

Sustainable Cities

Regular readers will be aware that I have been advocating the establishment of a Sustainable Cities Authority (SCA) as a vehicle for knowledge transfer and encouragement of Federal funding for sustainable projects – and in particular Lighthouse Projects that are outside the scope of the State Governments.

Apart from drawing together the four elements of Urban Design, Buildings, Transport and Tourism, there is perhaps not too much that is new in what I have been advocating. One of the pleasures of the process however has been the joining together with individuals and organisations that have been thinking along the same lines. This forms part of the validation process.

Earlier this year I was informed of the work of the bi-partisan House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage and their report *Sustainable Cities* which was dated August 2005. The Committee conducted an extensive consultation process and produced an excellent report and series of recommendations, including calling for the establishment of a Sustainable Cities Commission. The thinking around the SCA is very similar.

“This committee’s vision is for Australian cities that are vibrant and healthy – environmentally, socially and economically. Working towards this goal is not the responsibility of governments alone. It is the responsibility of all Australians and must be a priority for all Australians....What is missing is coordinated and concerted action. This committee believes that that there is a need for the Australian Government to assume a leadership role. Accordingly, the committee’s most important recommendations concern what form such leadership might take.”

Ref: Dr Mal Washer MP, Committee Chair Forward, Sustainable Cities, August 2005

“Labor, the Greens and environmentalists have hailed the bipartisan report by a Coalition-dominated committee as a positive step....The committee was appointed by the former environment minister, David Kemp, to report on how to reduce the environmental, economic and social cost of growing urban areas. Parliamentary committees rarely produce reports with recommendations that all members agree on.... ‘It’s a strong, bipartisan call for action to make our cities sustainable and it deserves the full attention of the Prime Minister and premiers to implement all the recommendations,’ (said

Don Henry, the Directory of the Australian Conservation Foundation).”

Ref: Stephanie Peatling, SMH 13/9/05

Unfortunately, in spite of the universal support, the recommendations seemed to have slipped below the radar. With the combined issues of Climate Change, Peak Oil and rising levels of obesity and diabetes, it is time to implement the recommendations.

Presentations

My recent presentations on Sustainable Cities have included:

- Sustainable Living Festival, Melbourne
- Building Regulations Advisory Committee
- Australian & New Zealand Solar Energy Society (ANZSES)
- Manningham Sustainability Forum
- Maribyrnong City Council (Vic)
- Hobart City Council (Tas)
- Campbelltown City Council (NSW)
- Victorian Eco-Innovations Laboratory (VEIL)

VEIL is helping to visualize possible sustainable lifestyles for Victoria in key specific areas. The organisation consists of academic designers (industrial and architecture) from RMIT, Monash and Melbourne Universities who are developing the scenarios and visions of sustainable life. These visions are periodically taken back to the universities and developed into ‘undergraduate studios’ where design students transform the ideas into relevant environments, products, services and systems.

Please contact me if you would like a presentation on Sustainable Cities & Transport for your organisation.



Ferries at Circular Quay in Sydney

Newsletter Feedback

➤ On **Road Carnage** in #18

“As someone who nearly lost a brother to severe head injuries, it’s good to see this being raised in the case for alternative travel. I’m not sure how much of this happens or is tried, but it seems that if the networks of people affected by such accidents worked in conjunction with those advocating for better travel alternatives, you would have a pretty large and powerful advocacy base.” Tosh Szatow 24/4/07

➤ On **Super Stops** in #18

“VicRoads, via the Think Tram program, in partnership with Yarra Trams and DOI, has designed the Super Stops in Collins St and Victoria Parade, and is also planning Bourke St. It has also done traffic signal upgrades. There are complaints about not having Super Stops at intersections, but it is often more sensible to have them mid block, allowing us to remove the odd stop, and enabling us to reduce the traffic to one lane each way without causing total gridlock for vehicles. This has created an improvement in tram travel times, as it is quicker to load and unload.” Confidential Feedback 24/4/07

➤ On **Russell Street Trams** in #17

“Running trams down Russell St would be expensive. Better to spend money on undergrounding and do the job properly. The turns at Russell/Flinders and Swanston/Flinders could be difficult.”
Confidential Feedback 24/4/07

➤ On **Smart Buses** in #18

“Smart buses are meant to be Orbital Routes, to link up with radial forms of transport, but the Rowville-Caulfield route has been introduced, with a lot of success. In my humble and personal opinion, the program should be increased dramatically, keeping the close integration with existing and new transport modes (including ferries).” Confidential Feedback 24/4/07

“The SmartBus program is increasing patronage, but the rollout is very slow. The planning for the Governments stated aim of 20% public Transport by 2020 is totally off track, with not enough trains and trams to cope with the present increase - let alone any doubling!”
Confidential Feedback 24/4/07

➤ On the **Tram Jam** in #17

“As for Swanston Street, I agree about the tram jam. The solution to me is an underground from Doncaster, down the centre of the Eastern Freeway, to Clifton Hill, then underground via

Fitzroy and Collingwood to Melb University, down Swanston Street and St Kilda Road, then either St Kilda or join onto the Sandringham line.”
Confidential Feedback 24/4/07

Campbelltown & Camden

Campbelltown and Camden, located to the south-west of Sydney, are significant growth areas that typify the issues related to urban fringe development around Australia.

In Campbelltown it was good to see the tree-lined streets and the traffic-calming measures in Queen Street – the key activity centre. A substantial railway station and bus interchange are located nearby but unfortunately not well connected to the city (with Hurley Street creating a barrier). What is striking though is the amount of land dedicated to car parking [see Google Earth] and much of it free. Presumably all of this land has more value than for storing chunks of metal and plastic? The other issue of course is the congestion generated by all of these cars which will be compounded by the new estates being established towards Camden.

Apart from the train, the main public transport seemed to consist of big diesel buses. The six or seven that I saw in Campbelltown or Camden were typically carrying two passengers each. My intuition tells me that the issue is mainly with the mode not just the routes and timetabling.

I travelled to Campbelltown from Balgowlah (near Manly). My preference of course would have been to use public transport but that would have involved two buses and then negotiating Sydney’s rail network – not a prospect I was looking forward to after travelling to Granville (which was only about a third of the distance) earlier in the year. On the other hand, the State Government, presumably with Federal funding, encouraged me to drive by providing tunnels much of the way.

For the return trip, tolls were \$13.60, petrol was \$22 and travel time was an hour each way. (There were two people in the car but the \$90 cost of hiring a car should be added in here). The point is that, with the preference for spending on road infrastructure, it was so much easier to travel by car in spite of the negative environmental and social aspects. This of course assumes that you can afford to own or hire a car, are old enough to drive, are not too old, are otherwise capable and still have a current licence.

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