs under the proposed regime.

A car culture among youth was identified in all localities, the most high profile symbols of the phenomena being ‘petrol heads’ and boy and girl racers. While spending money on such things as mag wheels and boom boxes may be a priority, paying for warrants and registration or having a licence may not be. This apparent act of defiance was seen as part of youth ‘risk taking behaviour’. One participant stated:

“The vehicle is independence, eh, that’s basically what it is. It let’s them do things when they want and how they want and all of that sort of stuff, so that’s what the vehicle does. The youth will do it, no matter if they have a licence, if the car has a warrant of fitness, if it has got a rego, if it is leaking emission it will do it. When they want to be independent they’ll do it no matter what”.  
*Palmerston North*

For many young people the issue of reducing emission as an environmental issue would be a minor consideration only.

“They wouldn’t give two tosses. It’s me and mine and my mate’s and that’s it”. *Youth*

Young car owners are likely to be adversely affected by a \$30 testing fee and especially by any significant repair bill, pushing more into operating a vehicle illegally.

### *Social Aspects*

The importance of vehicle ownership to young people was explored and two strong themes emerged. Firstly, cars were considered to play an important social role for youth, particularly with regard to their identity. Cars were also valuable as a means of accessing places or services that youth need to get to, but this latter function was

considered subsidiary to the identity role that cars can play in a young person's life. An appropriate analogy was described by one participant:

“Yes, it's like your favourite pair of shoes, it becomes like that ... it will actually say something about you as a person and say something about your resources or a whole heap of things”. *Youth*

A number of reasons were put forward to explain this behaviour. It was suggested that in South Auckland youth culture cars play a large role. Even when a young person mainly intends that his or her car will be used for 'functional' purposes, it was noted by participants that others in their peer group will encourage them to customise it. Television programmes and movies such as *Pimp My Ride*, *Extreme* and the *Fast and the Furious* were considered to be an influence. One participant noted that the numbers of youth as consumers in the car accessorising market are increasing and that this is adding to level of expectations youth have in this area. Perhaps most importantly to youth, is the response a car can bring from their peer group.

“... when somebody gets a new car that's been 'suped up' and everything, everybody will just, around the car you know and it just really brings so much status to that person”. *Youth*

Young people will go to great lengths to customise their vehicles but these inputs will not necessarily focus on practical issues like safety or emission.

“So it will be more important to have those mags or to have that new you know thingy light put in or the new something or other, or the better horn or something, than it will be to have anything that would actually make the car go better. *Youth*

This environment creates considerable pressures and there is already a disconnection between what is possible and what is affordable.

“... there's all these huge expectations ... they all have these bling bling fantasies and none of the bling bling realities”. *Youth*

Increasing costs brought about from the introduction of vehicle emission testing could make car ownership less viable for young people leaving a gap that may be filled by less desirable interests.

“Taking that car away, might [mean] that they've got more money for drugs or for tagging or for any of that other kind of stuff ... the car might be replacing some of that”. *Youth*

In physically isolated communities more restricted access to cars is likely to narrow the social horizons of young people as well as their access to positive recreational opportunities.

### *Access*

Private vehicles provide youth with access to key sites including work, sporting and recreational activities, socialising or church. Without their own vehicles, youth will need to rely on public transport, rely on family, or drop some of the activities they may otherwise have participated in. Public transport was criticised as often non-viable on the grounds of safety, availability and efficiency. Reliance on family resulted in a range of forms of pressure such as competing demands, constraints on destination and issues over timing:

“Well my Mum and Dad have to take my niece to work and she starts work at 8 o’clock. It’s just exhausting for them, they’re old people”. *Youth*

Barriers to accessing particular locations had also resulted in young people opting out of particular activities including sport and cultural performance.

A downstream impact of emission testing could be to limit the ability of young people in low income households to obtain their drivers licence. If the numbers of warranted and registered cars available in a community decline young people may not be able to learn to drive as a driver’s licence can not be sat in an unwarranted car. This will have implications for the young people and their families. The independence, autonomy and confidence associated with getting a driver’s license will be less accessible to youth and the parents will not be relieved of the role of transporting their youth from suburb to suburb, and in rural areas, from town to town. There was discussion about the heightened importance of autonomy for young people in view of the longer period of time young people now live with their parents before moving to independent accommodation.

### *Economic Issues*

It was suggested that young people do not necessarily consider the ongoing costs of running a vehicle when they purchase one. This is not necessarily something that is factored into the decision making process and, accordingly, many youth are not prepared for it.

“I was just saying, I think when younger people buy cars they don’t actually think, like how we’re going through and identifying where you can get costs ... They’re just like, they’re just getting the car, you know”. *Youth*

The introduction of emission testing would only add to this. Focus group participants indicated that an increase of \$30 on the cost of sitting a warrant of fitness test would stretch the resources of many young people.

“Really it’s just going to affect the kids at lower socio-economic levels, because it’s not really going to touch the ones up at the top because that’s just more money they’ll ask for from Mum and Dad and so it won’t matter to them. But it is the kids who don’t have much money who are going to be hit the hardest and they’ll have to get creative”. *Youth*

Further costs arising from repair work required to meet emission standards could prove too much for many. Another participant agreed that increasing the cost of



obtaining a warrant of fitness would put stress on families of young people with cars. She considered a possible practical way of dealing with the extra costs:

“I mean that would be hard for me to do, let alone for my 18 year old niece ... What we’ll end up having to do is probably have a car account where you’ve got to start putting money in every week so you can pay for the things”. *Youth*

Another factor which makes it more difficult for young people to pay for the ongoing costs associated with running a vehicle is that many youth get into debt to purchase cars and/or to customise them. Focus group participants noted that many cars and accessories are bought on hire purchase, but the cost of a warrant of fitness and associated repairs can not be. It was these up-front expenses that participants considered would be difficult for many youth to pay for, but they were not convinced that young people would prioritise the warrant over other spending. In such circumstances the group felt that young people would face fines associated with unwarranted vehicles, risk getting into debt and experience pressure to sell their vehicles.

Other impacts were noted to affect vehicle dealerships. Participants considered that there would likely be less people wanting to buy older and cheaper vehicles. It was also expected that the costs of cars would go up because of this.

### **People with Disabilities**

Mobility and the provision of flexible transport options are critical concerns for people with disabilities. Mobility is essential for quality of life as it opens up the potential for employment, social contact and participation in recreational activities. Therefore, although the starting point of the focus group discussion was the social and economic impacts of a vehicle emission testing programme, considerable discussion took place on the frustrations of current transport options for people with disabilities that were seen to inhibit quality of life. The relevance of the discussion arises from participants’ assumption that transport options for people with disability can only get worse with the introduction of an emission testing programme that had the potential to reduce private vehicle access.

A later section, entitled mitigation, includes participants’ critiques of some of the transport alternatives available to people with disability as many of these transport options were suggested by participants of other focus group participants as possible mitigation strategies for other population groups. Individuals with a disability, and representatives of agencies working with people with disabilities, were cognisant of some of the pitfalls of these proposed strategies.

#### *Transport Options*

A welfare benefit is the only source of income for many people with disabilities. So both their disability *per se* and their low income status have implications for the transport options available to them.

Walking and cycling as alternative modes of travel, are not easy options for people with disabilities. Walking is not always beneficial to health as indicated in the following comment from a focus group member:

“Even when you can walk, when you’re not in a wheelchair, the body is impacted on quite heavily, because the ground is not even, you know you fall. There’s issues with hills ...” *Disability*

In addition to this, the same focus group participant pointed out that the aging process can affect people with a disability at a younger age, with implications for their mobility.

Total mobility taxis, set up with wheelchair hoists, are available in some centres. There are a number run by different taxi companies and people with disabilities can be eligible for a discount card for their use. However, it was pointed out that they are still an expensive mode of travel and they are not always available when people need them. During the school term they are nearly fully booked out at the beginning and end of the school day. People with disabilities who do not go to school may have to plan their travel around these times. One focus group participant stated:

“The trouble with taxis though you’re coming back to the old regime that you will be told well yes you can go there and back again but that’s as far as you’d get. It does not allow you independence it just allows you to get to the doctor when you’re sick. It is too restrictive”. *Disability*

Another transport service that disabled people can use is Dial-a-Ride. Dial-a-Ride has taxis and buses available for community group use. They provide an inexpensive service. However, the service is very popular and is often booked out. Also, they do not operate in weekends. Using Dial-a-Ride also involves a lot of planning. Members of the focus group pointed out that it does not satisfy spontaneous transport needs.

Public transport access depends on the nature of a person’s disability and the extent to which particular services are set up to meet the needs of disabled people. For example some buses have lowering facilities to make it easy to get on and off buses, and wheelchair taxis are available in some localities. Buses are difficult for blind people to use, although the level of difficulty can be reduced where the upcoming bus stop locations are announced.

Family and whanau are often relied upon for transporting people with disabilities. As noted for other population groups this lack of autonomy can impact on the self esteem of individuals and it can be associated with individuals accessing a narrower range of social and recreational opportunities than they would choose if transport was more freely available to them. If family or friends offer transport, it is not always easy for the disabled person on a disability allowance to contribute to the cost of petrol and other forms of reciprocity are not always readily available. Consequently people with disabilities may be reluctant to ask for assistance with transport for ‘non essential purposes’ such as social events or entertainment: a similar observation to that made for other socially and economically disadvantaged groups.

For individuals who are capable of driving a car, owning a car that has been modified to meet their specific needs is aspired to and if achieved, highly valued. A car can provide a level of autonomy and independence that is otherwise impossible to attain for people with disabilities. However, given the generally low income status of many people with disabilities they are often reliant on grant funding to meet the purchase and modification costs of a car.

### *Economic Issues*

The disability focus group participants discussed the types of discretionary income disabled people have and their spending priorities. It was pointed out that many people with disabilities do not have much choice on how their benefits are spent:

“... for a lot of people [with disabilities] on benefits, the money for accommodation and for food and so on is tied up anyway and they don’t actually have a lot of control over it. The next one down that they would have control over would be where I go and what I would like to do and that’s my life and that’s the one that’s going to be hit by transport costs”. *Disability*

However, where they do have some spending power transport was definitely seen as a priority. This was particularly the case for youth. Although people with disabilities are often eligible for a discount rate on taxis, as noted earlier they are still an expensive form of transport for a beneficiary.

The disabled group considered most likely to be negatively affected by the introduction of vehicle emission testing are those who own their own vehicles but cannot afford the increased cost of warrant of fitness testing, or the cost of keeping their emission levels to a required standard. Disabled people may fund the purchase and required modification of their vehicle through a lump sum payment from the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) (in the case of those who became disabled through an accident), or through a grant from a fund such as the Lotteries Commission. However, once a disabled person gets their car they often have it for a very long period of time. One participant stated:

“Actually whether the pattern of social contact is established with ACC or not, what happens afterwards, like if your car comes then you’ve got this long period of constant maintenance and upkeep and replacement and all the rest of it, which is where extras chip away at..., Once they’ve paid for their car, ... They’re stuck with it and they’ve got to maintain it themselves and this is just going to hammer that again”. *Disability*

Considerable frustration was expressed over the availability of grants that could be used to purchase, maintain and replace cars. What was seen to be the one-off nature of their availability had particular relevance to the impacts of vehicle emission testing, as the number of years a vehicle remains warrantable could become synonymous with the duration of a disabled person’s mobility. Replacing a vehicle, that has had expensive modifications to customise it to the needs of a disabled person, is costly and funding for a replacement vehicle is hard to get.

As discussed above for other groups, food was the household item that was cut back on when transport was prioritised. This point is made by the participant quoted below, a person with a disability who had experienced a period with and without private transport.

“Yes, transport was something I couldn’t afford. I never ever budgeted for. I mean it was just not there, so you didn’t do it, you walked. You just accept, beneficiaries most of the time, food is the only thing you can cut back on because your rent is set .... My power bill I have to pay because I need the power. The phone I need the phone, so I have to pay that. The only thing that I’ve got that I can take leeway on is the food money. So if I have to get a warrant and it means that I’ve got to take \$35 out of the food money I will take that out of the food money because that’s the only money free I can change”.

*Disability*

### *Social Participation and Wellbeing*

Transport was identified as of key importance to participation in daily life:

“people with disabilities do need a social life. It’s not just a case of giving them a State house and dumping them in the community”. *Disability*

“Mobility is the issue when it comes to socialisation, work, everything, you’ve got to get out of the house to find the girlfriends and to find the entertainment and to go to the pictures”. *Disability*

Work was not only a form of employment for people with disabilities but also an important opportunity to interact.

“... people I talk to with disabilities and that, work is a social side. You don’t get people popping in [if you are disabled]. It doesn’t happen in the environment, in the community, when we talk about community care and stuff, the neighbours do not pop in, you know. Besides that most of them are working, but the community is afraid of you or unsure of you and they just, they don’t think about the needs you have at all, you know”. *Disability*

The importance of social interaction for youth with disabilities was highlighted. While at school, they are eligible for subsidised taxis to and from school funded by the Ministry of Education. Once they are out of the school environment, this funding ceases as does the opportunity to interact socially. The participants noted that these youth often feel unwanted and their whole demeanour may change. Many experience depression. Transport was seen as crucial to participating in all areas of life for disabled people.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers were another group identified whose activities could be negatively affected by the introduction of vehicle emission testing. They often use their vehicles to help elderly, ill or disadvantaged people in community settings, for example to

deliver meals on wheels. If volunteers face additional costs to provide community care, some may need to reduce their voluntary work for reasons of affordability. Volunteers were recognised as playing a major role in improving the quality of life of people who experience disabilities.

A number of focus group participants were involved in volunteer work. They noted that the use of private vehicles was integral to their volunteer work, in terms of accessing people and helping people access services. In the small rural towns much of their volunteering involved transporting people to larger centres to access services, and to attend meetings and appointments.

The following quote provides a specific example of how volunteers could be negatively impacted by emission testing:

“I mean we have a helpdesk here in this organisation and part of that is having volunteers to transport some of our kaumatua and kuia just to wherever they need to go. So the organisation gives the volunteers petrol vouchers to do that. Now if there was an extra cost for the volunteer in terms of the vehicle, it would fall back on the organisation, we’re only a small charitable organisation, so the actual cost would actually fall on us to I suppose up the ante for the volunteer to cover what the extra costs they incur to keep that car on the road”.

*Small Town*

## **Other Issues**

### **Centralised /decentralised testing facilities**

Whether emission testing facilities were centralised or decentralised was not a concern to participants in the urban locations, as it was assumed that access would be satisfactory. However the impact of centralised testing centres on the viability of local garages was raised. In the small towns the location of testing centres was a major concern.

The issues raised in the small towns centred on the implications of a centralised testing location, firstly for residents and secondly for small town and rural garages. In the smaller of the towns the closest Land Transport New Zealand vehicle testing stations were forty minutes drive away, a return trip of approximately 100 kilometres. The distance would act as a disincentive to many residents for reasons of time and cost. For older people, particularly those who do not usually drive beyond the small town, their options were seen to be: asking a neighbour or relative to take their car for testing; to continue to use the vehicle illegally, an outcome which many felt was unlikely in this population group; or to retire their car and face the consequences of reduced mobility. In the larger of the two towns, assuming it was large enough to host an emission testing programme, the same issues applied but were relevant to those people living in the even smaller outlying regions who would need to come to the town for testing. Currently garages in a number of the outlying population centres undertake warrant of fitness testing.

If residents had to travel to a distant garage for emission testing the question was asked as to whether they would also get their warrant of fitness checked at the same time at the same place.

“I imagine it would affect the garages because if you have to go to the testing station to get my emission testing while I’m doing a warrant, why would I go back to the garage who charges a lot cheaper than the testing station for a warrant”. *West Auckland*

As indicated in the quote above this would have an impact on the garages’ level of business. Where the local garage offered a cheaper service, was staffed by known and trusted mechanics, and/or operated a flexible payment system, there could be customer impacts as well.

The implications of the loss of business could be substantial for small rural and semi rural garages. Warrant of fitness testing and associated repair work can be a significant area of business for these garages. Running accounts for some locals, to assist with payment of bills and to retain the custom, was noted to be relatively common practice despite noted difficulties from time to time with recouping costs.

The potential loss of the small garages was a major issue in the small towns as they were both in localities that had suffered a steady loss of services such as banks, post offices and government services over recent years. It was noted that residents in a small town need to weigh up the costs of accessing often cheaper goods in larger towns alongside a possible consequence of loss of the local business or service.

The option of a mobile emission testing service was considered. For this to be effective the small towns would firstly need to be on the circuit and the service would also need to be flexible, so as to fit in with the needs of the community. For example, it would need to be available for reasonably long periods of time, so as to fit in with people who are shearers or shift-workers or others whose work is affected by weather. It would make a difference if the service came before or after pay day.

## **Mitigation**

A number of strategies to mitigate the potential impacts of emission testing were suggested by focus group participants. Implemented at central government, local government and or the community level, these ranged from awareness and education campaigns, assistance in the lead up to the introduction of emission testing, and assistance with the ongoing operation of the emission requirements. In addition to this, it was suggested that alternatives to private vehicle use could be promoted.

### *Education and Awareness Campaigns*

Raising awareness and educating people about the environmental issues surrounding vehicle emission was considered a vital part of being able to effectively implement any emission standard requirements. Making people aware of the issues was often thought of as being the first step in bringing people on board with such a policy. It was suggested that some people in rural areas would not be aware that vehicle

emission were an environmental problem. Other participants considered that vulnerable groups in communities may not relate to the issues.

“How do you bring people who are struggling to survive, into that conversation, when the only, from day to day they are barely barely able to survive? So it’s about how you present it. It’s all about how do you get people excited about the idea that they’re contributing to solving this problem, which is in actual fact killing them”. *Christchurch*

Education and awareness campaigns were seen as important in getting people to accept that there is a problem as the first step in taking responsibility to do their part towards fixing it. There was also a tendency for participants in the small towns to see emission as pollution and therefore a wealthy big city problem. This could manifest as resentment for paying for problems that they neither cause nor are affected by?

A lead in period of 12 to 18 months was suggested as a necessary timeframe in which to educate people about emission testing. Free emission testing during this lead in period could help people get an idea of whether their vehicles would meet emission standards. This would allow them to prepare for any future related expenses.

Many focus group participants highlighted the importance of engaging the community in education and awareness raising. It was noted that there are existing networks of people who have links to the community that should be utilised.

“We are only a small part of the networking teams in here, but to let them have an opportunity to have that input and then the wider community, as well. Because it’s proven that when we let them have a say they feel a part of it, they’ve embraced some of the projects we’ve done”. *Small Town*

Effective education strategies were considered to require more than a few advertisements on television. Local education at a grass roots level was suggested to be necessary to really change people’s behaviour.

“Even if there was a system that was put in at the local marae in each rural area where they did education on this”. *Small Town*

Education and awareness strategies could also provide useful suggestions to help people keep their vehicle emission as low as possible. Tips on how to keep vehicles within limits of emission standards could be provided.

### *Central Government*

It was widely considered that some support and assistance should be provided by central government to help people deal with the impacts of introducing emission testing. A range of practical policy strategies were put forward. One focus group participant suggested that if people failed an emission test they should be allowed a set period of time to rectify the problem. Allowing them a few weeks would provide people with the opportunity to budget for any expense that they may have to incur. Another participant suggested providing a subsidy for mechanics so that they could check people’s cars at no cost to the car owner and let the car owner know whether it

is actually fixable and, if so, at what cost. This would help people take the first steps into getting their cars into a position to meet emission standards. Another suggestion was the gradual introduction of emission standards. Standards could become more stringent over a 10 year period. It was suggested that this would have a less immediate impact on a communities.

A number of participants considered that the cost of emission testing itself should be free or very low cost. This would eliminate the lump sum \$30 or \$40 increased cost of sitting a warrant of fitness test. Costs could be recouped through an increase in petrol prices. This would mean that those on low incomes, who are less likely to travel great distances, would be responsible for a lesser proportion of the costs. Alternatively, to ensure that the price of vehicle testing is kept low, it was suggested that individual garage owners could apply for a licence to get equipment that the government has bought on their behalf. To reduce set up costs to businesses and the passing on of those costs to consumers the garages could pay it off over time. This has particular relevance to small towns as they will have a low turnover of testing and so it takes longer to recover costs.

Another policy strategy to mitigate some of the negative impacts of emission testing would be to limit the application of emission requirements. Participants suggested that certain groups or locations could have a waiver from meeting emission standards. Suggestions put forward included waivers for vehicles run by voluntary organisations; older vehicles owned by older people; vehicles owned by beneficiaries; vehicles with low mileage per year; and vehicles licensed to be driven in restricted areas, such as rural locations. Some participants considered that there are not the same environmental concerns for rural people as there are in urban locations therefore people living in a 'green belt' should not have to meet the same emission standards as those in urban areas.

A number of participants expressed concern about people who had cars that would be likely to fail an emission test while the owners still owed sums of money to finance companies for the purchase of these vehicles. It was suggested that these finance companies provide credit to people who are in no position to afford the repayments and on vehicles that are not necessarily of a quality that would meet introduced emission standards. Government could regulate the activities of vehicle finance companies in some way to reduce the likelihood that they provide finance to people for vehicles that are not able to get warrants because of emission levels.

Wealth redistribution policies were put forward as a mitigation strategy to overcome some of the negative impacts of introducing emission testing.

“Instead of just looking at it [emission testing] as something to draw to take more money from people you should be sort of giving something at the same time and it doesn't make that payment of that thing as big a strain as it might otherwise be ... There's so many people under so much strain and I think that you need to address that strain before you start expecting anyone to pay anything more”. *Youth*



Another suggestion was to simply increase the amount of benefits that people received. By having more money, beneficiaries would be more likely to be able to afford costs associated with emission testing.

### *Local Government*

Improving public transport was identified as a key mitigation strategy. The many limitations of public transport identified in the focus groups need to be worked on to make it a viable alternative to private vehicle use. Issues include the coverage, frequency, and reliability of services, and the safety, comfort and efficiency of journeys. Further, pollution caused by existing public transport systems was also identified as an issue that would need to be addressed.

Encouraging cycling and walking as alternative modes of transport was another suggested mitigation strategy. This could involve policies that did more to protect the safety of cyclists. The efforts of a local council that implemented a 'green bike' scheme were noted. 'Thousands' of green bikes were bought by the community. They were available for anyone to use – effectively being community bikes. Focus group participants noted that it was a great scheme when it began, but it seemed to have faded somewhat. This scheme was seen as positive and one that could be revitalised and promoted.

Other suggestions for local government encouragement of modal change or smarter use of private vehicles were put forward. Car pooling could be encouraged by having car pool stickers on cars that allowed for cheaper parking in car park buildings. Car-less days could be introduced. Community renewal and revitalisation programmes could be implemented that would encourage services to be based around where people live and communal strategies for accessing services. Car use would likely be reduced because of proximity of services and also the use of car pooling to access needs, such as grocery shopping.

Existing strategies employed by some local councils were identified as potentially useful in an emission testing environment. One strategy, Project Wheels, assisted people in getting their vehicles up to warrant of fitness standard. A participant explained that people who are not able to get a warrant for their vehicle are able to go to a local mechanic, who will teach that person how to make the necessary repairs to their vehicle in order for it to pass a warrant. The mechanic is subsidised to provide this service and car owners participate at no cost. It was noted that the scheme has proved very popular, with a large backlog of people wanting to take part, and that it had the effect of changing attitudes of people. Participants proposed that this scheme could be extended to teach people ways in which they may improve the emission levels of their vehicles.

Another strategy currently employed by some councils involves removing and disposing of vehicles that are no longer able to be driven. One participant considered that if a vehicle wasn't meeting emission standards and could not be fixed it should be taken out of circulation. This council scheme that disposed of vehicles could be extended to apply to vehicles that will simply never be able to meet emission standards.

### *Community*

Alternative transport options at the community level were suggested as a way of mitigating the impacts of emission testing. Community based projects or groups could have vans to transport people around. This was noted to already happen in a number of kohanga reo and kura kaupapa. One participant explained that some of the initiatives his organisation ran were planned on the basis that people would have no transport themselves. This meant that everyone could be included, regardless of their transport situation. This could be an option for other courses or events in the community.

While a community van could solve some transport issues, participants recognised that the idea is not without its limitations. Community vans often only assist with specific or limited trip options. They can not provide individuals with the relative freedom of a private vehicle.

### *Disability*

A range of mitigation strategies particularly relevant to people with disabilities were discussed. Central government was considered to have a vital role to play in providing some sort of subsidy or grant to help pay for the increased cost of warrant testing and any related maintenance costs and also to help people into new vehicles, when their existing one is simply too old to comply with emission standards.

“Say your vehicle is too old and you have to replace it, now there needs to be some way of doing that without going into huge debt or without putting you in a position where you just can’t do it. You have that, that’s one area when you’ve got to replace the car. The other area is the actual warrant and the emission test itself. If your car needs adapting, or whatever they do, ... then there has to be some way of paying for that. I mean if it is five bucks maybe people could scrape that up. If you’re talking \$30 to \$40 and depending on which garage you go to and all of this sort of thing, it’s just not going to work and people just can’t do it”. *Disability*

The selection of an appropriate body to administer any such grant or fund was considered to be vital. Focus group participants suggested that it would need to be a central government agency such as the Ministry of Transport. Smaller agencies may require people to be a member of an organisation, or may only be willing to provide funds to people with particular types of disabilities. The possibility of such funds being administered through WINZ was also not considered a good option by focus group participants because it was considered that WINZ were often reluctant to provide people with any extra money. Having to constantly ask for money negatively impacted the autonomy of disabled people.

Wealth redistribution issues were raised again in the context of people with disabilities. It was noted that if disabled people had enough income, in the first place, to meet their expenses they would be able to feel much better about themselves and would be less likely to require specific assistance from government to help with vehicle emission related costs.

“It’s probably the greatest thing you can do is the income, personal income would be actually the only real way to tackle on an adult basis in a fair way

where we could run our lives, we could get it fixed when we needed it fixed, we could get a warrant when it needed a warrant, it would allow us to make our own decisions, instead of asking someone else all the time, please sir, could I have some more”. *Disability*

Another mitigation measure that central government could implement would be extending the existing subsidised taxi scheme. While this currently assists children getting to and from school, it could be made available for those who have left school to get to other activities such as employment.

It was also suggested that a waiver for people who have modified their vehicles, making them exempt from the requirement to meet emission standards, be introduced. The cost of modifying new vehicles makes it very hard for disabled people to purchase new cars. However, participants did express some concern about such a waiver as it could cause a negative reaction from the wider community. Able-bodied people may feel that disabled people are getting a better deal. Focus group participants warned against this possibility in distinguishing disabled people from others and the potential for backlash.

“We’re trying to integrate, we have a big enough job now, you imagine if your neighbour has had his car taken off him because it is too old and you’re living next door, your car is older, but because you have a disability you keep it. You imagine the conflict that’s going to cause”. Further, it was noted: “... unfortunately the community aren’t charitable, so we don’t want to bring in this other problem of antagonising them”. *Disability*

Improving the current public transport system was identified as the best strategy for improving transport for people with mental health problems.

“If you don’t have access to transport you’re going to look for your recreation in other ways i.e. smoking more cigarettes, drinking alcohol or drinking meths or whatever. So you know do you keep them in that dependence or do you guide them to something else that’s going to be more quality of life”. *Disability*

At a community level, services such as Dial-a-Ride or other forms of community vans could be made more available to people with disabilities. A focus group participant noted that making vans available to mental health organisations for their clients to use could be a great help. However, others noted the community vans or buses never offer the complete freedom and flexibility of a private vehicle.

“The difficulty is, with what you’re saying, community vans are fine like if you want to all go to the doctor and you have the doctors’ vans. If you’re all wanting to go shopping and you’re going to the same area, that’s great. But nine times out of ten, one wants to go to the doctor, one wants to go to the dairy, one wants to go you know. The community doesn’t work like that. They all have different needs and if one wants to go and see their daughter and one wants to go and see their son and you see how do you get that variety there. ... it’s like, independence is like being in an institution and only going where you’re told because that’s where I’m going today, I can drop you off at

the side of the road, pick you up on the way back, but that's where I'm going".  
*Disability*

Community vans and buses cannot provide independence at an individual level.