

Rebadging Waste or New Train?

“Removing Connex’s name from Melbourne’s train fleet and replacing it with the new operator’s logo will cost more than \$15 million — almost the price of an entire new six-carriage train. ... Senior industry sources have told *The Age* the rebadging process for the new operator will be a major operation, which will entail removing Connex’s name from the city’s fleet of 164 six-carriage trains and 213 railway stations. And it must be replaced on the uniforms of about 2000 staff. If the change is done quickly, it could cost the new operator even more, as trains will need to be taken out of service so new signs can be put on them.” Ref: **Clay Lucas and Jason Dowling, The Age 17/7/09**



Comment: And then there are the trams. Why not change the livery (only when needed) to ‘Metlink’ so we don’t have to waste another \$15 million plus in another 15 years?

‘People didn’t like the white elephant. So we’re painting it.’

Feedback on Ferries for Port Phillip

“I reckon that two sets (1 and 2) of ferry services staging from say, Docklands, St Kilda (pier) and Brighton Beach (re-build the old pier?), thence to (1) Mornington, Dromana/Martha Cove and Rosebud (to weekends and golf courses), and to (2) Sorrento (thence Queenscliffe), Portsea, Blairgowrie marina and Rye (to weekends and sailboats) piers might actually get some bums on board. Beats the arduous 1.5 to 2 hours drive on a Friday night commuter rush-time. Provide good restauranting and say, a gaming room for the 1 to 1.5 hour trip? Then, the patrons can stagger off on shanks pony, bike or by local route bus or dial-a-bus services to go to their week-end/3+4 shacks (leave a week-end car and bicycles in the garage down there full-time).” Ref: **Peter Hill, 22/7/09**

Comment: There are certainly opportunities for value-adding and to help pass the sense of travel time. Note that if hovercraft were used there would be no need to build piers.



Beyond ...[U-turn]... Back to Petroleum

“BP has turned its back on more than a decade of preparations for a carbon-constrained future, closing its alternative energy headquarters in London and ushering its boss of clean energy out the door. ... The resignation of Vivienne Cox, the division’s chief and BP’s most senior female executive, was announced internally weeks ago and is effective from today. The BP chief executive, Tony Hayward, is said to be courting market favour by refocusing BP as a pure oil play.

“The chief executive officer of WWF Australia, Greg Bourne, formerly BP’s Australasian regional president and who worked for more than 30 years in the oil industry, said BP’s alternative energy division was the result of long-range thinking about the future of fossil fuels, undertaken in the 1990s. ... ‘What was interesting and quite palpable was the pride and hope that it engendered in employees around the world’, Mr Bourne said yesterday. ‘Here we were standing up and recognising the biggest single issue facing the planet and we were going to play a part, very progressively. I am disappointed for the organisation that they’ve left this behind, and I think many other people within BP would be as well. You must wonder where BP’s future now lies.’ The Guardian quipped yesterday BP would be seen as shifting ‘back to petroleum’.”

Ref: **Paddy Manning, SMH, 30/6/09**

And Also ...

“The crisp, clean, yellow and green sunburst logo - underscored by that winning line [Beyond Petroleum] - neatly encapsulated the changes, as any good brand identity should. But this week all that washed up on BP’s reputation like an oil slick on a pristine beach.”

Ref: **Julian Lee, SMH, 2/7/09**

People’s Car?

Single-seater, highly aerodynamic, tear-shape car, to be launched in Shanghai in 2010 for a mere US\$600. It will cruise at 100-120 km/hr at 0.99 litre/100 km.



Peak Oil Review

"If you think the running battle over climate change has been a long one, it's a pup compared with the peak oil debate. Essentially, the question with oil is whether it's going to run out before our need to use it does. The peak oil brigade say all the big and easy oilfields around the world have been discovered and global oil discovery has therefore peaked, while at the same time oil demand is showing no serious sign of dropping. They started their campaign, albeit quietly, in the late 1970s, with the debate over the Hubbert curve - the claim that oil discovery and production had moved in a curve rather than a straight line. Following on from that they posited that what went up must come down, in the form of a normal distribution curve.

"BP's new annual tome on the state of the oil industry, the 'BP Statistical Review of World Energy for 2009', sits on the fence on that one. It quotes chief executive Tony Hayward saying 'the world has enough proved reserves of oil, natural gas and coal to meet the world's needs for decades to come'. The document, published last week and freely available on the BP website, has him then say that 'the challenges the world faces in growing supplies to meet future demand are not below ground; they are above ground. They are human, not geological'.

"Well, thanks. We're left with two almost unrelated statements that don't take us very far at all. One is that oil reserves will expire at some indeterminate point in the future, which even the optimists would agree with, and the other is that supply will have to grow to meet future demand. Maybe BP's people are better at looking backwards - most of us are. Just to show that the US is no longer full of V8-driving petrol-heads, by the way, the review states that the US cut its oil consumption by a startling 6.4%, or nearly 1.3 million barrels a day, last year. Coming from the country that effectively invented the use of crude oil and is noted as the biggest user of oil in the world by every measure, that's truly dazzling.

"Even with Chinese oil use rising by 3.3% to 375.7 million tonnes, global oil use dropped by 0.6% in 2008, the first drop since 1993, so it's clear that the astounding jump in the crude price last year to about \$US147 a barrel did have a small effect in crimping demand. It's all relative, of course. The US, with its population of about 300 million, used 884.5 million tonnes; China, with more than four times that population, used 42% of the US total. For the record, Australia's equivalent oil consumption moved up by 1.5% to 42.5 million tonnes in 2008. Per head of

population we used 2.22 tonnes a year, whereas British motorists used 4.42 tonnes. The Chinese? About 370kg, which is about a sixth of what we use. It would be fair to extrapolate that Chinese per capita use and overall use is probably going to grow dramatically in the next few years and that the one statistic that passed the tipping point in 2008, non-OECD oil consumption exceeding OECD consumption for the first time, is also a harbinger of what's to come. Indian oil use last year was a bit more than a third of China's but it grew faster, at 4.8%.

"But the bigger question, coming back to peak oil, is are we going to run out any time soon? The evidence is frustratingly mixed. BP says the world's 'proved' oil reserves last year, 1.258 trillion barrels, were 17.7% higher than at the end of 1998 and 26% higher than the 998.4 billion barrels we had 20 years ago back in 1988. And by the way, the latest number does not include the recently exploited Canadian tar sands - the supposed Saudi Arabia of North America. If included, that would put us 41% above the original 1988 reserve number.

"All of that looks pretty encouraging, particularly as last year's ratio of reserves to annual production stood at 42 times. In the simplest terms, that ratio means global conventional oil reserves will last 42 years if production keeps going at current levels and there are no new discoveries. That's the good news, but on the flipside there's a lot of muttering in the oil industry about some developing nations' tendency to overstate their reserves for political purposes. Against that, oil extraction technology is improving all the time and the 'proved reserves' numbers are meant to refer to oil that is readily extractable by existing methods. In the simplest scenario, drillers can now send wells out horizontally to do a much more thorough job of extracting oil from existing fields than they did, say, 10 years ago. That's clearly a plus. But back on the negative side, there's a difference between proven reserves and economically extractable reserves, since some deeper fields aren't worth exploiting unless oil is closer to \$US80 a barrel than \$US30. With the crude price now at the upper end and rising, that will increase the amount of economically recoverable oil. Miners would say it's lowering the cut-off grade.

"Conclusion? We won't run out soon and the final date for the Oil Age will be put back further and further as the price rises. Don't bank on the tar sands, meanwhile, since there's another dimension: CO2 emissions. Converting tar sands to oil releases huge amounts of CO2 and there's no current technology available to stop that. Then

again, there could be one out there. All of which suggests we might still be arguing about the end of the Oil Age in 50 years. Let's hope that by then it will all be hypothetical thanks to the development of other energy sources. And remember, the world did fine without crude oil for 99.999999% of humanity's history on Earth."

Ref: Andrew Main, The Australian, 15/6/09

"Agriculture depends totally on oil and from the farm gate to the end user via the wholesaler, retailer to the householder it is all oil-based transport. Manufacturing also depends to an enormous extent on oil as feedstock. Have a look around the home, garden car etc and see how many items are made from oil. As the shortage becomes more acute and the demand rises with population increase, so will the price of oil rise, putting many items beyond the reach of the poor & middle class? Much hardship is going to be the result. Governments should be looking ahead now to find methods to alleviate this. Home veggie plots as in the Second World War, more public transport, less imports of vital merchandise, local markets."

Ref: 'Cart', ABC TV Difference of Opinion: Are We Running On Empty? Message Board 22/8/07

<http://www2b.abc.net.au/tmb/Client/Message.aspx?b=70&m=10902&ps=20&dm=1&pd=3>

Problems with Oil

"Venezuela has the seventh-largest oil reserves in the world and petrol is lavishly subsidised. 'If it gives us nothing else, at least the Government lets us have our own petrol this cheap ... It may be crazy and have no logic, but I'm not complaining. Nobody is.' That is the problem. The subsidy warps the economy, drains government coffers, rips off the poor, pollutes the air and paralyzes cities with traffic jams. Yet it is hugely popular and the Government dares not end the insanity."

Ref: Rory Carroll, The Age 19/1/08

And Also ...

"A Beverly Hills cosmetic surgeon has claimed to have turned human fat sucked out during liposuction into fuel for his four-wheel-drive car. Dr Craig Alan Bittner from the Beverly Hills Liposculpture clinic reportedly said he had created 'lipodiesel' with his patients' unwanted blubber and used it to power two cars. Dr Bittner is under investigation by the California Department of Public Health where it is illegal to use human medical waste to power vehicles, according to Forbes.com."

Ref: Mex Cooper, The Age, 24/12/08

Biofuels

"Biofuels are not a 'solution' in that we'll simply never be able to produce enough of them. The world as a whole uses 4.6 barrels of oil per person annually, and 3.2 of this goes into transport - not just transport of people, but of stuff made in China, coal from Newcastle and so on. This 3.2 is not really achieved anywhere, it's just an average. The US uses about 18bbl per person annually for transport, even a nice efficient eco-friendly country like Denmark uses 5bbl. We Aussies use 12bbl.

"Biofuels mostly come from something we could be using for food. We produce 307kg of grain per person around the world each year, and need 184kg. We produce 23kg of sugar and 130kg of fruit, and 130kg of vegies per person. Grain converts to biofuel at 3kg -> 1lt, sugar at 1:1, vegies at 4:1, and fruit at 2:1. So assuming we eat the minimum grain, and some fruit and vegies and no sugar, we could possibly scratch up about 80lt of biofuel.

"Stuff like palm oil can give us a bit more, so we could possibly claw our way to 160lt of biofuel per person annually. That's one barrel. One barrel of biofuel. 1bbl - compared to the 3.2 we use now worldwide, or the 12bbl we Aussies use, or the 5bbl even the eco-friendly Danes use. It just won't be enough for us Aussies to live as we do. We'd have to reduce the range of our lives - no more 50km trips to and from work, no more buying \$5 t-shirts made in China.

"Hydrogen is not practical for engineering reasons described here -

<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/archive/15/zubrin.htm>

"Whether public transport is 'convenient' or not is irrelevant. Shrinking fuel available will mean it's that or walking. The market must sadly adjust to physical realities. When the supply of fuel is low, the demand for public transport will rise. Public transport is fuel efficient compared to private vehicles for the obvious reason that it takes less fuel per person carried to drive a 10 tonne bus with 20-50 people in it than a 1 tonne car with 1-2 people in it (85% of all car trips have just the driver in them). Of course, a 10 tonne tram with 30-100 people, or a 10 tonne railway carriage with 50-150 people, those are more efficient still. And the tram and train we can run off solar or wind or geothermal or tidal power, using zero fuel; we can't do that with cars and buses."

Ref: Kyle Aaron, ABC TV Difference of Opinion: Are We Running On Empty? Message Board 1/8/07

<http://www2b.abc.net.au/tmb/Client/Message.aspx?b=70&m=10561&ps=20&dm=1&pd=3>

Social Justice & Urban Design (Part 1)

'We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us' (Winston Churchill 1941)

"The way we form our urban areas, the spaces they enclose and the values they embody have a profound effect on the quality of people's lives. Planning is an allocative mechanism, influencing who gets what. Urban design is a tool of the planning system that influences the experience people have of their surroundings and the needs it enables them to meet. These needs might be to get to education, to access healthy food, to get exercise, to access relevant and stimulating employment opportunities, to enjoy nature to find solitude or interact with other people, amongst others. These factors and others influence what people feel they can do and whether they feel stifled or nurtured by their surroundings.

"The way urban design is undertaken can contribute to ensuring fairer access to these opportunities and is essential to help create the circumstances that allow people to make well informed decisions, stay healthy and participate in society.

"Despite the committed efforts of people in the fields of planning and social services, many people growing up within our most disadvantaged communities have their life potential diminished as their economic disadvantage is compounded by environmental disadvantage, poor access to appropriate housing, limited recreational opportunities, inadequate nutrition, social stigma, limited transport choices, car dependency and limited choice and quality of social interaction opportunities amongst others.

"For these people, life expectancy is lower (seven years lower than the Australian average), they are typically more exposed to the vagaries of interest rates and the price of petrol, do less well at school, miss more days through illness, are more dependent on welfare and are more likely to be employed in jobs that are in 'at risk' sectors. They are also more likely to suffer from the 'urban epidemic' of cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes and cancer as a result of being overweight or obese.

"The impact of these existing issues of social exclusion and economic instability will be further compounded in the future by climate change, peak oil and other emerging challenges. For example, communities locked into car dependency, as many peripheral disadvantaged communities are, will find themselves not just with lower job security but simultaneously

isolated from education and training opportunities. These same characteristics isolate people without access to cars from recreational and social opportunities and increase their dependence on the few nearby shops that often sell a limited range of food.

"An essential component of addressing this unfairness is to ensure everyone can enjoy surroundings that make it comfortable, safe and pleasant to engage in the activities necessary to meet their needs. We are all fundamentally emotional beings and our cognitive reality - our understanding of the world - is informed by our values and experiences. This in turn informs how we respond to our surroundings and our sense of whether that environment welcomes us and supports our wellbeing, or makes us feel unwelcome and disadvantages us.

"Opportunities to meet our needs are rarely comprehensively denied, rather they are deterred (e.g. if a park offering your favourite sport is 15km away and you don't have a car and the timing isn't compatible with the bus, while it might be theoretically possible to walk - it is unlikely). In these cases, the benefits are not perceived as worth the cost in terms of time, fares and possibly an elevated and unacceptable exposure to risk. In other cases, the setting within which a need is met may have a negative association or stigma that may deter people and so, their need goes unmet, as can occur in uses as diverse as drug clinics and welfare offices.

"At other times a place is perceived as having been appropriated by a section of the community such as those of a particular age, members of a particular ethnic group or street dwellers to the exclusion of others. This may discourage other people from occupying that space or passing through it." {To be continued in #117}

Ref: Jenny Donovan, Australian Fabian News, 2009

No Idling

"Idling vehicles are a large contributing factor to greenhouse gas emissions. There is an anti-idling law in New York that is being made more stringent to ensure that vehicles do not idle [but] most people are not even aware that such a law exists."

Ref: Jorge Chapa, Inhabitat, 2/6/09

