

## Problems with Oil

"Every day, at a rate of 160,000 litres a second, crude oil gushes from the Good Earth. That's 13 billion litres every 24 hours, worth about \$US11.3 billion (\$A11.8 billion) at today's record prices. By any measure, the global oil economy is an eye-popping phenomenon. In a single day world oil revenue now matches the annual gross domestic product of Uganda, Paraguay or Jamaica, is more than double the GDP of Nicaragua and countless other battler nations, and is 31 times bigger than the economy of the Solomon Islands.

"Oil has long been the elixir of economic prosperity — for the countries extracting it and those 'petroholic' economies that have guzzled it at exponential rates. Oil has transported us, has warmed us, has fuelled our factories and the creation of vast wealth.

Oil underpins life as we know it. But the spectre of rising prices, driven essentially by the simple dynamic of global demand outstripping global supply, is casting a pall over Western economies, including Australia's, like never before."

**Ref: Simon Mann, The Age, 31/5/08**



Temporary eclipse

"America gives it sons and daughters for oil: war for oil is the supreme metaphor as the addict expels all their energy and oil getting more oil. The sums are astronomical and staggering. The Department of Defence consumes more than the entire nation of Sweden, every day. And, in a breathtaking departure from reality, that same department is dying for a fight with Iran, an act that would make JPMorgan's \$US200-a-barrel prediction in two years look optimistic. If President George Bush's closest confidants get their way, the President will leave his successor with another unwinnable war with an oil-producing giant and, more likely than not, the Gulf of Hormuz closed."

**Ref: David Hirst, The Age 23/05/08**

"Malaysia will end price controls on gasoline, a minister said today. Indonesia, Taiwan, Sri Lanka and Pakistan have decided to raise fuel prices as the cost of subsidies mounts. ... General Motors said that it will close four truck plants, make more small cars, and may drop its

Hummer brand of large sport-utility vehicles.

Gasoline exceeding \$US4 a gallon represents 'a structural change, not just a cyclical change', Rick Wagoner, chief executive officer of the largest US automaker, told reporters before its shareholders' meeting. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said oil prices have been artificially inflated by 'capitalists' and that crude oil remains plentiful. Iran is the second-biggest oil producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries."

**Ref: Business Day, The Age, 4/6/08**

## Problems with Park and Ride

"Commuters who already struggle to find a seat on Melbourne's crowded trains now face a new problem — finding a car park at the station. Most suburban car parks are full by 7.30am, while many quiet streets around stations are clogged with cars, as the sharp rise in rail use places further strain on public transport infrastructure.

"... The Brumby Government has increased funding by \$29 million for 1700 new car parking spaces, but Public Transport Users Association president Daniel Bowen said bus service upgrades should be the priority. 'Adding more car parks is enormously expensive and, according to budget estimates, costs about \$17,000 for each car park, to get just one passenger on the train network each day. The existing bus system is

extremely rudimentary and often only provides a service every 30 minutes if you're lucky', Mr Bowen said.

"Monash University transport professor Graham Currie said Melbourne had more 'park and ride' commuters than almost any transit system in the world and called for a radical rethink. 'We need to start thinking about selling these parking lots and building apartments. Car parks are a very poor use of incredibly valuable land', said Professor Currie. ... But the daily battle for a park is causing considerable frustration among commuters, and at Brighton station, 240 spaces were already filled by 7.30am yesterday. City commuter Olga Lorenzo does not have to be at work until 9am but leaves Brighton at 7.20am each morning in order to secure a park." **Ref: Cameron Houston and Miki Perkins, The Age, 27/5/08**

## And Also ...

"Traffic is a beast; the more you feed it with more road space the bigger it gets', Professor [Graham] Currie said. 'You need to somehow break this cycle of traffic growing and growing'."

## Electric Cars

*"How would you like to fill the tank of your car for \$1? That's what it costs to charge Melbourne City Council's latest addition to its vehicle fleet — a fully electric car. The council paraded its new purchase yesterday and has a second electric car on order for its 85-vehicle fleet, which also includes one hybrid. The Hyundai Electric Getz can run for about 100 kilometres fully charged at a cost of about \$1 in electricity. The car costs about \$49,000 and requires a new \$7000 battery after about eight years. Most importantly, it emits no greenhouse gases (outside of any emissions from electricity production). Acting Lord Mayor Gary Singer said the car was part of the council's commitment to zero net emissions by 2020.*



*"... Ross Blade, the director of Blade Electric Vehicles, which supplied the council with its new car, said there were about 50 such vehicles in Australia, and demand was growing. ... Mr Blade said the culture of petrol dependence was outdated. 'There is no long-term alternative other than electric', he said. While electric vehicles would not account for all car travel, they were ideally suited to urban transport, he said."*

**Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age 4/06/08**

"Maribyrnong Council will soon be running three new Blade Electric Vehicles as part of our Traffic and Local Laws fleet vehicles.



These vehicles will be powered with 100% green power and consequently provide zero carbon emissions. ... Blade Electric Vehicles from Castlemaine, Victoria are providing the high quality electric vehicles. The electric vehicles are a modified Hyundai Getz (manual with additional air safety bag features & ABS) with the petrol motor and tank removed. The Blade is powered by a 40kw 3-phase AC electric motor and energy is stored in 60 lightweight lithium-ion phosphate batteries. The vehicle has a range of 100 km without recharge and is capable of a maximum speed of 120 k/hr. The Blade can reach 60 k/hr in a little over 7 seconds which is comparable with the original petrol vehicle performance.

The Blade Electric Vehicle drives like an automatic (does not have a clutch) but has two gears one for town and one for a highway setting. Whilst driving in the city there would be no need to change gears. The vehicles will have air-conditioning and power steering. One of the most exciting features of the Blade Electric

Vehicle is the very low running costs. The vehicle has regenerative braking capabilities (similar to the Toyota Prius hybrid) which allow the vehicle to capture the energy from braking and store it back in the batteries. The cost of 100% green power to run the vehicle is around \$1.50 - \$2.30 per 100 kms (compared the Getz petrol at \$11.50 per 100 kms). Council's three Blade vehicles will normally be recharged overnight at the Work Centre (this

will take between three to five hours). A fast charge unit will be installed at the Town Hall to give Local Laws officers the capacity to do a quick top-up charge over lunch (a complete fast recharge would take one hour). When Council recharges the vehicles

we will purchase the equivalent amount of electricity from solar or wind generated source – which has zero carbon emissions. A meter will be provided in each vehicle which verifies the amount of electricity used." **Thanks to Gavin Mountjoy for this item (and the pictures).**

*"Never mind hybrid cars - and forget hydrogen power - because the future of the automobile is electric, Nissan says. The company's best engineering brains told Drive last week the quest for environmentally sustainable private transportation in the coming decade will be plug-in, rechargeable electric cars. Nissan is backing this thinking with a firm pledge: it will have an electric car in showrooms in the US and Japan in 2010, with a view to selling the cars globally in 2012."*

**Ref: Andrew Heasley, The Age, 31/5/08**

**Comment:** A must see film is 'Who Killed the Electric Car?' particularly in the light of the item on General Motors on the next page.

## Flash Cycle Jacket

*"A cycle jacket which changes colour as the cyclist brakes has won a global design contest. Michael Chen's jacket uses an accelerometer to sense movement, changing LEDs on the back from green when accelerating to red when braking. A tilt switch makes LEDs in the arm flash amber if the wearer lifts an arm to indicated turns." **MXNews 11/4/08***

## And Also ...

*"Every 1% move in the US dollar equals a \$US4 move the other way in the oil price. ... Oh, and if the US dollar doesn't snap back the global economy will shut down."*

**Ref: David Potts, The Sunday Age, 1/6/08**

## Fading Cars

*"With car buying down by close to 33-percent since 1990, Japan is claimed to be in the grips of kuruma banare, which, for Japanese carmakers, is the polar opposite of hakuna matata. 'It's being labelled the 'demotorisation' process, and it involves large numbers of people in Japan's urban centres not buying cars.*

*"Surveys have revealed a variety of reasons, from the cost of purchase and ownership, to vehicles simply not being status symbols anymore, to cars being passé – as in 'so 20th century'. The greatest worry [for car makers] is that young folks are simply not into cars, preferring cell phones and gadgets to Cubes and keis. Losing their audience before the love affair has even begun is no doubt causing JDM manufacturers to lose sleep. And the even worse news is that the trend is expected to continue, with another 1.2-percent drop in sales predicted this year. Japanese carmakers are fighting the perception that cars aren't cool or worth the price by expanding their marketing and sales efforts in an attempt to form emotional bonds in other ways. It is certain, however, that they aren't the only ones interested in the outcome: Japan's kuruma banare is expected to befall Europe as well."*

**Ref: Jonathon Ramsey, Autoblog, 23/5/08**

<http://www.autoblog.com/2008/05/23/is-japan-facing-a-post-car-society/> 26/05/08

*"General Motors Corp. announced it was closing four truck and sports utility vehicle plants and launching a new series of environmentally friendly vehicles in the face of high fuel prices. The automaker said it was also considering selling its hulking Hummer brand as consumer demand for gasoline guzzling vehicles dried up in its home market. 'These moves are all in response to the rapid rise in oil prices and the resulting changes in the US, changes that we believe are more structural than cyclical', said Rick Wagoner, GM chairman and chief executive officer."*

**Ref: Mira Oberman, The Australian 4/6/08**

## And Also ...

*"The first two oil shocks banished oil from power generation. How fitting if the third finished the job and began to free transport from oil's century-long monopoly."*

**Ref: Economist.com 29/5/08**



Graphic Economist.com 29/5/08

## Sustainable Design in Melbourne

*"If we are to preserve the best of what we have while making the city even more liveable, exciting and sustainable, we need to empower government to lead this effort at a metropolitan level. A metropolitan planning authority could integrate the plans of transport and infrastructure authorities, define pockets of higher density and produce appropriate controls — in effect, it could make things happen. Backed by ministerial authority, such an organisation could provide the decisive leadership needed ... Good urban design addresses the patterns of land use and movement as a whole. We neglect urban design at our peril. Every time we create transport networks, we transform the way the surrounding land is viewed. ... We know we cannot stand still. Our urban infrastructure is ageing. We need to preserve and recycle much more water for urban purposes. We need to reduce our carbon footprint and energy use. We need to reduce commuting distances and emissions by bringing jobs to residents. In the next 20 years, the whole metropolis will need to be reshaped and redesigned. This task demands the involvement of our most able and visionary professionals, working in a democratic framework with decisive and well-resourced governments. Metropolitan challenges demand metropolitan solutions."* **Ref: Roger Poole, The Age, 7/3/08**

## Eco-Station in Queensland

*"Rainwater tanks, solar energy and recycled building materials are some of the eco-friendly features incorporated in plans for a new railway station at Varsity Lakes on the Gold Coast. Transport Minister John Mickel unveiled the designs yesterday and said the station would include a range of sustainable and eco-friendly elements. ... 'An open plaza concourse, sheltered island platform, overpass and lift will provide a contemporary transit environment that is safe, accessible and welcoming,' he said. 'The design also allows for natural lighting and ventilation to utilise existing breeze, particularly in the hot summer months.' The station will be the centrepiece of the future Varsity Station Village, which will become the state's first purpose-built, transit-oriented development. Varsity Station Village includes plans for residential, shopping and employment facilities."* **Ref: Shannon Molloy, Brisbane Times 14/4/08**

## Congested Bridge in Melbourne

*"The West Gate Bridge handles 165,000 vehicles a day – 125,000 more than anticipated – and use is projected to increase 41% by 2031. Commercial traffic will rise by 55% over the period."*

**Ref: Chris Vedelago, The Age, 9/4/08**

## Roads vs PT in Victoria

"[Roads Minister Tim] Pallas — The government does have a priority and a commitment to the provision of public transport as a priority on road. That is clearly our objective in terms of seeking to ensure that the appropriate road space is provided. ... Our trams currently move at about 9 kilometres an hour —

Mr Wells — The slowest in the world.

Mr Pallas — And we are going to have to make some hard decisions if we want to get effective utilisation of our road space to get public transport moving. If we genuinely accept the proposition that we need to provide clear and effective priority for mass movement of people, then we have to take some reasonably firm and appropriate actions. ...

"[Transport Secretary Jim] BETTS — ... the establishment of clearways enables you to introduce DDA-compliant tram stop infrastructure without completely blocking roads. In other words, it frees up road space to enable you to do both. If you consider that a tram can carry 140 to 200 people, that can be a kilometre of traffic jam taken off the roads. Often giving priority to the trams is a decongestion measure. While Mr Wells said we have a slow tram system, we also have one of the largest tram systems in the world, which is a huge asset for us in the fight against road congestion. Protecting it through super-stops and the other measures the minister has described is part of reducing congestion in the long run, it is not a contributor to it."

**Ref: Verified transcript of the Victorian Public Accounts & Estimates Committee Inquiry into budget estimates 2008–09, 16/5/08**

## \$5 Billion Road Toll

"Road crashes are costing Victorians more than \$5 billion a year - almost \$14 million every day. The 332 deaths on our roads last year was the second lowest on record but each cost about \$2 million -- up from \$1.5 million in 1996.

...Assistant Commissioner Lay estimated a third of all police time and the force's \$1.6 billion budget was spent attending, investigating and preventing accidents. Melbourne ambulances raced to more than 13,400 crashes last year, taking 8675 patients to hospital at an average cost of \$1000 each, and treating 4700 others at the scene. The Transport Accident Commission spent \$700 million helping almost 40,000 crash survivors last year."

**Ref: Peter Mickelborough, Herald Sun 24/3/08**

## Noise Pollution

"Drivers hooted their way through Mumbai's first no-honking day, ignoring efforts to cut the ear-splitting cacophony of life in India's most bustling city. ... The city of 18 million suffers from severe noise pollution, with not even designated 'no honking zones' - such as for hospitals and educational institutions - spared by impatient drivers. ... Doctors say noise pollution stemming from cars, motorcycles, trucks and air traffic takes a toll on health, pushing up stress levels. Last year, the World Health Organisation said long-term exposure to traffic noise could be linked to heart disease." **Ref: SMH, 8/4/08**

## Quiet Ultra-Light Rail

"I live in close proximity to the line that runs between Stourbridge Junction and Stourbridge Town [in the UK] and during the week am plagued with the noise made by the rail carriage that generally uses that line. However, Sundays are a totally different situation. Your 'People Mover' slips virtually silently up and down the line and almost goes unnoticed. Apart from the benefits to ourselves and other residents of reduced noise, I would imagine that there is also a significant

reduction in the amount of fumes and other gases that pollute the environment."

**Picture: A PPM 50 at Stourbridge (UK). Ref: Parry People Mover Website 24/8/06**



## Cycling Savings

"Cycling saves taxpayers more than \$290 million in health and traffic congestion costs, a report to be released today reveals. The report, by the Cycling Promotion Fund, says the health benefits of cycling saves Australian governments \$227.2 million a year. It also cuts traffic congestion costs by \$63.9 million and saves \$9.3 million in combating noise and air pollution, the report says. CPF policy adviser Elliot Fishman said cycling reduced the incidence of 'sedentary lifestyle diseases. We're not getting people coming in with diabetes, their blood pressure is more likely to be in check, there's less incidence of stroke', he said. Mr Fishman said congestion savings were based on the value of time lost when people were stuck in traffic. He said the Cycling: Getting Australia Moving report, commissioned by the Health and Ageing Department, was the first report to put a dollar value on the benefits of cycling. The report will be used to lobby health and transport departments to invest in cycling infrastructure such as bicycle lanes and for better links with public transport." **Ref: Adelaide Advertiser 4/6/08**