

Cars Pollute Even With Engines Off

“Vehicles sitting in the sun for days at a time can spew out damaging hydrocarbons – one of the main ingredients in smog, a federal government study has found. Hydrocarbons are in the vapour that escapes from petrol tanks on a warm day. Most newer cars have canisters that trap them before they are released but if cars are left sitting for longer than 24 hours the canisters can fill up and stop working until the vehicle is driven, the Second National In-Service Emissions Study found. As many as 3 million Australian cars may not conform to Australian standards for evaporative emissions. ‘The results indicate that when vehicles are parked in warm conditions for an extended period (more than a day), the evaporative emission control systems may not be able to effectively control the build-up of evaporative hydrocarbons, as even the latest systems are only designed to provide effective control for a continuous 24-hour period’, the report said. A 2003 Toyota Camry, for example, which emitted less than two grams of hydrocarbons after 24 hours, had emitted close to 30 grams over 72 hours, according to Orbital, the company that did the testing. Smog is linked to respiratory problems such as asthma. ... The study tested cars’ evaporative emissions one hour after they were driven and then during a stationary test, where vapours were measured from each vehicle over 24 hours. One in four cars exceeded the test limit of two grams of hydrocarbons released. Assuming this 25% figure is representative of the wider vehicle population, almost 3 million cars on the road do not conform to Australian standards.”

Ref: Antony Lawes, SMH, 28/2/10

Chinese on E-Bikes

“Chinese commuters in their millions are turning to electric bicycles - hailed as the environmentally friendly future of personal transport in the country’s teeming cities. Up to 120 million e-bikes are estimated to be on the roads in China, making them already the top alternative to cars and public transport, according to recent figures published by local media. ... The bikes have been hailed as a green alternative in a country that is the world’s top emitter of greenhouse gases, with their rechargeable batteries leaving a smaller carbon footprint than cars. But some have concerns about the pollution created by cheaper lead batteries, calling for better recycling and a quick shift to cleaner, though more expensive, lithium-ion batteries.”

Ref: Joelle Garrus, The Age, 27/2/10



Lead Battery Bicycle

More on the Grand Prix

“What do we expect when we invite the gurus of global hooning to town for a weekend of government-sponsored hooning?”

Ref: Editorial, The Age, 28/3/10

“Re the law and racing car noise: the Australian Grands Prix Act overrules other Acts that protect our hearing, parks, freedom of information and access to the courts under the State Constitution, as well as many other things. Noise levels: F1 cars can emit 130db, whereas V8 Supercars are limited to 90db, 30 metres from the track. These are figures I obtained in the 90’s and submitted them to Vipac, one of the consultants to the Kennett Government on Grand Prix noise. The other was Melbourne Uni School of Population Health. The Herald Sun before the GP said the noise would be about the same level as a noisy intersection, with trams crossing. Vipac admitted they got it wrong some years later but Melbourne Uni never did.”

Ref: Peter Logan, 30/3/10

“The bigger issue is it’s an environmental anachronism that should be banished.” **Ref: Mayor Frank O’Connor, Emerald Hill Weekly, 31/3/10**

Thirst for Three Years of Oil

“The Obama administration is proposing to open vast expanses of water to oil and natural gas drilling, much of it for the first time. ... The move would end a long-standing moratorium on oil exploration along the East Coast from the northern tip of Delaware to the central coast of Florida, covering 67 million hectares of ocean. ... Large

tracts in the Chukchi Sea and Beaufort Sea in the Arctic Ocean north of Alaska - nearly 52 million hectares - would be eligible for exploration and drilling. ... But even as Mr Obama curries favour with pro-drilling interests, he risks a backlash from some coastal

governors, senators and environmental advocates, who say that the relatively small amounts of oil to be gained in the offshore areas are not worth the environmental risks. It is not known how much potential fuel lies in the areas opened to exploration, although according to Interior Department estimates there could be as much as a three-year supply of recoverable oil and more than two years’ worth of natural gas, at current rates of consumption. Much of the oil and gas may not be recoverable at current prices and may be prohibitively expensive even if oil prices spike as they did in the summer of 2008.”

Ref: John Broder, The New York Times, 31/3/10

Transport Integration Bill (Part 3)

Shortcomings of the current legislation

"In 1983, the Transport Act was the largest overhaul of transport services management in the history of Victoria, initially repealing over 100 pre-existing acts. The institutional and regulatory arrangements for transport have changed significantly since 1983. More importantly, the challenges facing the transport system and the community's expectations for transport are very different now than they were a generation ago. Among the limitations of the current legislative arrangements for transport:

- *There is no clear vision for the transport system articulated in legislation.*
- *It is not clear what constitutes the transport system.*
- *The government's broader policy objectives or frameworks are not adequately reflected.*
- *There is minimal guidance about social policy objectives.*
- *Environmental objectives are not mentioned at all.*
- *Transport bodies are established under different legislation and have different objectives.*
- *Some decision-makers who can influence transport outcomes are neither established in, nor recognised by, the Transport Act.*

"The lack of overarching objectives for the transport portfolio was identified as an important issue by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) in its 2006 report on transport congestion. The government, in response to VCEC's report, supported developing unified objectives for transport legislation and reviewing the way transport agencies are set up.

Integration

"To achieve transport integration, the different transport modes must operate together as an efficient, effective and seamless system. Crucially, the bill recognises that transport planning and land-use planning are essentially one and the same thing. Land-use decisions determine existing and future transport needs, and transport decisions can alter land-use patterns. For example, the location of housing and businesses affects the levels of travel to and from those locations -- while building new transport infrastructure or providing new transport services may increase demand for housing or commercial development in particular areas.

"The government has demonstrated the importance of transport and land use integration

by simultaneously developing the Victorian transport plan and Melbourne @5 Million. Importantly, the bill recognises that decisions impacting on the transport system are not made solely by transport agencies. It identifies a range of 'interface bodies' and explicitly acknowledges, for the first time in legislation, their important role in creating an effective transport system. So those who plan for the development of our state -- land managers, VicUrban, the Growth Areas Authority and Parks Victoria -- are designated as interface bodies under the bill. Similarly, the legislation under which these bodies perform their functions is declared interface legislation. This is a key aspect of this reform. These interface bodies are required to have regard to the objectives and decision-making principles when their decisions are likely to have a significant impact on the transport system. The bill creates a common platform on which we can build a more integrated and coordinated effort across many areas of government.

Sustainability

"The transport system needs to be planned, operated and managed so that it is sustainable, securing ongoing economic, social and environmental benefits for the state. A transport system needs to support social outcomes by being inclusive and providing access to economic and social opportunities. It enables people to get to their jobs and to visit their families and friends. It can also support the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities -- for example, by encouraging walking and cycling. A transport system needs to support prosperity through efficient and effective access to jobs, markets and services. It facilitates economic activity in vital sectors such as freight and logistics, and the tourism industry. And a transport system needs to support environmental responsibility by protecting the local and global environment -- by mitigating negative impacts, by promoting forms of transport, energy and technologies which have the least impact on the natural environment, and by improving the environmental performance of all modes of transport. When transport and land use are integrated, they contribute to better environmental outcomes by reducing the amount of travel needed and increasing access to sustainable modes. Creating a sustainable transport system also involves looking at impacts and outcomes over the long term. This requires robust strategic planning processes which set clear priorities and reflect integrated transport and land use planning." {Continued in #150}

Ref: Lynne Kosky, (Former) Victoria Minister for Transport, VicHansard, 10/12/09

Sacrificing to Suburbia (Part 1)

"The recent trend of Transition Towns as a response to climate change and the energy crisis highlights the importance of recognising the rural context when considering the issues of urban development. The movement, which began in the town of Totnes, in Devon [in the UK] aims to reduce reliance on global sources of energy and food by sourcing needs from within a locality. This is particularly relevant to the growth of Australian cities, as the continued spread of suburbia at the expense of proximate farming land is precisely the opposite of a climate responsive urban growth pattern. Under our current economic model, food production, packaging and distribution contribute to more than 20% of our energy use. With most of the cost of food taken up by packaging and distribution it is easy to see how rising food prices, an inevitable consequence of peak oil, could be alleviated by localising and intensifying food production. This is the 'Transition Town' notion of decoupling food from oil.

"Less generally understood perhaps, is how much damage has already been done by the suburban agglomeration. Not only has it destroyed farmland, coastline and other non-urban habitat, but its form and pattern is such that it can never be economically serviced by any type of circulation infrastructure: water, energy, waste or most obviously transport. An energy efficient city cannot be so dispersed and the continued release of land for housing subdivision on the fringe of major Australian cities, while politically attractive, will always be an environmentally irresponsible strategy.

"Not surprisingly, the need to effectively implement the delivery of much higher density mixed use development into suburbia goes hand in hand with a more climate responsive approach to the non-urban environment. It is unlikely that suburban residents would see it that way, yet maintaining a compost heap down the end of the garden can hardly compensate for the massive environmental footprint that suburban living entails. Of course, residents have little choice because what passes for urban consolidation is really just suburban intensification, offering nothing in the way of a real urban experience and retaining all of the negative features of suburbia. Surely the real benefit of urban consolidation should be the opportunity to avoid the homogenised sameness of suburbia while being close to non-urban places."

Ref: Kim Jones, The Age, 22/1/10



Sprawl

Photo:
James
Davies,
The Age

"What amazes me consistently is the argument that these outer suburban developments are somehow new. Look in Northcote, Preston, Box Hill, Camberwell, Caulfield, in fact any of the old middle suburbs. They have lower population densities than most of the new McMansion developments, which are really apartments by another name, with near no outdoor space. The truth is not that they are unsustainable, but more that we suddenly stopped trying to make them work. The provision of infrastructure stopped at basic utilities and a road. The market was allowed to rip along at the lowest possible denominator and presto, every man for himself.

"So out here in the west we have no useful public transport, no strip shopping, masses of traffic sewers isolating each 'community' and the unavoidable obligation to have a car per adult to travel to the massive soulless space of the local mall to shop or socialise. Even where the mall works, like say Point Cook, it is surrounded by a huge desert of asphalt that must be negotiated to reach a human scale place. That is not to say I disagree with the notion of regional cities, but they are just as likely to be blighted by a tight arsed government approach to planning and services resulting in a rural versions of Melbourne's planning failures."

Ref: Comments, The Age, 22/1/10

"I really get sick of inner city snobbery veiled as sustainability. Get the government to mandate vehicle fuel efficiency and reduce CO2 emissions

in Australia by 15%. Then try to retrofit all the 1-2 star energy inefficient inner city houses (especially in the wealthy suburbs) to 5 star to get a further massive reduction. Unless you are a millionaire you can't bring up a family in the inner city. What happened to the virtual office anyway? Armstrong Creek a development on the outskirts of Geelong will be sustainable with several new initiatives:

Ref: 'Andrew', Comments, The Age, 22/1/10

And Also ...

"The death rate [in motor crashes] is very high, but certainly not 1 in 100 for each trip — otherwise, we'd all be dead within a week or two!"

Ref: www.infrastructurist.com/2010/03/11/how-cars-are-killing-us-around-the-world/

Streets as Places (Part 4)

"In some cities, people are reclaiming their public spaces and exercising their rights to public space. One way of doing this is to create a public space 'Bill of Rights', a list of activities they would like to be able to do in their communities. This is the beginning of a Placemaking process that restores vitality to places that are important to communities.

"At one time or another, almost all of us have come across certain places we consider to be especially appealing and liveable. Such places might be embodied in a single street or even a street corner, in a series of streets, a district or an entire community. To describe these places, we often use words like 'charming' or 'comfortable' or 'convenient' without pinpointing their actual features. ... Learning about their qualities can provide clues about how to create streets that are special places for people, reflecting a strong sense of community. ...

"These places don't necessarily have all of the same features, although many share a number of them. One of the most common characteristics is that they haven't been overwhelmed by wide, fast roads. Their streets are narrow and crossable, and they often have serendipitous restraints on traffic, like the sequence of squares in Savannah, Georgia. Besides tempering traffic, Savannah's squares, with their full-grown oak trees, abundant greenery, commemorative sculptures and seating areas, are also havens for relaxation and contemplation. Squares have played a role in the life of many places, not only as quiet spots for rest and reflection, but also as centres where communities can come together to socialize and take part in an assortment of activities, many of which define local character.

"These are some of the characteristics that can be found in older towns celebrated for their livability: Small streets more for walking than for driving; Town squares; Strong commercial centres with a mix of activities; A down-to-earth scale; Friendly to bicycles; Traditional local

celebrations; Public markets; Diagonal parking; Sidewalk cafés; A transit station or stop that's easy to walk to, right in the centre of town; Trees and flowers; An involved community.

PUBLIC SPACE BILL OF RIGHTS
Everyone should have the right to:

- Walk and stroll in comfort
- Sit down in nice, comfortable places
- Meet and talk – by chance and by design
- Enjoy pleasant places to go to and comfortable places to stop
- Look at attractive things along the way
- See places that are interesting
- Feel safe in a public environment
- Enjoy other people around them

"We once routinely built such places. Now they are viewed as unique, or even exotic. However, many of their qualities can be incorporated into communities everywhere to create places people are proud to call home.

"Freeing up street space from domination by motor vehicles is essential to restoring communities. However, this alone will not create the kind of street that makes people feel comfortable and happy. If

a street is to become a convenient and enjoyable place, it must be looked at holistically - that is, as a distinctive environment with many different interrelated elements reflecting the character, needs and aspirations of a particular community. It is the integration of these elements, including traffic calming that both improves a street's balance between pedestrians and vehicles and creates a community-friendly street environment."
{Continued in #150}

Ref: Streets as Places – Using Streets to Rebuild Our Communities, Project for Public Places, 2008 See full report at:

[www.pps.org/pdf/bookstore/Using Streets to Rebuild Communities.pdf](http://www.pps.org/pdf/bookstore/Using%20Streets%20to%20Rebuild%20Communities.pdf)



"I just witnessed a great example of how Bendigonian's use their shared space in front of the Town Hall and thought you might be interested for your newsletter. The photo shows a number of people

and a young cyclist standing in the middle of the space enjoying some Chinese Lion dancers while motorists 'negotiate' their way through. The event was part of a Civic Reception to welcome new university students to the city. The road wasn't closed and there was no warning to drivers as to what was going on; their behaviour changed due to the presence of pedestrians and Chinese lions! It was great to see the theory behind 'naked streets' and 'Walk Bendigo' working in action."

Ref: Phil DeAraugo, 23/2/10

San Francisco Carves a Park

"The entire family of San Francisco city agencies responsible for maintaining its streets made an unconventional decision to close a portion of a street to cars and convert the new space into a simple, yet elegant, public plaza. The project combines all the important elements of plaza creation that have been successful in New York City and elsewhere: take space from cars, use simple treatments to convert the space into a pedestrian sanctuary, including movable furniture and leftover granite blocks from city salvage yards, and engage commercial interests around the plaza to help maintain and care for the new public realm. Though some neighbourhood constituents voiced scepticism that the plaza would be empty at best, or filled with miscreants and vagabonds at worst, the plaza's success is hard to dispute. In fact, so many people are using the new space and enjoying the tables and chairs, the businesses around the plaza have contemplated leaving the furniture out later than sunset, which was the initial closing time agreed upon between them and the Castro/Upper Market Community Betterment District." **Ref: Street Films, 29/6/09**
<http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/san-francisco-carves-a-park-from-the-midst-of-its-pavement/>

Gold Coast could Carve a Park

"The Gold Coast Mayor says an urban green space could replace a public car park on Cypress Avenue in Surfers Paradise. Councillor Susie Douglas says that parking will not be an issue once the new light rail system is introduced. She says demand for car spaces will reduce over time. 'Unfortunately it means we will lose some car spaces in the future', Cr Douglas said. 'But that won't be until the light rail is up and going and then hopefully not as many people will need to bring their cars into Surfers Paradise'." **Ref: ABC News, 4/3/10**

Swan Hill Transport Study

"A \$20,000 transport study will be undertaken at Swan Hill. Transport Minister Martin Pakula made the announcement yesterday during a meeting with north-west Victorian community leaders. Mayor Greg Cruickshank says the study will map both freight and passenger movements and link in with studies already done at Mildura and Horsham. 'All measures of transport throughout the municipality, it will be about the transport that's required from our small towns to access the major regional centres for their health and social needs as well, so it covers all the broad areas of transport', he said."

Ref: ABC News, 4/3/10

Nordic Lead on Sustainable Transport

"World transport is slowly transforming towards a sector powered by electric and biofuels, among others. Nordic countries like Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are at the cutting edge of this development. ... Norway already has more than 3,000 electric cars on its roads and Norwegian government policy dictates that charging their batteries is free of charge, zero emissions EVs get free parking, can drive on bus lanes in the city, get free rides on state run ferries (there are a lot of them in Norway) and there is no VAT [Value Added Tax] on electric cars in Norway, so they're reasonably priced. 'Think' is the leading producer of competitive electric city cars in the world. In addition, Norway produces the tiny Buddy EV electric car. Meanwhile, Sweden has become the world leader in biogas for vehicles: many taxis and buses have been running on biogas and ethanol since 1996 and the biogas business continues to boom in Sweden; ... Denmark is to set up a network of charging infrastructure for electric cars to be powered with electricity from the country's many windmills."

Ref: Alex Elliot, Ice News, 3/9/09

Glasgow Tram Freighter Plan

"A new plan for sustainable transport in Glasgow includes a proposal to run trams in the city centre for freight as well as passengers. A similar scheme was attempted in Amsterdam but failed last year, and the plan's authors have suggested that this was because there were too few restrictions on road lorries in the Dutch capital to give trams a competitive edge. The plan, 'Sustainable Glasgow', has been produced jointly by Glasgow City Council and the University of Strathclyde. It covers many environmental topics in a bid to deal with the effects of a changing climate, but its transport proposals include a city centre tramway linked to a dedicated bus route along the Clyde Waterfront which could also be later converted to light rail. It is, however, the suggestion that city centre trams could be used to replace lorries making deliveries which is unusual. Urban tramways have not been used to carry freight in Britain for many years, although the former Glasgow Corporation Tramways, which closed in 1962, were among those that did, sometimes using standard railway wagons. The report says: 'The potential for a mixed use passenger and freight tram system in the centre of Glasgow should be explored. This would initially operate primarily in the pedestrianised areas of the city – thus reducing traffic disruption during the installation of the system, and providing a transport link between Queen Street and Central stations'." **Ref: Railnews (UK), 9/2/10**

Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 19)

Here continues our discussion:

SI: Do you think our governments are getting the message about active transport? There still seems to be this push to build more freeways. Much more money is going into roads and just a trickle into active transport.

OK: Until more people participate in active transport, it's a bit of a 'Catch 22'.

SI: A 'Catch 22' and the 'Chicken and the Egg'.

OK: Transport engineers who have a very strong environmental focus and social focus, are fortunate that the medical profession is now strongly on the same side. Unfortunately, I don't think that they are talking to each other often enough. We should be seeing the Head of the medical profession, the Head of the Engineering professions, getting together on the issue of sedentary behaviour and modelling it and health.

SI: Previously you touched on good urban design: on how people use spaces where there is good urban design. And we know that this is absolutely true, you design a place well – and I don't mean over-design, over-designing can be negative in its own right – but good urban is not that hard to do, however in this country we don't do it enough, even though there are some excellent examples such as Swanston Street, with tens of thousands of people walking and cycling. It's an excellent example of good urban design and it's going to be made even better.

OK: It is said that the Mediterranean climate and the Melbourne climate are rather similar. In 1976 I sat in the street in Italy just about everywhere I went. When I came back to Melbourne, I could sit outside Genevieve's, one table, and the other one was outside the University Café. That was it!

SI: Both of those are in Carlton.

OK: Of course. But now there are 35,000 or something chairs in the City of Melbourne. It's huge. City of Port Phillip [with chairs outside]. It's huge. So it's climate but you have to ask the social question: why does it happen? Is it a long-term cultural impact? I don't think so.

SI: So good things are happening in the centre of the city, stretching out to those inner suburbs like [the City of] Port Phillip and the City of Yarra; and it seems that when you go to the middle suburbs, less so; and when you go to the fringe suburbs, we know they are much more car-based.

OK: In 2001, I did the strategic transport study for Nillumbik [Shire Council, on the north-eastern fringe of Melbourne]: six chairs in public space – there were a few more in private space that was open to the public – but the whole of that municipality had just six chairs in public space! {Continued in #150}

And Also ... Small Area Plan in DC

"The DC Office of Planning has released a new Small Area Plan for the Brookland neighbourhood that calls for converting the entire neighbourhood to open space. The plan will set maximum allowable heights of 0 feet and adjust the permitted FAR to 0. 'We heard the message loud and clear from the ANC', said Ward 5 Planner Deborah Ostrich. 'Vocal residents expressed a desire to maximize the amount of open space in the neighbourhood, and this plan does this'. All houses will have to comply with the new zoning by 2015. At that time, the plan assures that riders getting off at the Brookland Metro station will not have any structures blocking their view. Residents will be able to remain in their homes provided the buildings have basements. DC zoning laws allow for small penthouses provided they are set back at least ten feet from all property lines. Brookland residents will be able to take advantage of this rule to construct penthouses for entry and exit.

"DDOT will also remove all obstructions to automobile traffic, including curbs, bulb-outs, and medians. 'This plan will ensure that residents no longer have to circle the block to reach the parking lot for the Yes! Organic Market on 12th Street', said ANC Commissioner Carolyn Jumpfoote. Residents had criticized DDOT's previous design for the streetscape, which created a median blocking some left turns and bulb-outs which allegedly reduced the number of parking spaces.

"Residents will also no longer be constrained by such impediments as sidewalks and corners, but will instead be able to choose the shortest route to their destination. The new transportation plan will ensure no obstacles block emergency vehicles. Council member Harry Thomas, Jr. (Ward 5) praised the new plan, especially the section on accessory structures, which will permit gas station pumps as long as they do not exceed six feet in height. 'DC has lost many of its gas stations in the last ten years', he said. 'We need to create an incentive for more full service gas stations in the District of Columbia'. The Small Area Plan allows any property to contain small structures under six feet covering no more than 15% of the lot."

Ref: David Albert, 1/4/09

<http://greatergreaterwashington.org/post.cgi?id=1936>