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# Case Study 1: The low carbon mobilities of Chinese migrant communities in Sydney, Australia

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## Introduction

In Australia, as in many other industrialised societies, there is an urgent need to transition to low carbon mobilities. Australians have amongst the highest rates of car ownership in the world. In 2014, there were 756 motor vehicles per 1000 residents (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). In Australia's most populous city – Sydney – 68.1 per cent of trips are made by private motor vehicle (Bureau of Transport Statistics, 2013). Transitioning to low carbon mobility futures in a highly car dependent society will not hinge solely on technology but requires changes to places, policies, ideas, and behaviours, as well as technologies. And there is evidence to suggest that low carbon mobilities are *already* being practised by some social groups – even in otherwise heavily car dependent places. This case study foregrounds one such group: Chinese migrants living in Sydney.

Our point of departure is evidence gathered in quantitative transport studies. Large-scale USA travel surveys show that migrants and ethnic minorities have significantly lower rates of car ownership and use than ethnic majority and native-born populations (Douma, 2004; Valenzuela *et al.*, 2005; Bohon *et al.*, 2008; Lovejoy & Handy, 2008; Grengs, 2010; Golub *et al.*, 2013; Modarres, 2013). This trend is replicated in Australia. For instance Klocker *et al.* (2015) reported that individuals of north-east Asian ancestry (primarily Chinese) owned and used cars at significantly reduced rates when compared with Anglo-European Australians. This trend was particularly pronounced amongst first-generation migrants of north-east Asian ancestry. These differences remained statistically significant *after* controlling for income differences – suggesting that cultural factors are likely at play (see Tal & Handy, 2010 for similar findings in the USA).