

### More on the Tax Reform that Isn't

"The RACQ says it's disappointed the federal government has not taken up Dr Ken Henry's key recommendation for a congestion tax to tackle the \$20 billion problem of crowded roads around Australia. Dr Henry had recommended some form of congestion charge, or a user pays 'per kilometre' charge, in exchange for scrapping registration charges and stamp duties. The Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics last year estimated 'avoidable congestion' would cost Brisbane alone \$3 billion a year by 2020. However the federal government ignored these warnings in its first response to what Dr Henry has suggested be a decade-long review of Australian's tax system."

Ref: Tony Moore, Brisbane Times, 3/5/10

### Myki

"The 'botched' introduction of the Myki smartcard is set to come under increased scrutiny in the lead-up to the state election. ...

"There is a view in the community that the government has botched the introduction of Myki, and scrutiny of why that's happened will help", [Opposition MP, David] Davis said." Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 3/5/10



### And Also ...

"Girl to man using Myki (ticketing system): 'Oh my God, did your Myki just work?'"

Ref: Krishna, Mx News, 28/4/10

### Interview with Oz Kayak (Part 24)

OK: But also where does the level of insanity enter that marks streets at 60 kph or no marking which implies 50 [kph], and then others at 40 [kph] and others at 30 [kph] within 'a stone's throw'? The feedback that I get is that someone hasn't thought it through. It [Victoria Street, between Victoria Market and Russell Street] should all be zoned at 35 or 30 and that's it.

SI: As low as that?

OK: As low as that! It won't make any difference to the total performance and then everybody knows that they are in a [pedestrian] precinct. I mean, until a few years ago you could still do 60 [kph] down Lygon Street [Carlton] and today, despite two fatalities if not three, you can still do 60 [kph] approaching Lygon Street. No wonder the hoons use it as a time trial. {Cont. in #155}

### NZ Rail Future (Part 2)

"But the last two investments the [NZ] Government has made in rail have been stunning successes. Last year, the Government subsidised the building of a rail siding at Tangiwai to enable forest products to travel by rail rather than road to the Port of Wellington. An investment of just over \$1 million spread over three years is yielding cost savings to Government of \$16 million and benefits to the nation of \$9 million. 3,000 trucks/year are being taken off our roads as a result of this subsidy. Another investment of just under \$1 million to build log transfer yards in Marton, Wanganui, and Masterton will realise a \$90 million return to the nation over the 30-year life of the project. By year four of operations, 9,000 trucks/year will no longer be barrelling down our roads.

These two small investments yield benefit cost ratios of 99 – an arbitrary number due to the fact they have negative costs. The 99 means they're investment no-brainers, the likes of which even the Road Transport Forum couldn't stop. (They tried.)

"Rail in New Zealand has been mismanaged in the past and, under private ownership, run down to the point of collapse. [Minister] Joyce is right to approach any new investment with

scepticism. But he also needs to understand the tremendous potential for economic benefit from the right investment in the right places. Without a modern rail network, we'll never be able to tap these investment no-brainers that are everywhere there are trucks moving freight in large numbers. Perhaps this is why Mainfreight, New Zealand's largest trucking firm, is backing the future of rail in this country too."

Ref: Gareth Hughes, Frogblog, 2/3/10

### And Also ...

"The [NZ] Government has talked much of 'infrastructure' since its election, which many of us believe to be code word for 'as much dosh as the highway lobby wants, not a lot for anything else'. Certainly that impression is reinforced by the Roads of National Significance \$2.4 billion rebuild planned for State Highway 1 from Otaki to Wellington International Airport – despite the cost well exceeding the calculated economic benefits. (Upside: we don't have to be defensive about rail costs anymore. Even the most ambitious future gold-plated regional rail scenario, with all the tram-train we could wish for and a N-S Junction duplication, would not exceed half of that one road!)"

Ref: Brent Efford, Trans-Action Bulletin #89, 9/3/10

### Flinders Street Railway Station: 100

*“Flinders Street Station is among Melbourne's most recognisable landmarks. It is the best-known railway station in Australia. ... Each week, more than 10,300 passenger-carrying suburban train services operate to and from Flinders Street Station. On an average weekday, more than 110,000 people pass through the station and its ten platforms. At 708 metres long, Platform 1 is the fourth longest railway platform in the world.”*

**Ref: Victorian DoT Website, 29/4/10**



Photo: [www.flindersstreetstation100.com/](http://www.flindersstreetstation100.com/)

*“Railway architect James Fawcett, in partnership with railway engineer H.P.C. Ashworth, began design and construction of Melbourne's iconic Flinders Street Railway Station in 1900, and completed the building in 1910. While broadly Edwardian in style, there is also a French Renaissance influence to the design. Elements such as symmetrical main sections, rusticated piers, squat domes and broad arches are examples. The use of red brick contrasted with coloured cement render (known as the ‘blood and bandage’ effect) reflects elements of public architecture popular in Melbourne at that time. Flinders Street Station has always been more than just a train station. The offices of the Crown Solicitor, the Commissioner of Patents and the Registrar of Trademarks, Designs and Copyright were all located in the building at various times. The facilities even include a grand ballroom. The small hat shop hidden down the stairs to the side of the main entrance has been part of the station building since its completion in 1910.”*

**Ref: APESMA National E-News, 22/4/10**

*“Preliminary work began in 1901, and on September 25, 1905, a contract was let for construction of the station building. After a couple of years, difficulties arose with the contractor, and the Department took over the work, which was completed in 1910 at an estimated cost of 514,000 pounds. This cost was far in excess of the original estimate. ... At last, the people of Melbourne had a station of which they could be proud. The concourse ran along the Swanston Street end, with ramps dropping down to each platform. A subway replaced the*

*old footbridge at the Elizabeth Street entrance. The Victorian Railways Institute was granted space within the new building and room was eventually found for a nursery. ... Flinders Street's architectural style is neo-classical, and it is built in granite and basalt, with the octagonal dome, the clock tower and pavilions linked by the facade. It may not be physically in the centre of Melbourne, but Flinders Street Station is still undoubtedly the ‘heart’ of the city. Along Flinders Street, the station provides the longest continuous building facade,*

*ancient or modern, in the central area. It is strengthened, at its southern end, by the viaduct, which continues the theme of cement render and red bricks. With an entrance like Luna Park and a dome like the Taj Mahal, a classical pediment dominates the main entrance which is flanked by rustic plasters and cupolas on top.*

*“The clocks at the main entrance of the station were part of the original design plans, and remain in almost the same place as they did in the early years of construction. The 13 clocks are now operated by computer and indicate train departures to suburban lines. An attempt was once made to replace them with video screens, but the outcry was enormous and therefore they have remained. Electrical circuits were fitted to the entrance steps in June 1985 to keep the steps dry and therefore prevent people slipping. The granite steps were also replaced with red brick tiles as part of a \$23 million redevelopment project.*

*“During the early seventies, development rights were leased by the Government to increase office and shopping activity at this strategic location. The proponents of the scheme had not anticipated the attachment which had been forged over the years between the people and their station. A number of proposals withered for various reasons and public support for the station led to the restoration of its weather-beaten facade. Architectural details concealed behind advertisements for decades were revealed as the work commenced. Original paint colours were researched and re-applied. During 1994 the station exterior was repainted.”*

**Ref: History – Flinders St Railway Station**

[www.buslines.com.au/hillside/trains/history.html](http://www.buslines.com.au/hillside/trains/history.html)

## Transport Nirvana (Part 2)

*“Building roads and neglecting public transport turns population increase into urban sprawl, with widely dispersed residences and jobs. This encourages more car use and, indeed, locks many parts of Sydney into dependence on cars. Neglect of public transport causes a movement away from it, which is then reinforced by deteriorating service frequencies, service quality, travel times and even the cancellation of off-peak services. So we've had both pull factors (we prefer our cars) and push factors (reduced quality and availability) worsening public transport and compounding our problems. The report says that ‘even if it were assumed that private vehicle travel will continue to be as viable and affordable as today ... adding to or extending Sydney's radial freeway and toll-road system would be an expensive way of providing at best very short-term and geographically limited improvements’.*

*“And, of course, we can't assume car travel will stay viable and affordable. Our heavy dependence on car travel is unsustainable. Curbs on greenhouse gas emissions will force up its price, as will the growing shortage of world oil reserves. Add the projected growth in Sydney's population - a 40% increase to 6 million in the next 30 years - much of which will be accommodated by higher-density living, add the much higher proportion of elderly people, and you see why we need to switch to a different tram, as other big cities that have pursued road-based solutions are doing.*

*“That still leaves a role for cars, of course. As the report says, not all of Sydney is dense, nor should it be. ‘In lower-density suburbs, for trips not going into urban centres, the private car is likely to remain a dominant mode of travel’, it says. The challenges we face in getting our transport arrangements back on track are considerable and costly. We need catch-up measures to correct the under-investment in public transport infrastructure for the present population, as well as measures to accommodate future population growth. We need extensions of the public transport system into outer areas as well as significant enhancement of the system in inner areas.*

*“This will leave little room for the building of further freeways or tollways. We need more investment in all modes of public transport - rail, light rail, buses, ferries and even, well down the track, metros - but according to a carefully considered, long-term plan establishing a clear*

*order of priority. We need less rivalry and more co-operation and co-ordination between the modes so that an ill-fitting collection of systems becomes a single, seamless one. It's not possible for all journeys to be completed without the need to change within a mode or between modes. This requires integrated timetables, accurate and timely provision of information about disruptions and, above all, an integrated fare and ticketing system. All of this will cost and there's no one to pay for it but us. There'll be carrots (more and better quality train and bus travel) and sticks (rising levels of road congestion for those who persist with cars). But here's the good news: both the public's submissions to the inquiry and the inquiry's opinion polling show most Sydneysiders have got the message. Now all that remains is for light to dawn in the minds of our politicians.”*

**Ref: Ross Gittins, SMH, 17/10/10**

## On the NZ Rail Network Closures (Pt 3)

*“Once transport funding and policy is balanced, incentives to get an economically efficient level of freight moving on rail corridors while maintaining freight and market sector choice is by a mix of both pricing and investment mechanisms. This utilises use trigger thresholds. Calculating on paper all the infrastructure provision, and the private and public costs associated with each activity, there will be a given use threshold whereby part of the sum of road transport investment and activity duplicating the role of a train (if movements can be agglomerated between key points) can be identified.*

*“Therefore electronic corridor pricing (replaces RUC'S) can be adapted to incentivise corridor sector pricing and investment. Private companies forming co-operatives assisting the Government to run rail (Kiwirail remains one entity) with seamless supply chains, eliminates the need for revenue transfer to competitors. To do this we need to first ensure truck operators profitability over the long term is at least the same as at present-we need our truckies in business.*

*“A balanced transport policy, funding and integrated approach is a needed change from the fanatical road transport forum lobby position continually suggesting only rail is unviable and its lines should be closed. The truth is neither mode is truly viable in its own right and its past time obsolete prejudices from the 1970s were retired from the transport sector. The economy and the freight sector will perform better if each transport mode is able to perform the role it is best designed to do.”* **Ref: Kevin Sharp, 5/3/10**

## The Curse of Cars

*“Australia has become one of the most car-dependent nations, and Sydney is probably its most car-dependent city. Cars are expensive, one of the least cost-efficient methods of moving people from one place to another. We use 12% to 15 % of our collective wealth to pay for it. By contrast, cities that have strong rail networks, as many European cities do, use 5% to 8% of their wealth on transport. With oil resources dwindling and climate change bearing down on us, we are not well positioned for the future. ...*

*“The transport policies of successive state and federal governments have left us with massive hidden costs. One big cost to our community results from congestion on our roads. Across Australia, this has been estimated by the federal government at \$21 billion - and that was just for 2006. Sydney has a quarter of Australia’s urban population; the cost burden for the people of NSW is massive. ... Another cost is the road toll. Every year about 1600 Australians are killed in motor vehicle accidents and 30,000 more are seriously injured. Every year the government delays improving public transport, or establishing safe cycleways, means avoidable deaths are added to the toll. The federal government’s infrastructure department found that car passengers were 10 times more likely to have a serious injury than those in trains, based on distance travelled. It estimates that car accidents cost our community \$18 billion a year. A third cost is health. Encouraging walking and cycling for short journeys would be a cost-effective way of tackling the obesity epidemic which is fuelling diabetes, heart attacks and strokes.*

*“These ‘externalities’ - air and noise pollution, road accidents, physical inactivity and the contribution to greenhouse gases and global warming - are costing us dearly. That’s before we consider other social impacts such as social exclusion for those who don’t drive and have inadequate access to public transport. We need to update our thinking about transport so the costs are no longer hidden and so they reflect what fossil fuels are really costing us. The federal government’s fuel excise, for instance, is the fourth-lowest in the world, according to a Treasury report on Australia’s future tax system. It goes nowhere near paying for all the hidden costs of road transport. To do so, we should be paying fuel excise of \$1.33 a litre - 3½ times what we pay now. The politics of that mean it’s*



*unlikely to happen, but we need to go some way towards reflecting the real cost to society of using fossil fuel-dependent cars. The revenue from removing fossil fuel subsidies should be used to provide better, safer, more sustainable transport. As a nation we urgently need to prioritise investment in the public transport, cycling and walking networks of our cities. We need governments to look ahead 10 and 20 years and help us make the transition away from oil dependency, with all its hidden costs, towards a sustainable transport future.”*

**Ref: Gail Broadbent, SMH, 19/2/10**

*“It is no surprise that after more than 50 years of car-centric urban development in Sydney, it is hard to imagine living without a car. Every detail of our lives has been optimised for car use. We keep expanding our city with low-density urban sprawl that is difficult to serve with bikes or trains. Shopping malls have huge car parks but hardly any way to enter by foot. Every street is used for car traffic or parking, with no space for bikes or buses to avoid the gridlock. Every office building has hundreds of car spaces and still there are hundreds more parking stations and on-street parking. The city is so choked by cars that the real users of the city (pedestrians) are squeezed onto tiny pavements and asked to wait 5 minutes at every intersection to cross the road. The Cityrail network has had less than 20km added to it since 1950! The bike network is incomplete and indirect.*

*I could go on for hours....*

*“Wake up and smell the exhaust fumes people! There is nothing special about Europe. We keep telling ourselves that their cities are the right size, or the right density, or they are flatter or the weather is*

*different or some other lame excuse. The only thing standing in our way is the car-centric system we have built. So let’s start building the right system. We need great public transport (particularly heavy rail), urban consolidation and better facilities for bikes. To reflect the huge cost of providing roads and (usually free) parking for cars we need appropriately heavy charges (fuel tax, tolls, parking costs and congestion charges).”*

**Ref: ‘TonyA’, SMH, 19/2/10**

*“Motor vehicles are used in Sydney to establish a pecking order. Pedestrians are at the bottom and Hummers are the top. If you ride a bike you will soon work that the road rules only give you right of*

way over a 4WD if you get to the road space first. If the 4WD gets there first, it's his and you need to avoid him or suffer the consequences. Those who are top of the flock of road users aren't likely want to pay to lose their position. For them the fuel usage figures posted on new cars are useless and should be replaced by an official pecking order number on Sydney streets. Motor vehicles are also used to establish status in Sydney. A new BMW would be at the top and an old Hyundai at the bottom. If you want both status and pecking order you buy a large luxury 4WD. Another issue is anxiety amongst owners of high status vehicles otherwise known as 'BMW Separation Disorder'. Folk need to be with their cars all the time and don't like leaving them too far away. Hence a BMW owner who parks in a disabled spot at a sports field is not necessarily lazy, he is just trying to keep his car near, preferably in sight of whatever he then does."

Ref: 'StuckinTraffic', SMH, 19/2/10

### The Tragedy of Suburbia (Part 2)

"The pattern of 'main street' US, in fact this pattern of building downtown [city centre] blocks, all over the world, is fairly universal. It's not that complicated. Buildings more than one storey high were built out to the sidewalk edge so that all kinds of people can get into the building, other activities are allowed to occur upstairs – apartments, offices and so on – you make provision for this activity called 'shopping' on the ground floor. (They haven't learnt that in Monterey [California] ... you'll see an intersection with four blank walls on every corner.) ...

"In Glens Falls, New York [State] ... the first thing they do [instead of following the pattern above] is to pop up the retail about half a level above grade [street level] to make it look 'sporty'. That completely destroys the relationship between business and the sidewalk – where the theoretical pedestrians are – but they'll never be there as long as it's in that condition. Then because the relationship between the street and the retail is destroyed we pop a handicapped ramp on that and then to make ourselves feel better we put a 'nature bandaid' in front of it. That's how we do it. I call them 'nature bandaids' because there is a general idea in America that the remedy for 'mutilated urbanism' is nature [but] in fact the remedy for wounded and mutilated urbanism is: good urbanism, good buildings, not just flower beds. ...

"The street trees have four jobs to do ... spatially denote the pedestrian realm, to protect the

pedestrians from the vehicles and the carriageway, to filter the sunlight onto the sidewalk, and to soften the hard-scape of the buildings and to create a feeling of a vaulted ceiling over the street (at its best). ... One of the problems of the fiasco of suburbia is that it destroyed our understanding of the distinction between the country and the town, between the urban and the rural. They're not the same thing and we are not going to cure the problems of the urban by dragging the country into the city, which is what a lot of us are trying to do all the time.

"A lot of [the problem] comes from the fact that the industrial city in America was such a trauma that we developed this tremendous aversion to the whole idea of the city, city life, and everything connected with it. And so what you see fairly early – in the mid-nineteenth century – is this idea that we now had to have an antidote to the industrial city ... and that's supposed to be delivered in the form of the 'railroad suburb', the country villa along the railroad line, which allows people to enjoy the amenity of the city but to return to the countryside every now and then – and believe me there were no Wal-Marts or convenience stalls out there then – so it really was a form of country living. But what happens is of course it mutates over the next eighty years and it turns into something rather insidious, it becomes a cartoon of a country house in a cartoon of the country. And that's the great non-articulated agony of suburbia and one of the reasons that it lends itself to ridicule because it hasn't delivered what it has been promising for half a century now. ...

" We are going to have to change this behaviour whether we like it or not. We are entering an epic period of change in the world, and certainly in America – the period that will be characterised by the end of the cheap oil era. It is going to change absolutely everything ... we are going to have to down-scale, re-scale, and resize virtually everything we do in this country and we can't start soon enough to do it. We are going to have to live closer to where we work, we are going to have to live closer to each other, we are going to have to grow more food closer to where we live – the age of the '3000-mile Caesar salad' is coming to an end. We have a railroad system that the Bulgarians would be ashamed of – we've got to do better than that and we should have started two days before yesterday."

{Continued #155}

Ref: James Howard Kunstler, TED Talks, Monterey, California, February 2004

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1ZeXnmDZMQ&feature=player\\_embedded#](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1ZeXnmDZMQ&feature=player_embedded#)

## On the Gulf Oil Disaster

*"The story starts 41 years ago, with a blowout at an oil platform some nine kilometres offshore from Santa Barbara, California. Over 11 days, 900,000 litres of crude oil bubbled to the surface, killing birds and dolphins, and polluting about 56 kilometres of coastline. It was by no means the worst oil spill but it was possibly the most important one, because it helped kick-start the US environmental movement, which then spread rapidly worldwide. Richard Nixon, just days into his first presidential term, said the spill had touched his conscience (which must have taken some doing), though the president of Union Oil, which operated the platform, objected: 'I am amazed at the publicity for the loss of a few birds'. The result was that oil drilling became unacceptable off the US west coast. Twenty years later the prohibition extended nationwide, after the much more serious spill from the Exxon Valdez in Alaska. The taboo started to dissolve as oil prices rose, and vanished when they peaked before the financial collapse. 'Drill, baby, drill' was Sarah Palin's war cry, while Republican commentators opined that offshore oil was 'extraordinarily safe and environmentally friendly' because none had been spilled during hurricane Katrina."*

**Ref: Geoffrey Lean, (UK) Telegraph. 2/5/10**

*"A third of America's oil comes from the Gulf of Mexico, as does nearly all of its seafood."*

**Ref: Tom Leonard, (UK) Telegraph. 2/5/10**

*"A fisherman and former oil worker [said]: 'I've nothing bad to say about oil companies - man, my boat doesn't go without it'."*

**Ref: Tom Leonard, (UK) Telegraph. 2/5/10**

## Australia Dependent on Imported Oil

*"Australia's oil reserves are dwindling and the nation is becoming increasingly reliant on imports for transport fuels, a new report shows. The Australian Energy Resource Assessment (AERA) report ... released by [Federal] Resources Minister Martin Ferguson ... shows the nation will need to import more oil to run its transport network."* **Ref: AAP, SMH, 4/5/10**

## The Hiawatha Light Rail Line (Part 1)

*"The US\$715 million Hiawatha Light Rail Line opened in 2004, running between downtown Minneapolis and the Mall of America in Bloomington. The line is the first major investment in the Twin Cities region in what planners and public officials are envisioning as a comprehensive network of transitways to include a mix of light and heavy rail and Bus Rapid Transit. This report presents the finding of a study of economic impacts resulting from the construction of the Hiawatha Line. Three major research questions are investigated:*

- *What are the impacts on property values of proximity to a Hiawatha Line station?*
- *How have land-uses changed around the Hiawatha transit stations?*

- *What are the impacts of the transit stations on the level of housing investment within the corridor?*

*"The 17 Hiawatha Line stations are located in a diverse set of neighbourhoods. The downtown Minneapolis station areas from the northern terminus (Warehouse district station) to the Downtown East/ Metrodome station have little land-use diversity, being dominated by commercial land uses and having very few residential properties. The downtown stops are typically destinations for those travelling on the*

*Hiawatha Line."*

*"Land use patterns were examined through analysis of the Metropolitan Council's seven county land use data base. The findings indicate that construction of the Hiawatha Line has had a positive effect on property values within station areas. The effect is limited to the west side of the line; on the east side a four-lane highway and a strip of industrial land uses intervenes and eliminates any positive impact of the line. Results also show a high level of residential investment (as measured by dollar value of the investment) within station areas compared to the control area."*

**Ref: The Hiawatha Line: Impacts on Land Use and Residential Housing Value, Centre for Transportation Studies, University of Minnesota, February 2010** For full report see:

[http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/The\\_Hiawatha\\_Line\\_Impacts\\_on\\_Land\\_Use\\_and\\_Resident\\_162947.aspx?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Transportation%20Research%20Board&utm\\_campaign=TRB+E-Newsletter+-+02-09-2010&utm\\_content=Web&utm\\_term=](http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/The_Hiawatha_Line_Impacts_on_Land_Use_and_Resident_162947.aspx?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Transportation%20Research%20Board&utm_campaign=TRB+E-Newsletter+-+02-09-2010&utm_content=Web&utm_term=)



The Nicollet Mall station is near the heart of the Minneapolis downtown commercial district. Many regional bus lines converge there, providing light rail users with connecting transit options. (Photo ref - As per report below)