

Federal Australian Budget

"Drivers of imported cars will pay almost \$880 million in Customs duty by 2015. ... The Government is also picking a fight with the motor vehicle industry following big reforms to Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) arrangements for people who drive salary-sacrificed cars. Bizarrely, the present scheme delivers bigger tax breaks the more that people drive – a scenario that has seen thousands of well-paid workers rack up kilometres to reduce their tax bill. ... A single 20% FBT rate will replace the current four-tiered system, realising an extra \$953 million over four years. ... But the motor vehicle industry is already in talks with the Opposition about blocking the FBT changes in Parliament."

Ref: Padriac Murphy, Herald Sun, 11/5/11

"In 2012-13, small business owners can claim up to \$5000 as an extra deduction on new car, ute or van purchases, in a measure worth \$350 million over two years. ... However, in a move that could raise costs for some commuters, the budget also included cuts to concessions for people who drive salary-sacrificed cars. ... The changes, which apply [only] to new contracts entered into from 7.30 last night, will introduce a single rate of 20% for assessing the value of car fringe benefits."

Ref: Clancy Yeates, SMH, 11/5/11

Federal Funds \$m	Road	Rail Freight	Rail Public
NSW	9,709.2	2,432.2	8.3
Vic	4,078.9	638.2	2,265.0
Qld	7,912.0	98.5	518.0
WA	2,842.4	293.5	236.0
SA	1,761.0	371.7	584.7
Tas	612.5	197.6	Nil
NT	585.0	2.5	Nil
ACT	201.9	Nil	Nil
Unallocated	200.2	239.7	20.0
Total	27,903.1	4,273.9	3,632.0

Federal Budget Transport Figures for the period: 2008-09 to 2013-14 (5 years)

Ref: Federal Department of Transport, 15/5/11

This is a good-news story for Australia with \$3.6b of federal funds allocated to public transport compared to almost nothing from previous years. Combined with Rail Freight, this totals \$7.9b compared to \$27.9b for Roads. Ultimately these choices are political decisions, but we need to question if we are getting better value by investing in public (trains, trams, ferries and buses) and active (walking and cycling) transport or by primarily investing in more roads.

Budget – Our Cities, Our Future

"This Government will provide \$61.4 million over three years for the development of a national smart managed motorways trial to improve congestion, lower urban emissions, and expand the capacity of existing outer city road infrastructure networks. ... The rapid growth of our cities, as well as the outward expansion of cities over the last 50 years, has created significant congestion on urban roads, which has had an impact on residents' quality of life and reduced family and social time."

"Efficient public transport can address congestion and improve access to jobs and opportunity (productivity); it can also reduce greenhouse gas emissions (sustainability); and enable affordable access to education, health and recreational facilities (liveability)."

"[We will] establish a new funding program, the Liveable Cities program to facilitate tailored local solutions to urban design and infrastructure challenges in our 18 major cities. This program, along with the other Australian Government investment programs, will support public transport projects which facilitate increased residential density and employment nodes to improve transport connectivity within cities and accessibility to employment and services."

"Road transport has been the main source of transport emissions and accounted for 86.3% (69.2 Mt) of 2008 transport emissions. Emissions from road transport increased by 27.5% (14.9 Mt) between 1990

and 2008. Passenger cars were the largest source of transport related emissions, contributing 60% of emissions from road transport (41.6 Mt), and increased by 18.2% (6.4 Mt) between 1990 and 2008.”

“In applying the principles of the National Urban Policy to its future urban sustainability agenda the Australian Government will ... apply more stringent mandatory air pollution standards for all new cars, 4WDs and utes sold in Australia. These tighter emission standards – known as the Euro 5 and Euro 6 standards – will target the pollutants responsible for the formation of smog over our major cities and health problems within our population, such as respiratory and cardio-vascular disease. When fully in place the new standards package will cut a new car’s maximum allowable emissions of:

- hydrocarbons by up to 50%;
- oxides of nitrogen by up to 70%; and
- particulate matter by up to 90%.”

Ref: Extracts: Our Cities, Our Future, 10/5/11

http://cache.treasury.gov.au/budget/2011-12/content/download/ms_urban.pdf

Oil and War

“British government ministers discussed plans to exploit Iraq’s oil reserves in the months before Britain took a leading role in invading the country, sensational new documents have revealed. The secret papers, obtained by an oil campaigner and published by The Independent newspaper, are minutes of meetings between senior oil executives and Labour cabinet members. They highlight for the first time the hollow nature of Western governments’ denials of national self-interest in the decision to invade Iraq. The documents, which have not been provided to the ongoing Chilcot inquiry into Britain’s involvement, appear to contradict statements made by Shell in 2003 – just before the invasion – that reports of meetings between the company and Downing Street about Iraqi oil were ‘highly inaccurate’. BP had also denied it had any ‘strategic interest’ in Iraq, while former Prime Minister Tony Blair dismissed as absurd what he described as ‘the oil conspiracy theory’.

“But papers published by the newspaper, covering October and November 2002, show that just five months before the invasion, Baroness Symons, then the trade minister, told BP that the government believed British energy firms should take a share of Iraq’s enormous oil and gas reserves as a reward for the country’s military commitment to US plans for regime change. The minutes reveal that the baroness agreed to lobby the Bush administration on behalf of BP as the company feared being ‘locked out’ of discussions and deals purportedly being thrashed out between the US, France and Russia – and their oil companies. ‘Baroness Symons agreed that it would be difficult to justify British companies losing out in Iraq in that way if the UK had itself been a conspicuous supporter of the US government throughout the crisis’, a minute from October 2002 read. The minister pledged to report back before Christmas on her lobbying campaign. And in November 2002, the Foreign Office invited BP to discuss opportunities posed by ‘regime change’, describing Iraq as the big oil prospect and noting that ‘BP is desperate to go there and anxious that political deals should not deny them the opportunity’.

“Another minute quotes Edward Chaplin, the Foreign Office’s then Middle East director, who noted Shell and BP could not afford not to have a stake in Iraq, adding that ‘We were determined to get a fair slice of the action for UK companies in a post-Saddam Iraq’. Obtained under freedom of information legislation, the documents’ release was the result of five years’ work by an oil campaigner, Greg Muttitt, and show that at least five high-level meetings were held on the topic in late 2002. Muttitt’s book, Fuel on the Fire, is to be published next week. He said that before the war, Britain went to great lengths to insist it had no interest in Iraq’s oil. ‘These documents provide the evidence that give lie to those claims’, he said. After the war, the 20-year contracts signed were described as the biggest in the history of the oil industry, covering half of Iraq’s reserves. This stake, representing some 60 billion barrels of oil, was bought up by companies including BP and CNPC (China National Petroleum Company). The Independent reported that this joint consortium stands to make \$US658 million in profit a year from the Rumaila oil field.”

Ref: Paola Totaro. The Age, 20/4/11

“[Osama] Bin Laden, a Saudi national, is believed to have established terrorist group al-Qaeda, which means ‘The Base’ in Arabic, in 1998. He used his family’s wealth – accumulated through Saudi Arabia’s oil boom – to set up training camps in Afghanistan and to plan attacks against other countries.”

Ref: Simon Mann. The Age, 2/5/11

Gold Coast Light Rail

"The company which will build and operate the \$1 billion traffic-busting Gold Coast Rapid Transit network stretching from the new University Hospital to Broadbeach has today been announced. Premier Anna Bligh said the successful bidder, GoldlinQ is a consortium which includes companies Keolis, Downer EDI, McConnell Dowell, Bombardier and Plenary – each with a proven track record of transport construction both within Australia and overseas.

"Ms Bligh said they were chosen from three consortia shortlisted for Stage One of the project last year. 'Over the last year the government's project team has been pouring through 150 boxes of documents from the final three short listed bidders', Ms Bligh said. 'The end result is a public private partnership with GoldlinQ that will deliver light rail to the Gold Coast and more than 6,300 direct and indirect jobs. This is one of the biggest public transport projects in the country – and the

first light rail project for Queensland – and when it's completed in 2014, it will give Gold Coast residents and visitors alike easy, hassle free commuting. It will transform the face of the Gold Coast City, which will boast the most modern public transport system in the country'. Ms Bligh said following the completion of road works later in the year construction of the light rail corridor will begin in earnest with track expected to be laid in the second half of 2012."

Ref: Federal/State Media Release. 6/5/11

A small milestone, having reached our 200th edition!

Since July 2006, this newsletter has been distributed without charge, advertising or external sponsorship. We appreciate the contributions, ideas and links from our readers around the world.

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Plastic Roads

"Plastic bags are a high-profile environmental problem, but an Indian businessman has seen the negative as an opportunity and is paving a path to the future. ... [In] Bangalore, India, they may have found a use for this scourge: roads. ... India's roads have a life of three or four years under ideal conditions. But with India's monsoonal rains, conditions are often less than ideal, contributing to pot-hole riddled roads that have become a hallmark of the country. [Ahmed] Khan and his brother decided to mix plastic with asphalt, which forms a compound called polymerised bitumen. This polymerised bitumen, Khan says, is capable of withstanding India's prolific monsoon rains far better than the pavements currently in use owing to plastic's tendency to act as a binding agent and being water resistant. It's also cost effective. While a road built with plastic will cost about 3% more than a conventional road in the short term, in the long run, it will require much less repair and hence repay the higher up-front cost. Plastic roads made by Khan's company last at least a year or two longer, by conservative estimates and at least a decade more by his own. So far, the company has laid more than 1,200 kilometres of roads using 3,500 tonnes of plastic waste. ...

"For every one kilometre of single-lane road, about two tonnes of plastic are needed, he explains. Of the 35 tonnes of plastic waste generated by Bangalore each day, Khan says he's already using three to five tonnes daily on the roads. ... Khan spent about \$325,000 to finance the initial research and testing of the roads, says he can't imagine a world without plastic and rejects the idea that the focus needs to be on reducing plastic consumption. 'We need to start looking at plastic as raw material rather than waste', he says.

"[Ian] Kiernan seems to think plastic roads could have potential Down Under. 'Polymerised bitumen created using new plastic is in use on some of our highways and other asphalt surfaces, but as far as I know we have never trialled recycled plastic in bitumen. Testing would need to be done in Australian conditions to ensure that the same quality results could be achieved using recycled plastic', he says. 'I'd also like to learn more about control of potential leachate as the surface breaks up over time'. A comparison with current practices may well prove this innovation to be more attractive as an option, he says. After all, bitumen is an oil-based by-product, as is plastic. I'd be interested to learn more about which is the better environmental outcome under different conditions'."

Ref: Mridu Khullar Relph. ABC Environment, 18/4/11

www.abc.net.au/environment/articles/2011/04/18/3192740.htm

US Freight Companies Take Lead

"Five leaders in green transport and logistics –AT&T, PepsiCo, United Parcel Service, FedEx and Verizon – have become charter members of a [US] national effort to reduce use of diesel fuel and gasoline with cleaner, greener fleets. The National Clean Fleets Partnership, an Obama Administration initiative announced last week, is a public-private venture designed to help big companies reduce fuel consumption through the use of more electric vehicles, alternative fuels and fuel-saving measures.

"The charter members operate five of the 10 largest corporate fleets in the United States. Together, the five companies are responsible for some 275,000 vehicles. Though none has a completely green fleet, all five firms have made headlines for their work in integrating electric or hybrid vehicles, alternative fuels and fuel efficiency strategies into their operations and for setting ambitious goals to reduce emissions. ... Rivals FedEx and UPS are also arch-competitors in their pursuit of sustainability, particularly regarding their fleets; AT&T and Verizon have taken steps to reduce the environmental tread of their vehicles; and PepsiCo's Frito-Lay has added all-electric delivery trucks to its fleet, in addition to taking other measures. Three of the five firms also are long-time members of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's SmartWay program to help companies cut fuel consumption, costs and greenhouse gas emissions. ...

"In the National Clean Fleets Partnership, the Department of Energy will provide participating companies specialized resources as well as technical expertise and support in efforts to further reduce fuel use and increase efficiency. The new partnership is part of the DOE Vehicle Technology Program's 'Clean Cities' initiative. It is also a part of President Obama's larger campaign to increase the country's energy security by reducing reliance on foreign oil. Ramping up energy efficiency and reducing energy consumption are key to the push that began when the president took office.

"The announcement of the Clean Fleets Partnership on Friday capped a week in which the president delivered a much-anticipated speech on energy security and his administration issued a challenge to American entrepreneurs to help bring next-gen energy technology to market. 'Even though America uses 25% of the world's oil, we currently have only about 2% of the world's oil reserves', Obama said, speaking about the Clean Fleets Partnership ... 'Even if we used every last drop of all the oil we have, it wouldn't be enough to meet our long-term energy needs. So, real energy security can only come if we find ways to use less oil – if we invest in cleaner fuels and greater efficiency'.

"Noting that the federal government has doubled the number of clean energy vehicles in its fleet, Obama added: 'In the next few years, we're going to switch the entire fleet over. And I'm here at UPS because it's not just the government getting in on the action. Companies ... with some of the largest fleets in the country are switching to more efficient vehicles. And through our Clean Fleets Partnership, driven not by government, but by business, more companies are going to be switching to electric and alternative vehicles, too – not out of the goodness of their hearts, but because it's good for their bottom lines'. Current efforts and near-term plans of the five companies will put more than 20,000 advanced technology vehicles on the road and result in an estimated annual petroleum displacement of more than 7 million gallons, according to the White House."

Ref: Leslie Guevarra, GreenBiz, 6/4/11



President Obama

Photo: Pete Souza, White House, GreenBiz



'And now, folks – The Green House!'

Bus Rapid Transit (Part 3)

"The Greater Manchester Quality Bus Corridor (QBC) is similar to the Dublin QBC and covers a network of 280 kilometres and investment of €120M (€2.33M/km).

"A Quality Bus Corridor is defined as a route that has been improved so that:

- *The bus stops are high quality;*
- *Buses are provided with sufficient priority to guarantee their journey times and reliability;*
- *Passengers can access stops safely and efficiently; and*
- *Cyclists are able to travel safely along the corridor.*
- *The bus stop is first point of contact with the passenger for the bus journey.*

"Key issues for QBC success:

- *Low-cost solution in parallel with the implementation of Metro & Light Rail extensions.*
- *Funding to be aligned with other resources such as the Road Construction Programmes where bus lanes are incorporated in the designs.*
- *Integration with other major public transport modes.*
- *Park and Ride facilities, Integrated Ticketing & Real Time Passenger Information.*
- *Political support and public acceptance.*



Dublin, Ireland
Photo: UITP, QBC

"In October 2005, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) opened the Orange Line, one of the first systems in the U.S. to incorporate a comprehensive set of BRT features. The Orange Line primarily operates on a dedicated busway with high-capacity articulated buses, substantial stations, near-level boarding, off-board fare payment, and headway-based schedules. On weekdays, buses run at four- to six-minute headways during peak hours, and every 10 minutes off-peak. This frequency means that passengers do not need to consult a schedule before heading to a station to catch a bus, reducing both actual passenger wait time and the frustration that can result from waiting. The stations can accommodate multiple bus arrivals, which helps avoid the problem of bus bunching. The Orange Line runs along a 14.5 mile dedicated guideway (average station spacing 1.12 mi).

"Australia has some BRT systems operating but these are not well known all around the world. One of the oldest BRT systems is the Adelaide North East Busway launched in 1986. The Adelaide busway is a guided bus system using guide wheels on the side of the buses (similar to Quito Trolleybuses System). The other systems in Australia are unguided and operate on exclusive bus lane roads, such as: Brisbane South East Busway, Brisbane Inner Northern Busway and Sydney Liverpool-Parramatta Transitway.



Orange Line Busway, Los Angeles, USA
Photo: D Peña

"All Australian BRT systems have some off-vehicle ticket sales (in Latin America, all BRT systems have ticket sales in stations, operate as Metro trains) but also allow some on-vehicle sales. Intelligent Transport Systems are an important part of all systems and real time information is displayed in most of stations."
{Continued in #201} **Ref: Domingo Peña, 18/2/10**

And Also ...

"The M42 bus is so slow, a grown man on a child's Big Wheel-like trike can beat it across midtown. Mark Malkoff, 35, challenged one of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority's notoriously sluggish buses in a mile race on 42nd St. from 10th Ave. to Madison Ave. and won by two minutes and 38

seconds. ... The comedic filmmaker from Astoria, Queens, plans to release video proof today on www.MyDamnChannel.com/MarkMalkoff. Gene Russianoff of the Straphangers Campaign said Malkoff's feat is less surprising than it is aggravating: 'It's a fact of New York life, but it's awful', he said. 'That bus is actually slower than a running chicken'."

Ref: Bill Hutchinson, New York Daily News, 6/4/11

Newcastle (UK) Metro

"The Tyne and Wear Metro, also known as the Metro, is a light rail system in North East England. ... It opened in 1980 and in 2007–2008 provided 40 million public journeys on its network of nearly 78 kilometres. The Metro is usually described as Britain's first modern light rail system. It can be considered a hybrid system, displaying elements of light rail, heavy underground metro, and longer-distance, higher speed suburban and interurban railway systems. Metro is an 'open access' network with no fixed ticket controls. Despite this, the Tyne and Wear Metro has the highest level of passenger income per year (£40 million in 2009/2010) than any other light rail system outside London. Checks are made by roving patrols of inspectors. Ticket gates are due to be re-installed at several main stations during 2011, after an upgrade of the system's ticket machines. The original gates, which were found on every station when the system was opened, were removed in the late 80s due to safety concerns. They remain in place at several key stations to assist with crowd control. ... Metro does not allow the carriage of standard bicycles, though there are storage lockers for these at some stations. Only small folding bicycles are permitted on the Metro, and technically only Nexus approved models of folding bikes are permitted."

Ref: Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyne_and_Wear_Metro



Newcastle (UK) Metro Ref: www.nexus.org.uk/metro
Note the ferry connection across the mouth of the river.

Expensive Trip

In March 2006, 118 local fare dodgers were convicted for not paying their fare. They paid £16,320 in fines and costs

Amble Kimberley McClelland, aged 28, of Glendale, £120 Backworth Karl C Scaister, aged 19, of Hartside Crescent, £140 Blyth Steven Matthewson, aged 22, of Ravensdale Grove, £50 Byker Scott Anderson, aged 18, of Molineux Court, £140 Carl Bennett, aged 24, of Whickham Grns, £110 John R Brown, aged 20, of Northumberland Terrace, £140 Tammy L Brown, aged 25, of Manor House Close, £145 Austin Byrne, aged 25, of Molineux Close, £140 Ian Cartwright, aged 27, of Wilfred Street, £110 Lindsay Clarke, aged 21, of Chillingham Rd, £100 Raymond Conley, aged 28, of Albion Court, £220 Caroline Devine, aged 31, of Felton Walk, £170 Stewart Dodd, aged 24, of Dalton Crescent, £120 Kate Easton, aged 18, of Northumberland Terr, £110 Paul Errington, aged 28, of Burton Street, £120 Darren W Gale, aged 23, of Albion Road, £145 Mahram Hajj, aged 35, of Allandale Road, £120 Louise C Heppell, aged 22, of Whickham Gardens, £230 John R Mark, aged 24, of Wilfred Street, £245 Gavin Riley, aged 42, of Shipley Walk, £120 Ross Smith, aged 19, of Grace Street, £170 	Hazlerigg Gary Bidclough, aged 43, of Lieven Street, £120 Heaton James Abram, aged 21, of Mandella Crescent, £110 Carl Adams, aged 31, of Bolingbroke Street, £120 Ryan Davidson, aged 19, of Simonside Terr, £120 Michael Goodhild, aged 20, of Rothbury Terr, £120 Steven Langton, aged 29, of Second Avenue, £160 Mark McCrory, aged 29, of Spencer Street, £140 James McGuire, aged 19, of Heaton Hall Rd, £140 Aidan O'Kane, aged 19, of Rokeby Terrace, £100 Benjamin Watson, aged 23, of Spencer Street, £40 Hexham Yvette Brown, aged 26, of Chareway, £145 High Heaton Neil Davidson, aged 34, of Acton Place, £110 Jesmond Ben Allan, aged 21, of Lillico House, £110 	Claire Hutchinson , aged 21, of Westmorland Road, £140 Michael Kane , aged 24, of Clumber Street, £120 Emmeline Kirk , aged 21, of Park Road, £160 James D Miller , aged 28, of Clumber Street, £160 Paulo V Morris , aged 22, of Grenville Terrace, £160 Mamarr Nigle , aged 39, of Kingsley Terrace, £120 Andrew Sewell , aged 30, of Georges Road, £140 Pauline Thompson , aged 32, of Hillsview Ave, £140 North Kenton Jordan Fortune, aged 22, of Emden Road, £70 Jonathan D Gillie, aged 21, of Hillsview Ave, £120 Dean Jamieson, aged 20, of Banbury Road, £160 Wayne Turnbull, aged 35, of Mastyn Green, £120 Nuneaton Iljir Voca, aged 32, of Bracebridge Street, £120 Peterborough Steven Hutchings, aged 21, of Holdfield, £145 Shieldfield Mark Elderbrandt, aged 30, of King Charles House, £140 Adam Lott, aged 19, of Lort House, £150 South Gosforth David Jones, aged 25, of Audley Road, £140
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Newcastle, UK, Metro where the names of people convicted of fines for not paying their fare – fare dodgers or losers as they were referred to as on the original signs – are shown on posters in the stations entitled 'Named and Shamed' Ref: Wikipedia

Photo: L Hoon, Wikipedia, 17/6/06

Interestingly the ages shown range between 18 and 43 while the average age is around 25. (Presumably those under 18 are not listed).

'Shields Ferry is running smoothly'

"A Shields Ferry makes the seven minute trip across the River Tyne between North and South Shields ferry landings [and the two Metro stations] every 30 minutes in each direction. The ferries also cruise along the Tyne in the summer, for 1 hour Tyne Tours or 3 hour Afternoon River Trips. ...

"[One] ferry landing is about a 5 minute walk from South Shields Metro station. ... The distinctive new ferry landing was officially opened in July 1999. It consists of a 50m steel bridge leading to a 32 square metre reinforced concrete pontoon. There's an enclosed waiting area and the needs of the visually impaired have been catered for with a tactile walkway. The [other] ferry landing is about a 10 minute walk from North Shields Metro station. The route is quite steep, but the FerryLink provides a free shuttle service to Shields Ferry passengers. ...



Shields Ferry, River Tyne

Photo: Nexus Website

"Dogs can travel free on the Shields Ferry. ... Bikes can also be carried across the river on the Shields Ferry free of charge [and they] can accommodate about 20 bikes on-board. There are cycle lockers at South Shields ferry landing [which can be used] free of charge (£30.00 deposit required but this is refundable when you return your locker key)."

Ref: Nexus Website

<http://www.nexus.org.uk/ferry>

Cycling Fine in New York City

"A [New York woman] was pulled over by a cop while cycling on Columbus Avenue and slapped with a ticket for pedalling with a tote bag strapped to her handlebars. Claire Lecomte du Nouy ... said at first she thought the cop was just [joking]. Having ridden a bike for five years in New York, Lecomte du Nouy said she couldn't understand how the city – which is supposedly trying to encourage cycling – would hit bike riders with frivolous tickets. ... When she protested, she said the officer comforted her by adding, 'Don't worry, you can go to court. The judges always throw these out'. And it turns out, that's exactly what will happen. The summons listed her offence as 'carry articles on bicycle', but it was only after she returned home ... and did a little research that she learned the city has no such zero-tote policy. 'Not a single person knows about this thing', she said. Police brass – who are currently pushing a widespread crackdown on unlawful cyclists – say the summons should have never been issued. 'A summons may be issued ... if a cyclist is transporting a bundle or package in such a way that it prevents him/her from keeping at least one hand on the handlebar', NYPD spokesman Paul Browne admitted. Lecomte du Nouy had both hands on the bars."

Ref: David Seifman and Jeremy Olshan, New York Post, 15/4/11



Claire Lecomte du Nou

Photo: Dan Brinzac, NY Post

And Also ...

"I really don't want to see any more frivolous tickets being penned, so [here are five] NOT ticketable offences for biking in New York City:

1. Failure to use deodorant;
2. Ringing your bell more than three times consecutively;
3. Wearing two bike helmets;
4. Failure to signal to drivers that you have an upset stomach;
5. Locking your bike with dental floss."

Ref: Streetfilms, 15/4/11