

THE RESEARCHER: A SNAPSHOT



Jennifer Kent is an urban planner and PhD candidate in the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Her research interests lie at the intersection of planning and health, with a particular focus on barriers to active transport. This poster presents some of the findings from her doctoral research, which is supported by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute and the Australian Research Council.



THE BENEFITS OF ACTIVE TRANSPORT



Active transport, which includes walking, cycling and public transport, is often identified as a way to address the rising incidence of chronic diseases associated with physical inactivity. It is also destined to play an important role in society's transition to less carbon intensive cities.

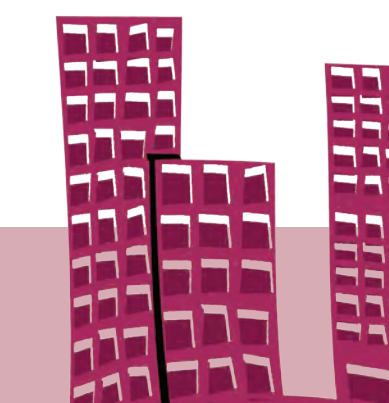
THE BARRIERS TO ACTIVE TRANSPORT



Despite the benefits of active transport, the private car continues to dominate mobility behaviour. Research often conceptualises this domination in relatively functional terms, such as the car's unparalleled speed and reliability. Policies aimed at reducing car use are usually directed at overcoming these barriers. The pursuit of higher density cities, for example, is regularly justified as a way to decrease distances between uses and facilitate the uptake of active transport.



WHY PEOPLE CHOOSE TO DRIVE

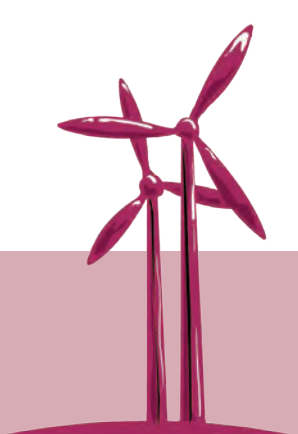


This research uses qualitative methods to record very personal barriers to the uptake of alternative transport. It explores the daily practices and perceptions of those who continue to drive, despite having access to viable alternative transport.

The research finds that the autonomous mobility enabled by the private car is deeply engrained in the way people make sense of, and navigate, not only their streets but also their place in the world.



ENDURING AUTOMOBILITY



What will it take to challenge the hegemony of the car?

Transition away from car use will require unprecedented disruption to existing ways of 'being' in modern life. The extent of this disruption has been underestimated by existing policy approaches to urban planning for active transport and needs to be considered if the car's hegemony is to be challenged.



A FLAWED APPROACH?



A potential flaw in this policy approach is that even when the car is not the fastest, most convenient or even reliable way to travel, people still choose to drive. Deeper understandings of resistance to active transport modes are therefore required.