

## New South Wales Election

*"So here's an idea: why not let considered and senior transport bureaucrats address the public over the head of the transport minister? Why not let bureaucrats present proposals to the public, have them debated, and then let the minister decide if they want to adopt them or not? The current process – in which transport plans are cooked up inside the bureaucracy, announced by a minister, and then reneged on later – clearly hasn't worked. ... When [former NSW Transport Minister] John Robertson listed the transport achievements of Labor and included the Waratah trains, still to be delivered, about a third of the audience last night broke straight into laughter. When [then Shadow Minister] Gladys Berejiklian tried to deflect a question about why she would defer the Parramatta to Epping Line on Labor's record, the crowd grumbled with spontaneous frustration. But what will you do about it? Whoever will take control of transport policy ... will encounter a disillusioned yet informed public that deserve to be taken seriously. People spend too much time on trains not to know about them."*

**Ref: Jacob Saulwick, SMH, 11/3/11**

*"A re-elected NSW Labor government would invest \$21.9 billion in roads over the next 10 years, [said former] Premier Kristina Keneally. ... 'Only NSW Labor has a staged, funded and coordinated plan to deliver more roads, safer roads and better roads across metropolitan, rural and regional NSW'."*

**Ref: The Age, 22/3/11**

*"The Liberal-National Coalition has seized power in New South Wales. ... Liberal Leader Barry O'Farrell ... has nominated the state's struggling transport system as his personal top priority in government [with] better services in Sydney's north, south and western fringes."*

**Ref: Shane Green, The Age, 27/3/11**



**"I hear they're offering a sweetener with the top Transport job - bullet proof personal transport"**

## Caught Short

*"Tens of thousands of passengers were forced off [Melbourne] trams last year before they reached the end of their journeys, as operator Yarra Trams struggled to run the city's services on time. Of 1.6 million tram services scheduled to run last year, 74,000 were turned around by Yarra Trams before they reached the end of the line. In these circumstances, the late tram was 'short shunted' – passengers were told by the driver to get off and wait for the next service. The tram they were on was then sent back the other way, to avoid a knock-on effect to other services. Trams that are 'short shunted' have generally completed more than 80% of their journey, but passengers ordered off can still be inconvenienced – especially as the next tram is often crowded."*

*"The figures on tram performance, supplied to The Age by the Department of Transport, show the private operator behind Yarra Trams also cancelled 3359 services last year. Cancelling a service means the state government fines the company behind Yarra Trams, KDR (a joint venture between French transport giant Keolis and engineers Downer EDI). 'Short shunting' a late tram before it reaches the end of the line costs KDR one-eighth of the fine for a cancellation. In the financial year ending June 2010, KDR generated a net profit for shareholders of \$9 million, on revenue of \$212 million."*

*"Phil Altieri, of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, said drivers were being pressured by management to drive trams faster. There was now an average of three collisions a day involving trams and cars, said Mr Altieri, secretary of the union's tram and bus division. Because the state government did not do enough about roads clogged by cars, or give trams priority at many traffic lights, meeting the timetable was becoming impossible, he said. As a result, too often trams were 'short shunted' instead of finishing their journey. Company profits were a consideration when cutting a run short. ... They will do the numbers game: what is going to cost them more, run a tram late all the way to the terminus or cut it short and turn it back?' Yarra Trams spokesman Colin Tyrus said the operator did not stop trams short of their final destination in order to avoid financial penalties. Tram drivers only forced passengers off [2 kilometres on the #1 southbound] near the end of the route when there was another tram following. 'This ensures minimal disruption to the majority of passengers', he said."*

**Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 23/3/11**

## Feedback on Trees vs Roundabout

*"I love the newsletter. Just want to let you know that months ago I spread the word to a few people about The Avenue of Honour issue {see #192} as I discovered this when driving through town and reading the local paper. I am so glad the news is spreading, is out there. We have to save those trees but more so the tradition and the memory of those soldiers otherwise nothing is worth anything. I am against war but now the trees are there in their magnificence – leave them! Not one is able to be spared!"*

**Ref: Elfie Crystal, 22/3/11**

## More on the Grand Prix

*"I've been to the grand prix at Albert Park twice and each time was lucky enough to watch it from above pit lane as a guest of a corporate sponsor. Yet on each occasion I couldn't wait for the damn thing to finish. I didn't have a clue what was going on, found it unbearably noisy and thought it strangely devoid of the elements I usually associate with great sporting events. As a result, I'm unlikely to return. But do I think the government should pull the plug on the race? No. Fact is, there are a great many fans who love it and it's elitist to deny it. Latest figures suggest the GP now loses close to \$50 million a year. On its own that's a lot of money, but in a total state budget of almost \$44 billion it's a drop in the bucket. Of course, I'd prefer it cost nothing and I'd certainly prefer that Mr Ecclestone's company didn't get a reported \$20 million-plus fee. At the very least I'd like to know the exact figures. ... Then there's the Ron Walker factor. He can be a pretty persuasive character, especially within a political party he has raised millions for and which now finds itself in office. Reasons will be found to keep the race."*

**Ref: Bruce Guthrie, The Age, 27/3/11**

*"At what cost to the taxpayer do we say we can't afford this event. Last year it cost Victorians well over \$50 million."*

*"Obviously it was money well spent by the corporate sponsor, that must be a cosy arrangement, free tickets in return for favourable publicity. So the grand prix keeps us connected to the world? Really. Having a highly paid circus of rev heads fly in and out in a week stops us from feeling isolated and detached. What a load of crap. .... I have no problem with the grand prix, but I don't think we should be giving over a public park or public money to hold a private money making event."*

*"I think a clear and obvious signal of how well this event does in Melbourne is indicated by the news coverage. [www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au), first thing the Monday morning after the race, what's the leading story? AFL. Not coverage on the world recognized motor sport Grand Prix ..."*

**Ref: Readers' Comments, The Age, 28/3/11**

➤ Top sports story on ABC News at 7pm on the day of the race was also football (AFL).

*"A F1 V8 engine spinning at perhaps 18,000 revs a minute is a demented thing, as if a swarm of a million or so giant killer wasps, mated with another million or so mutant cicadas, had been admitted to one's inner ear. When 22 of these machines light up and slingshot down the track, wearing earplugs is a matter of survival."*

**Ref: Tony Wright and Michael Lynch, The Age, 28/3/11**

- 'Angry hairdryers' was another interpretation I heard recently. Vic Ave in Albert Park is normally a bustling shopping strip on a Saturday afternoon but on the mild weather day before the race it was all but deserted. Can't be good for business?
- I watched the grand-prix-express-trams in Clarendon Street on the #112 route on Saturday afternoon for about twenty minutes. About ten trams went by (in both directions), some with a few passengers but many completely empty.
- Meanwhile the normal tram service was severely disrupted. Later that evening I tried to catch a tram from South Melbourne Beach to Brunswick on the #1 route but had to catch four trams instead of one, as they kept stopping short and unloading the passengers.
- And what is the connection between attack helicopters and sport?

**Ref: Stephen Ingrouille 28/3/11**

## And Also ...

One of the big supermarket chains gathered several hundred of their head office staff last Thursday to hear their special international F1 driver guest. Only problem: he was stuck in traffic on the Monash Freeway.

## Kiwis and Petrol Prices

*"The [NZ] Green Party is calling for the [NZ] Automobile Association (AA) to be upfront with Kiwi motorists that more is needed for the country to face oil price shocks than just efficient driving tips. 'Advising people to "pump up their tires, go easy on the brakes and close the windows" is simply a band-aid covering up our severe dependence on oil for transport,' said Green Party Transport spokesperson Gareth Hughes. 'We know that fuel prices will continue to fluctuate in the future, and that there is a serious risk of sustained high prices and shocks. 'The AA has for decades lobbied against increased Government investment in smarter transport like trains, buses and infrastructure for cycling, which would have increased New Zealand's resilience. They need to make up for lost time now, and lobby on behalf of their members for more and better transport options, and for the Government to develop a plan to deal with price shocks. This means reprioritising the central government transport spend away from a few uneconomic motorways, to real alternatives like an Auckland CBD rail loop and streets that are safe and convenient for walking and cycling. Providing efficient driving tips is a good service, but useless without acknowledging that decades of prioritising and subsidising cars have left us dependant on expensive fuel'.*

*"Research from Colmar Brunton in August found 72% of New Zealanders wanted the Government to prepare for future oil price rises by investing in alternative fuels and public transport. Mr Hughes said the last time petrol was over \$2 a litre, New Zealanders switched to public transport, which also reduced congestion more than new motorway connections. 'The Government will need to accommodate a sustained influx of train passengers and invest in fuel-efficient transport solutions like the Auckland CBD Rail Loop and the Wellington light rail project. The AA needs to get behind these projects', said Mr Hughes."*

**Ref: NZ Greens Media Release, 9/3/11**

## Highway Robbery?

*"Australian investors are being accused of highway robbery by motorists in Virginia, who blame the Macquarie Group for what they say are exorbitant road tolls. The complaints have been taken up by a member of Congress and Virginia's transport authorities, which have agreed to set up a local committee to look at ways of making the 22 kilometre Dulles Greenway 'more user-friendly'. But the prospect for lower tolls is poor. The road, one of the most expensive in the US, charges up to \$US5.25 for car journeys, but has not paid a dividend to its owner, Australia's Macquarie Group, for the past three years. Some residents and local companies have boycotted the road – choosing gridlock on alternative routes – with week-day traffic volumes falling by 3% in 2010. Despite this, toll increases helped lift income by 1.8%.*

*... But the man who runs the road responds: 'We are a toll road and, sure, people don't like to pay tolls and there's probably very little we can do to put lipstick on that pig, so to speak'."*

**Ref: Simon Mann, The Age, 28/3/11**



**The Dulles Greenway**  
Photo: The Age, 28/3/11

## Auckland's Green Vision

*" 'Auckland Council has produced a visionary document that shows how we can do things smarter', said Green Party Auckland Issues spokesperson David Clendon. ... 'The Auckland discussion document envisions a city where people can easily and safely walk and cycle, or use modern, efficient buses and trains to get to vibrant town centres. It proposes ways of saving money and energy with greener services like composting organic waste, and widespread uptake of solar energy options. Contrast this with the Government's vision for Auckland as more of the same: a sprawling, car-centric mess with bad traffic congestion and few opportunities to walk, cycle or take a bus or train as petrol prices continue to spike. This is old fashioned 1950s thinking. More motorways and sprawl have made Los Angeles one of*



*the most congested and expensive cities in the world. Meanwhile, their local government is going broke and not even able to maintain the roads. It's not too late for Auckland to grow differently. The Government must allow Auckland to put in place the sustainable urban design & 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure they voted for."*

**Ref: NZ Greens Media Release, 23/3/11**

## New Zealand's Transport Stimulus

*"The [NZ] Government's 'Transport Stimulus' would have created many more jobs if they hadn't cut funding for everything else to build new motorways said the Green Party today. 'Research consistently shows that investment in public transport, walking, cycling and even road maintenance creates many more jobs than spending on new motorways', said Green Party Transport spokesperson Gareth Hughes. 'A recent report by Smart Growth America found that transport stimulus spending on public transport created 70% more job hours than spending on motorways, confirming many earlier studies. We can create more jobs and give people more transport options by investing in buses, trains, walking and cycling. We can create more jobs by keeping our current roads up to spec, by investing in road maintenance. This Government cut funding for everything else in order to build their pet motorways, most of which do not even have a return of \$1 for each \$1 spent on them, according to their own economic analysis. Motorways are built by machines and the money goes on materials, not people, so they're the most expensive way to create jobs. Typically they only create 1-2 jobs for each million invested. ... Electric or fuel efficient cars also cost New Zealanders money, and don't reduce congestion at peak hour."*

**Ref: NZ Greens Media Release, 17/2/11**

## Feedback on Fast Rail

*"The UK is an EU pioneer of tilting trains (Virgin). They only require a minor adaptation of tracks, and rolling stock costs a fraction of HSR. The line that would benefit most from an improvement is London-Manchester. In Spain HSR is justified because of the need to replace old wide-gauge tracks and because of intercity distances."*

**Ref: Pierre Laconte, 17/3/11**

## On Melbourne

*"I'm from Melbourne and have lived there all my life, and there is a lot to love about the city, but only if you live in a handful of very well-known areas. Melbourne's CBD is mostly really good, though not uniformly good – some large areas are still very NYC-ish or even LA-ish and alienating, particularly the western side of the city and the appalling new docklands development. The docklands is just the worst kind of architect-driven, sweeping, modern nonsense with zero sense of intimacy and seemingly designed just to get people to buy expensive apartments there before it was built. Filling an artists' rendering with happy couples pushing prams is easy; actually bringing people to that space is really hard, particularly with a huge stadium on one side, faceless ultra-modern buildings on the other and empty, sweeping grass mounds and sidewalks with a very low density of small business opportunities that are needed to bring a place to life."*

*"The best urban renewal in Melbourne right now (in my opinion) is happening in mid-tier villages, Brunswick, Collingwood and Northcote. These formerly derelict shopping strips have been reclaimed by urban hipsters and turned into thriving communities full of really interesting galleries, cafes, performance spaces etc. We've seen this phenomenon before, about 10 years ago, in Fitzroy – a former unkempt urban wasteland that now has colossal land value thanks to the efforts of thousands of individual urban revivalists. ... The influx of young people on the weekends funded a lot of investment in the suburb itself, though now most of the innovation has moved on as land prices shot up."*

*"But the untold story of Melbourne that people don't really hear is the urban sprawl. There are people commuting up to 2 or 3 hours from outer suburbs into Melbourne – lots of them – living in gated communities with no real life to them. Houses without backyards or nearby sporting grounds, very little investment in things for young people to do locally (hence the huge influx of frustrated youngsters into*



**Slow Train, UK, 2004**

*the CBD at night looking for fights), and a culture that values bigger cars over community cooperation. There are serious social problems developing in these communities due to a lack of balance and access to facilities or public transport.*

*"So what has driven people to the outer suburbs? I think two things. First, rent and land prices are insane. Most investment in Australia is in land rather than small businesses which has pushed land and house prices up by 7 - 17% p/a for decades, way beyond the CPI [Consumer Price Index] and increasingly beyond the wallets of young people trying to live out of home for the first time, and particularly young families. So they move way out to the fringe of the city, and therefore that's where the investment is, rather than in renewing these interior urban spaces that really need it. Secondly, the 'Australian Dream' is to have a huge home all to yourself, not a modest apartment in a high-density area. Most people aren't satisfied unless they end up owning a double-story home with a whole floor dedicated to the kids' toys and playthings – not a lifestyle conducive to an efficient, satisfying and tightly integrated urban environment."*

**Ref: Daniel Warmesley, Comment, Streetfilms, 27/2/10**

See the May 2008 Streetfilm: *Melbourne: A Pedestrian Paradise* at: <http://www.streetfilms.org/melbourne/>

## Heart Attacks and Traffic

*"Riding your bike in heavy traffic can be, metaphorically speaking, a heart-stopping experience. Now research has found it is one of the biggest triggers of heart attacks. In a new sliding scale of everyday risks that prove the 'final straw' in bringing on a heart attack, spending time in traffic – as a driver, cyclist or commuter – tops the list because of factors including stress and exposure to pollution. But of these, cyclists were in greatest danger because they were more heavily exposed to pollution and subjecting themselves to another major heart attack trigger, exercise. The study, which analysed 36 pieces of research, is the first time the 'final straw' risk factors for triggering heart attacks – rather than underlying causes of heart disease – had been quantified. While some factors overlapped, scientists in The Lancet medical journal online ranked them after the proportion of total heart attacks caused by different triggers was calculated. Traffic exposure was blamed for 7.4% of heart attacks, then physical exertion with 6.2%. Overall air pollution triggered 5-7% of heart attacks and drinking alcohol or coffee accounted for 5%. Other risk factors included negative emotions (3.9%), anger (3.1%), eating a heavy meal (2.7%), positive emotions (2.4%) and sexual activity (2.2%)."*

**Ref: Jenny Hope, UK Daily Mail, 25/2/11**

*"Don't exercise, people. Don't go outside. Life is dangerous. Stay indoors. Watch TV."*

**Ref: Reader's Comment, UK Daily Mail, 25/2/11**

*"Cities should be served by a tram service [and] cyclists should have their own lanes, and we would all be healthier and get there quicker – without stress."*

**Ref: Rudolph Huckler, UK Daily Mail, 25/2/11**

## 6 in 10 Australians Overweight / Obese

*"The number of Australian adults classified within an acceptable weight range continues to decrease, according to the Roy Morgan State of the Nation report – a major study of Australians spanning well over a decade with almost a million interviews."*

Body Mass Index of Australians	Sept 2001	Dec 2010
Acceptable Weight	40%	36%
Overweight	34%	35%
Obese	23%	27%
Underweight	2%	2%

**Ref: Roy Morgan Research, 24/3/11**

[www.roymorgan.com/news/press-releases/2011/1302/](http://www.roymorgan.com/news/press-releases/2011/1302/)

## Learning to Walk (Part 2)

*"As a child I lived next door to my school. While this might sound like a parent's dream of safe travel, for me it was a social disaster. I remember being jealous of other kids who always seemed to have adventures on the way home. Their walk could lead to anything from catching taddies down the creek, playing footy, building tree houses in a park, to playing in someone's backyard. Walking enabled the type of imaginative, creative and spontaneous play that is essential for children's healthy development."*

*"A range of cognitive, social and intellectual skills can be developed from creative play and independent travel. The trip to and from school can be as important to the long-term health and wellbeing of children as is what occurs inside a classroom. But we should be careful not blame the decline in children's*

walking solely on parents. The obstacles are complex and many. Poor urban form, few local destinations relevant to everyday life, lack of crossings, good footpaths, shade and the like, all play a part. Traffic volume and speed is a major barrier.

*"Recent VicHealth research found that 62% of parents felt there was too much traffic on the roads for children to move safely around their neighbourhoods without adult supervision. We need to put our streets on a car diet. We need to slow traffic speed, not simply by lowering speed limits, but by 'design speed'. Designing our streets for slower speed and less traffic depends upon visionary leadership and commitment. It can be expensive, but these costs are outweighed by the enormous benefits to children and the community. The burgeoning costs of physical inactivity, congestion, road trauma, climate change and the looming impact of peak oil makes action an economic and social imperative. If we want to get children walking, we also all have to walk more. Children learn by imitating parents and others, if others aren't walking, who can they imitate? Populated streets are safer streets."*

**Ref: Ben Rossiter, The Age, 4/2/11**

*"This is an excellent article. One important criterion in the planning of towns and suburbs needs to be environments safe and congenial enough for kids to walk and play! Is it too late for that. In fact just observing that single 'rule' would make an immense change for the better. Then we could look after the aesthetics too!"*

*"Busy streets are safer streets, when vehicle traffic is slow and pedestrian traffic is high."*

*"And it can't be much fun for parents either, caught up in the increasingly congested suburban school run. If only we had the same problems as in The Netherlands where the public and authorities bemoan the 10% or so of parents (ie about 30 at a 300-student school) who 'create havoc' by driving their children to school!"*

*"Latest research on sustained exercise such as walking is that it releases the hormone serotonin which generates a feeling of well being and assists with brain development. Everyone should do it, not just kids."*

*"I walked home from primary school with all the kids in my neighbourhood - we had lots of fun and safety in numbers. I hope my kids are lucky enough to have a similar experience growing up."*

**Ref: Readers' Comments, The Age, 4/2/11**



Photo: Victoria Walks website

## Monash Freeway Upgrade Waste

*"Monash Freeway's extra city-bound lane is a 'huge waste of money' because as many commuters could be accommodated by an upgrade to the adjacent Main Yarra bicycle trail at a fraction of the cost, a bicycle lobby group says. VicRoads says the \$1.39 billion Monash-CityLink-West Gate (M1) upgrade will ease congestion and enhance safety on important, high-volume arterial roads."*

**Ref: Marika Dobbin, The Age, 28/2/11**

*"Bracks / Brumby could have used the \$1.39 billion for a rail line which would move thousands and thousands of people, and which would have reduced road congestion."*

*"This was Bracks/Brumbies band aid fix to Melbourne's sprawling transport woes. No extra rail out into the growth area like Pakenham and Wyndham Vale just an extra lane on a bridge and freeway (car-park) which everyone except those in government knew would be short lived ease and returned to gridlock before finished."*

*"For \$1.39 billion you could put in major bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Also introduce reduced speed limits in the Inner City i.e. 30km in the CBD and where people live, and a blanket 40km/h speed limit for all inner city roads. This would free up traffic congestion like you wouldn't believe. So much so that you would think you're back in 1960's Melbourne. Thus the roads would be much better for trades, truckies, delivery people and anyone else who could not seek alternative transport options."*



*"The inescapable fact is that 10 cars make 100 metres of traffic jam when they are stopped and about 250 metres when they are moving. It makes sense to improve riding conditions for cyclists."*

*"Can we please have a DRIVE to WORK day once a month with all cyclists driving their cars – then, for the rest of the month that the roads aren't gridlocked and shut down, car drivers will be more grateful every time they see the cyclists on the road."*

*"Light rail in combination with bike lanes is the ultimate solution to Melbourne's transport woes. If an elevated light rail line was put in the middle of Eastern freeway from city to Doncaster and similarly a light rail line in the middle of Monash freeway from city to Dandenong bike lanes could be built underneath similarly to sections of Gardiners creek trail at the moment. This would leave the freeways free for heavy freight traffic and other traffic that requires a car."*

*"Freeways are a piece of western transportation history, which I'm no longer happy to have my taxes fund in any way shape or form, no matter how quasi-privatised they are. Imagine a world where the freeways were massive bike lanes. Can you imagine the volumes of people it could transport, could you imagine the positive impact to their health, and could you imagine the positive impact on the environment? Time to vote in politicians who have a bit of imagination about the future."*

*"Aarrgghh! I'm so conflicted! Most days I cycle and hate all motorists, some days I drive and I hate all cyclists. I ask myself why I don't pay taxes and rego, then I realise I do after all! I'm now beginning to hate myself ... somebody please help me!"*

**Ref: Readers' Comments, The Age, 28/2/11**

## Cyclists' New Weapon

*"Cyclists have found a new weapon in their battle to stay safe on the roads – the video camera. They are mounting the tiny cameras to their helmets or handlebars to film accidents or near misses. Police say they are willing to use the footage as evidence. On average there are three injuries a day for pedal cyclists in NSW, the RTA says, citing the most recent figures, from 2009. A couple of years ago Nathan Besh hit a pedestrian who stepped in front of his bicycle. He said the pedestrian was at fault but did not admit responsibility. 'In a lot of situations like that there are no witnesses and no evidence, it is your word against theirs', Mr Besh said. As a result he started an online company which sells mounts for attaching cameras to bicycles. He has mounted a forward-facing camera to his bike for his Chatswood-to-city commute."*

*"Police could take action after reviewing video footage, a NSW police media spokesman said. 'Such footage could be used by police to make further inquiries, but whether they used that footage to take things further would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis', he said. A partner for Armstrong Legal, Lionel Rattenbury, said the footage could give cyclists strong ammunition if an incident made it to court, so long as conversations were not recorded without consent. 'It is akin to CCTV footage', he said. Simon Hookham, who rides from Castle Hill to work in St Leonards, uses the bike camera. 'The most common things I see are vehicles nearly shaving off my arm as they go past me, and cars that overtake without indication across double lines', he said. 'When you play the footage back, you can see just how close you came to getting hit'."*

**Ref: Melissa Davey, The Age, 28/2/11**

## And Also ...

*"Spiders have forced Mazda US to recall more than 50,000 Mazda6 mid-sized sedans. The Yellow Sac spider reportedly spins it webs inside part of the car's fuel system, which in turn causes increased pressure in the fuel system, causing the car's petrol tank to crack. The fault was discovered in late 2009, when a dealer reportedly found a spider web inside the fuel system of a Mazda6 when the car's owner brought the vehicle in to be repaired after noticing a fuel leak. ... The Yellow Sac spider is native to Northern America. There is an Australian arachnid known as the Yellow Nightstalking Sac spider, but it's unknown whether the local breed has the same taste for fuel fumes."*

**Ref: Matt Campbell, The Age, 4/3/11**