

Trams to be Made in Victoria

"For the first time in almost two decades, trams will again be manufactured in Melbourne's south-east, after the Brumby government awarded a contract to build 50 vehicles in Dandenong. Each tram will cost \$6 million - about \$1 million more than for comparable orders for trams in other cities. It is the first order for new trams placed by Labor in 11 years of government, and it is only half of Labor's 2006 promise to put 100 new trams on the city's tracks. Canadian transport giant Bombardier, the world's biggest tram manufacturer, yesterday beat France's Alstom to win the \$300 million contract."

"Commonwealth Engineering made hundreds of the city's existing trains and trams in the 1970s and 1980s at the Dandenong plant, which is now owned by Bombardier. The last tram made at the factory rolled off production lines in December 1993. All new trams and trains since then have been imported. Eleven new trains brought into service in Melbourne this year were made in Poland and assembled in Italy. Public Transport Minister Martin Pakula, who is also Industrial Relations Minister, said most of the manufacturing work for the 50 new trams would be done in Dandenong. ... The new contract will create more than 100 direct jobs at Bombardier, and at least 400 more flow-on jobs in Melbourne's south-east. Bombardier has already made more than 100 VLocity carriages for V/Line at Dandenong. Australian Workers Union's Victorian secretary Cesar Melhem said awarding the contract to Bombardier sent a message that Victoria still had a future in manufacturing."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 28/9/10

Christchurch Earthquake

"The rail lines in Canterbury were de-kinked and back in action within a few days of the Big One [September 4 earthquake] – ballasted sleeper track is actually remarkably easy to repair, with the assistance of modern machinery – and the Christchurch Tramway, with its solid reinforced concrete foundations ... suffered not at all. The Christchurch Tramway was up and running almost as soon as the central area was re-opened. In doing so it provides a sense of a rapid return to normality (and revival of the vital tourist industry) that Christchurch needs. The morale boost that quickly reinstating tram services provides was also noted after the bombing of Hiroshima (though it is obviously fatuous to make any other comparison of the two disasters!) – just another example of 'the magic of steel and sparks' to quote the Mayor of Christchurch, Bob Parker."

Ref: Brent Efford, Trans-Action Bulletin #101, 23/9/10

Call for Public Transport Authority

"No one takes responsibility for the co-ordination of Melbourne's public transport services, according to the managers and former chiefs of Melbourne's tram, train and bus systems, says a report. ... [But] the Victorian Greens have proposed establishing a public transport authority with wide-ranging co-ordination powers, if they win the balance of power at November's state election. Some of the cities with the world's best public transport services - London, Copenhagen, Vancouver and Singapore - have such co-ordinating authorities. ... [However in Victoria] operators and the government have run their organisations with little regard for what others are doing. 'Currently, co-ordinating timetables across the modes is, at best, a reactive process by interested individuals, as opposed to a planned, strategic proactive process', the authors wrote. A study by the Public Transport Users Association ... found only 38% of trains met a connecting bus."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 29/9/10

"We looked to see how all the different agencies were co-ordinating our public transport service ... we asked them how they thought it worked and who was responsible ... and what we found was that they all thought it was somebody else ... the public transport [department] says that Metlink is the central body. Metlink says 'well if you look at our service agreement with the government, co-ordinating timetables is not our job', so really there is nobody who is actually responsible for making sure all of the parts of the system work together in the best possible way. What it means is that we are not getting the services that take people quickly ... also what is worse in a way is that we are not getting the economic efficiencies ... buses running through the suburbs in complicated loops with very few people on board"



"They lost the office key back in the 1960s."

which cost the taxpayer. And what we found out is that where you do have good central planning we can actually get economic efficiencies as well as getting a system which allows people to leave their cars at home more often. No city in the world which has a good public transport network does it without having a strong public agency whose job is to design the timetables and the routes so that all of the pieces of the network fit together."

Ref: John Stone, Fairfax Media, 29/9/10

Portarlington Ferry Evaluation (Part 3)

"In the longer term, were the ferry to become established as a reliable service, the research suggests that the improved access to Melbourne would encourage some families to continue to live on the Bellarine Peninsula, when they otherwise may have moved to Melbourne, and some Melbourne families to move to the area permanently, particularly those who already own holiday homes on the Bellarine. Both these factors are outside the scope of this report. ...

"The latent demand among potential visitors from Melbourne and, to a lesser extent, regional Victoria should be considered as longer term potential for the ferry service, as facilities and transport connections are developed at Portarlington and Port Melbourne; as should projected population growth and changes to this growth brought about by the existence of any future ferry service. The visitor market, while potentially significant, would require substantial investment in marketing and tourist product development and therefore should not be relied upon in any decision-making about the current and near-term viability of the proposed service.

The passenger numbers estimated by this research could be analysed further to determine the extent to which they would make viable a regular commuter ferry service with a vessel of 200 to 300 seat capacity, considered appropriate for crossing Port Phillip Bay."

Ref: Portarlington to Melbourne Ferry Service, Parks Victoria, DoT, DPCD, Tourism Victoria and City of Greater Geelong, June 2010

http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au/resources/mresources/port-arlington/Portarlington_Ferry_Report_June2010.pdf

"Victoria, and more specifically Melbourne suffers from an ethical problem, which (in my opinion) tends to manifest itself in skewed land-use and transport system investments. I have just read the Melbourne Link Authority web page [which] makes no reference to linking regions of Melbourne by integrated modes of transport. There is no reference to planning for non-motorised transport, or other alternatives, such as freight, coach services or ferries. There is a case to be argued that investing in the linking of some parts of the Port Philip region, such as Portsea and Mornington Peninsula for week end travel connections between the CAD by private cars on roads may not really be a worthy objective. ... To serve the week end tourist trade to the Mornington and Bellarine Peninsulas with a lower ecological footprint transport system such as, improved coach and ferry services should be reconsidered."

Ref: Oz Kayak, 27/9/10

Poll Factor in Ferry Bid

"The cost [of the survey study] was approximately \$60,000. ... The Bellarine Ferry Group briefed Liberal candidate Kurt Reiter regarding the ferry and he indicated that he will be recommending it to his party as an exciting visionary addition to public transport".

Ref: PBDA Newsletter, March 2010

"Supporters of the campaign to get a ferry service between Portarlington and Port Melbourne hope the coming state election will inspire the political will to support the service. Bellarine Ferry Group secretary John Rae said a recent public meeting attended by Opposition transport spokesman Terry Mulder, overwhelmingly endorsed the idea. Mr Rae said some criticisms of the plan were unjustified. 'We have never said the service would pay for itself', he said. 'What we say is that we think it should be treated like any other public transport service like the railways. No one says the railways have to make money'. Mr Rae said Bellarine Ferry Group had no financial stake in the project. 'There is one business person in our group the rest of us are retired people who just think it is good thing for the area', he said. 'We are lobbying for it, but we do not want to operate the service. We want the government to put it out to tender like any other transport service. There are buses running around the peninsula that don't make money. Public transport is always subsidised'. Mr Rae said the first thing that needed to happen was for the State Government to fund the \$55 million safe harbour project for Portarlington. 'Then the service could be put out for tender ... While the service would be primarily a commuter service the potential benefits

for tourism were huge ... Look at all those people in Port Melbourne ... A ferry service on the weekend could bring lots of people from Melbourne to the peninsula'.

"Mr Rae said Mr Mulder had given an undertaking to try to get the Liberal Party to adopt the service as policy in the coming state election. Liberal candidate for Bellarine Kurt Reiter said the meeting showed overwhelming support for the scheme. 'People were saying, "We would use this service",' he said. Member for Bellarine Lisa Neville said she pushed hard to ensure that the redevelopment of the Portarlington Harbour Masterplan released late last year included provision for the infrastructure and services that would be necessary to support a ferry service."

Ref: Tony Prytz. Geelong Advertiser, 24/6/10

"Terry Hickey, Deputy CEO of Geelong Otway Tourism, said 'Though the major benefit to the Bellarine community is to open travel both ways as commuter transport, there is definite potential for tourism'."

Ref: Media Release, PRLog, 1/7/10

Problems Replacing Oil (Part 2)

"Annual Australian sugar production is about 5 million tonnes, of which 4 million tonnes is exported at world market prices. The amount used for domestic consumption would be largely used for food and confectionary production or in existing ethanol production. If we convert all of the sugar that is normally exported to ethanol, then we have import substitution for oil. How much petrol would it displace? One tonne of sugar yields 489 litres of ethanol. The Australian export sugar crop (4 M tonnes) would then produce about 1.54 Megatonnes of ethanol (1.96 Megalitres). The annual consumption of petrol in Australia is about 20 gigalitres. To make all our petrol into a 10% ethanol blend would require 1.82 Gigalitres of ethanol. However, we would have saved not quite this amount of petrol. This is because ethanol delivers less energy than petrol (only two-thirds as much), so more of the ethanol/petrol blend will be consumed per kilometre. We will have nearly enough sugar to do it and still maintain our local food markets. However, there will be some additional costs.

"Fossil fuels will be needed to plant and harvest the sugar cane crop. Petrochemicals are also used for fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides. Production and distribution of the ethanol fuel produced will also require energy. How much have we really saved? While we have enough sugar to do this, would it push up the global price of sugar and thence the price of food? Would we choose to eat less or differently or drive less? Would we oblige poor people in other countries to eat less? Driving is a social justice issue.

"What if we grew more sugar cane? This is then a land use and water use issue. Australia is the driest cultivated continent and has the poorest soils. There will be an impact on the environment. Wouldn't it be better to make cars 10% more fuel efficient? Australian made cars tend to have higher capacity, less fuel efficient engines than those widely used in Europe and Asia. They are not becoming more fuel efficient with the passing years, just more powerful.



"The proposed voluntary code of practice for vehicle manufacturers in Australia, announced ... 15 April 2003, has set some fuel efficiency targets for 2010, but these are fairly low by international standards. European, Japanese and Korean car makers have committed to reduce CO2 emissions from new passenger cars to an average of 140 grams per kilometre (g/km) in 2008 (2009 for Asian makers). The ultimate objective is to reduce emissions to 120 g/km in 2012, although this is looking unlikely ...

"The Australian code has specified a 'National Average Fuel Consumption Target' for 'new passenger vehicles' of 6.8 litres per 100 kilometres travelled. Given that CO2 emissions for petrol are 2.5 kg/litre of fuel, this translates to 170 g/km for the Australian standard. This is some 18% less efficient than the European 140 g/km standard, two years later, and is only voluntary. I contend that the Australian target could be tighter and the implementation date for the standard brought forward. Australia is behind the EU and Asian manufacturers and is getting further behind. These unchallenging targets will also cause some problems for Australian automobile manufacturers in trying to sell our 'gas guzzlers' into export markets. Let's tell the industry to produce the vehicles that are good for Australia. A start would be the federal government mandating fuel efficiency in their fleet purchases."

Ref: Peter Flanagan, August 2006

Community and the Fast Train (Part 1)

"There are signs that the timidity of federal politics may be turning with the announcement that both sides of politics will support a feasibility study into a bullet train for the Australian eastern seaboard. While commonplace in Asia and Europe, this would be revolutionary here. It would reduce the number of planes in the sky and be a welcome antidote to commuter chaos. A bullet train could make the journey from Campbelltown to Sydney's CBD in 10 minutes, Tullamarine to Melbourne in five mins or the central coast to Sydney in 20 minutes. But the chances of this idea happening are very slim if left to the politicians."

"We can anticipate a significant negative reaction from the airline industry. The Melbourne-Sydney flight path is the third busiest in the world, and it won't be given up without a fight. And, like in the 1980s, the project could get bogged down in debates about the route the train line takes. The hope for the bullet train lies in the fact that it could be championed by a highly unusual coalition of organisations that all have an interest in better transport. But, some important lessons about coalition building will need to be kept in mind if such an alliance is to be successful. Planning will be key. This is a very long-term project and will need to maintain popular and political support through multiple electoral cycles and probably a variety of different state and federal governments."

Ref: Amanda Tattersall, SMH, 22/9/10

British Airways to Run on Rubbish

"BA has set up Green Sky with US biofuel firm Solena which aims to build a plant capable of taking thousands of tonnes of rubbish from east London every year and converting it into enough jet fuel for all its flights from London City airport two times over. Jonathon Counsell, BA's head of environment, said: 'This is a proof-of-concept type project. We hope that eventually there will be many plants like this around the world'. BA is not doing this out of the goodness of its heart. Airlines face a bleak future. Last year will, in the words of Giovanni Bisignani, head of industry trade group IATA, 'go down into the history books as the worst year the industry has ever seen'. It rounded off a decade in which airlines accumulated \$US47bn in total losses."

"From 2012, airlines flying in to and out of Europe will be forced to pay for every tonne of carbon dioxide emitted over 2005 levels to comply with the European Union's carbon trading scheme. And the price of jet fuel, the single biggest cost for an airline, is expected to rise in line with oil. In January last year, Walsh broke ranks with the rest of the industry by declaring BA would halve its carbon emissions from 2005 levels by 2050. The move was followed by rivals."

Airlines have only one practical option: biofuels. Solena chief executive Robert Do said: 'Air transport doesn't have the same options that carmakers do. You can't go hybrid, or plug (aeroplanes) in. The only option is to look at alternatives to jet fuel from oil'."

"Some carriers such as KLM and Virgin Atlantic have begun experimenting using biofuels blended with conventional jet kerosene. But the infrastructure required for significant biofuel production, from crops to refineries to re-engineered engines, is still a long way off. The Solena project tackles one key obstacle: feedstock. The idea of using large areas of arable land for the production of jet fuel has many critics. Waste, however, is another matter. London produces 10,000 tonnes a day. The Solena plant would need 1500 tonnes daily, about 60 lorry loads. For waste firms it is an attractive proposition. Soaring landfill taxes mean they will pay Solena to take it off their hands. ... Today there are about 18,900 airliners in the world. The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that aviation causes about 3.5 per cent of the man-made effects on the weather. New aircraft such as the Airbus A380 and the Boeing 787 are more fuel efficient, but the gains will be more than wiped out by the industry's growth."

Ref: Danny Fortson (The Sunday Times), The Australian, 20/7/10

Camelina

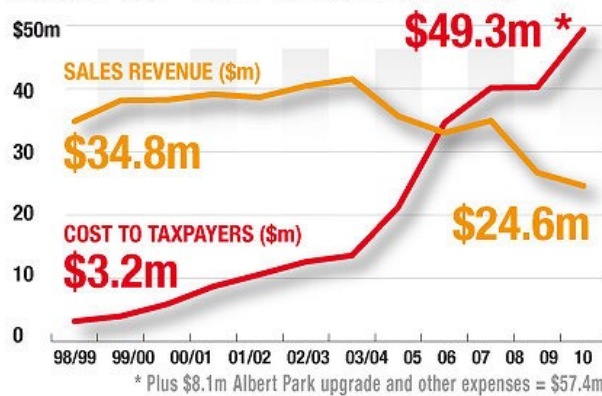
"Camelina, a hardy plant from the mustard family that can grow in harsh conditions where food crops cannot ... is now the darling future fuel of the airline industry because its specifications are almost the same as normal jet fuel: a flash point of 38 degrees Celsius and a freezing point at minus 47. No engine modifications are needed."

Ref: Stephen Cooper, The Age, 12/9/10

More on the Grand Prix

"When spending to upgrade the Albert Park circuit and other costs are added, taxpayers were out of pocket \$57 million for this year's event. Executives at the Australian Grand Prix Corporation received bonuses totalling \$150,000, including \$50,000 for chief executive Drew Ward, whose total salary topped \$380,000. The cost to taxpayers of staging the event in Melbourne for the past decade has topped \$235 million. ... Plummeting revenue has exacerbated increasing costs. From a moderate government contribution of \$3.2 million in 1998-99 – the cost to taxpayers has skyrocketed. In 2006 the event raised revenue of \$35.6 million, but this year it slid to \$24.6 million. During the same period, costs climbed from \$68.8 million to \$80.3 million. ... This year the attendance was 305,000, up 5000.

COST OF THE GRAND PRIX



"Independent state MP Craig Ingram savaged the exponential growth in the cost of the event 'to a level where it is embarrassing. I think it is just outrageous', he said. 'It has gone past a joke and it is time both sides of politics started to seriously reconsider the ongoing taxpayer bailing-out of this event'. MPs were struggling 'to get funding for health services, education, support services for disabled kids at schools, for roads and other infrastructure. I just think there is a whole range of services and other infrastructure which need that sort of money more than a car race in the middle of Melbourne'."

Ref: Jason Dowling, The Age, 17/9/10

How Deadly is Diesel? (Part 4)

"Is a diesel-free world possible? Working backward from the vision of a diesel-free world, what steps could we be taking today to achieve the vision? That is the essence of a precautionary approach. But the risk-based approach serves the purposes of 'business as usual', and therefore has the backing of powerful special interests. So long as the exact size of the problem is uncertain, risk assessors can always call for delay and more study. And, since scientists-for-hire can always reinterpret old data to cast doubt on the nature of the problem, action can be stalled for decades. This is in fact what has happened with diesel.

"On May 2, 1995 the New York Times reported that researchers were casting new doubts on the evidence that diesel fumes cause cancer in humans. They acknowledged that diesel soot might endanger people by aggravating conditions like asthma, chronic bronchitis and cystic fibrosis, but lung cancer? Probably not, they said. The Times reported then, 'Studies in humans found that those with an occupational exposure to diesel smoke had lung cancer rates 20 to 50% higher than other workers, but none of the studies were precise about the level of exposures....' so the studies could not be relied upon to tell us the true cancer danger among the general public in places like New York City and Los Angeles. Doubt is a powerful helpmate when your goal is to maintain 'business as usual'. The risk-based approach waits for the holy grail of scientific certainty to emerge from the data -- until then, just keep on truckin'.

"So now in 2005 we awake to learn that we have a public health disaster on our hands, with at estimated 21,000 deaths each year caused by diesel fumes, and more than 100 times that number made sick. It is time to engage in an urgent search for a way out of this diesel disaster. Every college and university that receives any public funds (including tax exemptions for private institutions) could to commit to doing something to solve this problem, engaging in a coordinated effort to figure out how to make the U.S. 'diesel-free or darn near' within 15 years. Given that we have 'risk assessed' our way into this problem, we could refuse to wait for further study to determine the exact placement of the decimal point. We could take precautionary action now, aiming to eliminate this problem. But precaution is not (yet) fashionable. Risk-assessment is. So, for example, in our home state of New Jersey (which likes to think of itself as environmentally progressive), the state's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has set a goal of reducing diesel emissions by 20% over the next eight or nine years – during which time an additional 7 or 8 thousand citizens of New Jersey will have been killed by diesel fumes with many times that number made sick.

But a recent study revealed that truck traffic in New Jersey is likely to increase 80%(!) in the next 15 years, so the DEP's plan seems unlikely to make any real headway against the diesel death-trap. Their goal is too timid.

"Something much larger is needed. Something bold, innovative, aggressive and comprehensive. Something commensurate with the size and urgency of the diesel menace. Every state's colleges and universities that receive public subsidies could focus enormous resources on this problem, to find solutions as quickly as is humanly possible. Diesel presents a conundrum for urban designers and planners, and for those with urban transportation know-how. It is a complex engineering problem, fraught with fundamental questions in several hard sciences. It is an environmental problem, a medical/biological problem, a legal problem, and a management problem. It is an enormous public health problem. It is a problem of public administration and good government. It is, above all else, an ethical problem, a problem of fairness and justice – those most harmed are those least able to defend themselves, children of the urban poor.

"Philosophers, economists, sociologists, psychologists, historians, writers, and all the humanistic disciplines (arts, dance, theatre, literature, film, and music) could make important, unique contributions. Knowledge and skills from business, labour, and decision-making are needed. Every discipline could contribute because this diesel poses a fundamental question for a self-governing people. In the original conception of this country, how was democracy supposed to work? Who is supposed to decide?"
{Cont. in #176}

Ref: Rachel's Environment & Health News, Health and Energy, 24/2/05

http://healthandenergy.com/deadly_diesel_fumes.htm

And Also ...

'VicRoads advises using train services, direct bus services, park and ride options and then car travel in descending priority order'.

"The words you never thought you'd see! Advice to Geelong residents during the UCI World Cycle Championships."

Bruce from Brunswick', 27/9/10



Photo: Phillip Stubbs

Problems with Tar Sands (Part 4)

"Canada should make every effort to evaluate and understand the full cost of exploiting these unconventional [oil] sources. But Canadians don't need a lecture from an American about protecting their environment. Some of my progressive counterparts would probably disagree on this point, but thinking about this from the effects on the Alberta environment alone, Canada's people are empowered through their democracy to decide how to balance environmental priorities against industrial activities. And I respect the fact that the Alberta government has taken steps to try to reduce the environmental degradation that comes from extracting oil in these ways, including \$15 per ton carbon levy.

"But the global effects of climate change now complicate our ideas about environmental responsibility. The boreal forests represent over a tenth of the world's terrestrial carbon storehouses. And in the next 10 years alone, tar sands operations are forecast to triple their contribution to Canada's total CO2 emissions. These atmospheric impacts are no longer a localized affair now that we know CO2 emissions are causing environmental changes around the world – especially in regions that already suffer from extreme poverty and deprivation. To be fair, tar sands exploitation has distinct strategic advantages, especially in the near term, for both the United States and Canada. These are mostly economic and security related, and they aren't trivial. The U.S. needs energy from stable sources, and Canada provides that. Reasonable people can disagree when priorities are weighed differently among those with different perspectives or time horizons.

"But what I think reasonable people cannot easily disagree on is the choice I laid out at the front of this talk – we either rapidly green the world's engine of economic growth, or we suffer consequences that are very difficult to even fully comprehend, in addition to those we already tolerate. Unconventional sources of fossil fuels cannot be our energy future. There are no leapfrogging technologies on the horizon that suggest with any plausibility that this could be otherwise. There are no silver bullets waiting to be fired. Notwithstanding the substantial investments our governments are making in RD&D on carbon capture and sequestration, at this point, it is still closer to being on the drawing board than being

deployed. For the reasons Dr. Lynch mentioned, investments should not be made on the assumption that CCS [Carbon Capture & Storage] is a technology that will make continued production of fossil fuels environmentally and economically viable. Of course, our countries should continue to cooperate on CCS research, as Secretary Chu and Minister Prentice are directing. But for the foreseeable future, 'greening' inherently dirty sources of energy does not add up to much more than tinkering at the margins. Yet industry is ploughing capital into unconventional sources of oil, while making only superficial investments in clean technologies that would serve the public good. Research by the Centre for American Progress found that the big five oil companies invested only 1.7% of profits in clean energy R&D. As two leading academics noted in an article in The Washington Post recently, this is because the corporate culture and core competence of oil companies favour large, centralized investment opportunities, like the unconventional resources in Canada or deepwater drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. Beyond Petroleum is an ironic slogan, but not a real strategy. But of course, oil companies are structured to make money this way, and that, like all industries, is their purpose. The winner of an OPEC Award from the International Association from Energy Economics estimates that the oil industry of 2100 will be both larger than today's and up to 90% dependent on unconventional oil. That future is flatly incompatible with one in which we achieve a best-case climate scenario.

"So where does all this leave us in the largest sense? To borrow a metaphor from Canada's former environment minister, right now the United States, Canada, and the rest of the world are absurdly trying to ride two horses galloping in opposite directions. We all recognize we have to keep global temperatures under 2 degrees Celsius to avoid catastrophic climate change. Importing countries, the United States in particular, also recognize that their addiction to oil sustains and enriches bad actors around the globe, regardless from whom their own particular imports are purchased. But our reliance on oil continues unchecked. Soon, though, policies in the United States and elsewhere will almost certainly catch up with the demands of climate science, and technologies will come on-line that will ease the transition to a low-carbon future." {Cont. in #176}

Ref: John Podesta, Climate Progress, 23/6/10

<http://climateprogress.org/2010/06/23/podesta-green-tar-sands/>

"Very large amounts of natural gas are required to heat water in order to process bitumen. By 2011, it is estimated that the then existing oil sands plants will burn enough natural gas to annually release 80 million tons of CO2 into the atmosphere."

Ref: Bishop Luc Bouchard, 25/1/09

[The Integrity of Creation and the Athabasca Oil Sands](#)