

## Federal Budget 2007

I had a vain hope that the Federal Government would adopt the unanimous August 2005 recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment, and invest in sustainable cities and sustainable transport. As usual roads and rail (read rail freight) did well with \$22.3 billion but such spending can actually be counter-productive particularly where it has a negative impact on cities through increasing congestion and pollution. There was some money to encourage physical activity but this is just tampering at the edges rather than realising that the way we design our cities can have an enormous impact on the health of our citizens. Carol Nader in *The Age* (9/5/07) wrote: *"It is in the interests of governments to invest heavily now to reduce obesity and diabetes. More than 60% of Australian adults and 20% of children are overweight or obese....If nothing is done now, doctors predict the impact on the future health budget will be catastrophic."*

In the budget reviews, a constant theme was that punters would rather forgo their tax cuts as long as the money was spent on nation-building infrastructure projects. At the Federal level we appear to be awash with money and this surely is the time to start planning for sustainable cities.

In 2006 we tried to secure \$100,000 in matching funding from the Federal Government to conduct a substantial study on sustainable transport in Melbourne. In spite of being told that our application was a *'fantastic project with a bold vision'* our application was unsuccessful in part because the program was over subscribed. [See Newsletters #6 & #7].

Liz Minchin in *The Age* (9/5/07) reported that: *"A third of the 2006-07 budget for climate change - \$96 million out of a total of \$280 million - was not spent, which the government attributed to delays in key programs. Significant underspending has also occurred in previous years."* Meantime, Sarah Miles in *The Age* (9/5/07) noted that *"an initial \$120 million had been provided"* for a study into proposed rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane. It makes our bid for \$100,000 seem insignificant.

Annabel Hepworth's comment in *The Australian Financial Review* (9/5/07) was *"...groups who thought there might be a chance that yesterday's budget would deliver a truly visionary blueprint to deal with Australia's infrastructure problems would probably be disappointed."*

## Victorian Budget 2007

*"Victoria will spend \$362 million on 10 new trains for Melbourne's troubled metropolitan system and country train travellers will have their fares reduced by 20 per cent over four years. The government will also employ 22 new train drivers under transport investment totalling more than \$1.1 billion."* *"Victorian commuters will reap the benefits of an \$872 million injection into public transport, Transport Minister Lynne Kosky said today, while more than \$200 million would also be spent on the state's roads."* **Ref: The Age 15/5/07**

## Ghost Trams

It was an eerie sight to see dozens of darkened trams stranded in Swanston Street between Victoria Street and Federation Square recently. Of course things like power failures happen and Melbournians take it stoically. but it does support a case for a tram/metro system in Russell Street to provide a supplementary service. Congratulations to Yarra Trams for providing replacement buses but the sign 'Rail Bus' rather than 'Tram Replacement Bus' was bit confusing.



Dark and Stationary 7.15pm Monday 7-5-07

## Ghost Train

*"The new owners of Sydney's notoriously expensive Airport Link railway service are considering cutting prices and offering group discounts to compete with taxis as a way to attract more customers....(onto) the service once mocked as the 'ghost train'... The fares were under review. The high cost has been blamed for sending the 10-kilometre into receivership six months after it opened in 2000."* **Ref: Jordan Baker SMH 26/4/07**

## And Also...

Following last weeks 4 Corners program on euthanasia I was reminded of the joke: *"I'd like to die peacefully in my sleep like my grandfather, not screaming in terror like his passengers"*.

### What's Good for You

*"Let's face it, the world's running out of oil — it's not a matter of if, but when. So perhaps it's time we started getting over our motor vehicle addiction. If we all gave up our cars tomorrow and started taking public transport the world would be a much cleaner place. But it's also true that there's a lot of work to do in making buses, trains and trams a more attractive option to commuters. The better public transport gets, the sooner we'll all be able to make the switch."*

**Ref: What's Good for You (Ch 9) 30/4/07**

**What's the Healthiest Way to Get to Work?**  
<http://health.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=264133>

### What could we do with 3.3 billion?

NSW Roads Minister ... *"said the state government had a record \$3.3 billion roads budget... Opposition transport spokeswoman ... said the government was in denial about the extent of traffic problems in Sydney and should do more to improve public transport services. 'People need to feel confident that a public transport solution is there for them which is safe and reliable, and which will get them to home on time,' ... 'But our public transport in this state and in Sydney in particular, is in such a mess that people have no other option but to get in their cars.'"*

**Ref: The Age 12/4/07**

### Meanwhile in Victoria ...

*"Under Labor, the roads lobby has been successful in getting more road space per head of population. Its main effect has been to increase congestion, and support the urban sprawl and the development of shopping malls that can only be accessed by car." The Roads Minister ... "showed his contempt for non-car users and the Melbourne City Council when, within 24 hours of the public announcement, he vetoed a well-thought-out plan by the council to introduce dedicated lanes for bicycles along St Kilda Road."*

*"Bicycle usage is inhibited by cyclists' justifiable fear of being struck by a speeding car or colliding with opening doors of stationary cars. Each bicycle carries as many commuters as the overwhelming proportion of cars that enter and exit the city each day. The decision is not even good politics, as increased road space devoted to bicycles will reduce congestion in the central business district, and postpone the need for congestion taxes, as bicycles have outsold cars in the past seven years."*

**Ref: The Age 11/4/07**

### And some more good news ...

In Victoria *"the state-owned regional rail operator V/Line will be responsible for the regional rail network. One of its first tasks will be to conduct a full safety audit of the regional network. State cabinet has agreed to spend \$25 million more over the next year on track upgrades."*

**Ref: Paul Austin, The Age 16/4/07**

*"Sweaty city bicycle commuters will soon have somewhere to lock their bike, change and shower, with Melbourne City Council poised to launch two prototype 'bike parking pods'.... The 'demountable' units will house up to 37 bikes in secure lockers, and will contain showers and change cubicles."*

**Ref: Simon Kidd, Melbourne Times 18/4/07**



**Valet Bike Parking at the 2007 Sustainable Living Festival. The police were providing a free engraving service.**

### Media

Recently there have been several programs on Peak Oil, Climate Change and Sustainability on both radio and TV, particularly on SBS TV and ABC Radio National. Peter Mares' program *The National Interest* (RN Sundays at noon) always makes for consistently good listening.

Is there not, however, an incongruity in SBS advertising a brand of car during their Peak Oil program *Crude Impact* and providing a car and a clothes dryer as viewer prizes on their lifestyle show *Eco House Challenge*?

The ABC TV documentary *Crude* will screen on Thursday May 24 at 8.30pm.

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